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Discussion on Buddhism and Arts

Dr. Dion Peoples
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“In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political lines. There is in fact no such thing as art for art’s sake, art that stands above classes, art that is detached from or independent of politics. Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian revolutionary cause; they are as Lenin said, cogs and wheels in the whole revolutionary machine.” – Mao Tse Tung

“All our literature and art are for the masses of the people, and in the first place for the workers, peasants, and soldiers; they are created for the workers, peasants and soldiers and are for their use.” - Mao Tse Tung

 “[Our purpose is] to ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy, and that they help the people fight the enemy with one heart and one mind.” – Mao Tse Tung

When the idea for this journal became clear, our excitement throughout the Buddhist university culture was elevated. This is a topic that many people wanted and often communicated to me, for a conference or journal topic. Certainly, we want to see the reaction from the wider scholarly Buddhist community of authors, pertaining to any interest in the various arts. We can confirm that there is interest in Buddhist-related arts, even though the submissions for this particular volume didn’t reach the caliber or thematic expectations we were hoping for, we do think it opens a wide door for an academic-conversation. We are inspiring the academic conversation.

The editor envisioned articles about ancient or decades-old temple-murals, contemporary Buddhist art, Buddhist inspired music or movies, Buddhist inspired architecture seen outside of temples, perhaps articles dealing with monastic-regulations which can inspire weightless (the art of maintaining a physically strong body), topics dealing with mythology, and just anything falling under the expansive rubric of various

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Is there some disappointment that the aspiration was not met: of course; however, we have a nice collection of articles that have been submitted for your consideration – serving as an offering from the Buddhist academic community to you, the dear student or reader of Buddhist studies. Preliminary feedback was great, but the actual submissions were few. We will take a critical, yet constructive, look at all of the articles, in brief, below:

Sritantra’s article, initially confused the editor: the editor was fixated on the yoga-construction of the paper, thinking it was about stretching exercises for improving the flexibility of someone’s body – indeed a hot topic amongst adults; but in fact the paper deals with the proof that there are deeply rooted historical or cultural foundations for the Hindu-Buddhist hybrid form of religion that is practiced by millions in Southeast Asia. Therefore, the article was reassessed, and we found value in this article which details or chronicles animist culture towards today’s modern expressions of morality and associated values. The author is discussing inscriptions, statues and panels – today we see these items in museums and classify these relics as art, so the paper fits into the thematic journal under an examination of words from ancient texts and associated art. Some academic articles on Khmer-inscriptions actually depict the object with the inscription⁴, but Sritantra doesn’t provide any visual evidence⁵, so we assume his references are correct.

Sritantra’s well-researched document highlights the brahmanistic foundations of Khmer-history and Khmer-culture: detailing Siva-worship and Siva’s transformation into a Buddhist Bodhisattva. He enquiries into the real religion of the Khmer kings – a difficult construction to assemble, and ponders into the real meaning of a religion and the principles of Buddhism? The article meanders and weaves through the history of early-Thailand, using outdated sources that have been cleared up in later publications, but this distraction of using only foreign sources for information can be excused, and actually provides a window for additional scholarship to build up or clarify points in later work. We take notice of the tone of the article which seems to condemn or issue harsh impressions of historical-events – examples of such language occur in the discussion over the creation of the Dhammayuttika-Nikaya sect. There are actual books published by Mahamakut University Press which illuminate the creation of the sect; and there is an obsolete discussion pertaining to the term of Theravada, which was clarified in the How Theravada is Theravada? publication, edited by Peter Skilling. Sritantra quotes a Skilling online-quote from 2006, but Skilling has a later document⁶ written in 2009, and a book⁷ published in 2012 – expounding on the issue.⁸ Another text was published in 2010 that also discusses the subject.⁹ The sole point of this critical assessment is to suggest that the argument could be clearer if the new information was

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⁵ As an example of more visual evidence: http://dharma-documentaries.net/banteay-srei
⁸ A review of the text by a notable commentator/scholar can be found here: http://www.bangkokpost.com/print/314876/ - by Prof. Chris Baker
⁹ See: Prapod Assavavirulham: The Ascendancy of Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2010), see the discussion from Chapter 6, pp. 149-183
available to the author. While he is not incorrect, a better assessment could have been achieved. All readers are urged to review the How Theravada is Theravada? text (itself, a wonderful work of not only scholarship but includes quality paper and pictures of various things that are being discussed in the text), and are additionally urged to write articles respectfully, according to the decisions made by the World Fellowship of Buddhists in 1950 to formally adopt the term Theravada, renouncing the use of Hinayana.\(^\text{10}\) Any author writing about the term Hinayana after 1950 may be writing the term in a derogatory manner – and may wonder why this term is edited out and replaced by respectful terminology.\(^\text{11}\) The IABU utilizes the respectful terminology, mandated by the 1950 proclamation. For years, the IABU has been replacing the derogatory term from contributions, we continue to see the term from scholars, and continue to emphasize the need for the cessation of the term. Millions of people across South and Southeast Asia do not consider their version of Buddhism to be some insignificant method for seeking an ultimate aim. Buddhism is about purification and living properly, not about insulting others. We as scholars can be more artful in our future message, messages which should resonate well with the masses of people who are reading and examining those future contributions for Buddhist Studies. Here are the covers of the useful books, in the possession of the editor, texts that were formerly taught in his Research & Literature in Thai Buddhism course, at MCU:

Likewise, the author has portions of the article that recycles opinions (although through his analysis) from other authors, rather than looking at the concerned-documented; for instance\(^\text{12}\), when discussing the Sangha Act of 1902, there is no real reference to the actual document\(^\text{13}\) – it’s just an assessment of the perceived fall-out or repercussions. Sure, changes occurred after the 1902 pronouncement, in 1941 and in 1962, but these changes pertain towards the changes in the national structure of government – which mandated a change in the Sangha to be governed in a similar way.

\(^{10}\) The issue can be read here, and anywhere else where the documentation is preserved: http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma3/theramaya.html & http://ibc.ac.th/faqing/node/76

\(^{11}\) Again, more work on the issue can be read here: http://www.myanmarnet.net/nibbana/tlwin01.htm - What is Theravada, by Muang Kyauk Seinn, 1998.

\(^{12}\) Documentation can be found online, if the actual text cannot be purchased or reviewed for research: http://www.thai buddhism.net/pdf/admin_thai_sangha.pdf

\(^{13}\) See: Acts on the Administration of the Buddhist Order of the Sangha of Thailand, BE 2445, 2484, & 2505 (Bangkok: Mahamakuta Educational Council, 1989), shown above.
There are new demands within Thailand for a new Sangha Act to follow the changes that have occurred after the Military Coup of 2014, led by General Prayuth Chan-Ocha. What we do have in this article are generalized mentioning of sacred matric-syllables and associated philosophy, and only little about any actual movements or form of yogic-practices; we have body-segments associated with cosmic-principles represented through textual interpretations. The author himself ponders (and speculates) if any of this is within the realm of reality? In the arts, we are allowed a freedom and a variety of interpretations. We don’t have to agree on the perception of an object, and we can differ in our perspectives of some subject – we have an aesthetic even through our politics and art. Art assessment is ideological. Some people may interpret a statue of the Buddha sitting under the coiled Naga in one way, while another thinks nothing more of the image than the base-level presentation, rather than any re-presentation. The particular value that we can gain from this piece is that indeed our Buddhist culture is influenced by the traditions that preceded ours, and it is from those traditions that our own Buddhist traditions emerged away from it. Today, we are left with this sort of hybrid/syncretic idealism – and scholars are still sorting out the ideas, and Sritantra’s article assists with further clarity and validation for the aesthetic aimed towards. We hope you find value in his interpretation of history and the associated philosophical ideas.

Jana Igunma’s article on the depiction of foulness meditation in Thai manuscripts suggests that this was a common practice in Buddhist Thailand, and backs up the claim with centuries-old manuscripts found in the British Museum. Recently, several scholarly texts[14] also published photographs from the last century featuring evidence of temples where dead-bodies are brought and cut into pieces, and left for the vultures to devour. However, with the coming of European-powers arriving into the nation and other social-complaints against sanitation/diseases, the practice faded away, and the vultures disappeared. Igunma suggests traditional burial methods changed in the 18th century – a move from burial towards letting animals and nature to take care of the dead in the ways that occur naturally – as illustrated below. There is nothing really mentioning the practice of cremation by fire and the dearth of burial grounds in Thailand. In former-days, villages were more connected to the forest, whereas now we are more connected with concrete, and green-spaces (the natural environment) are reserved or set aside as protected areas rather than utilized areas.

[14] See, for instance: Kamala Tiyanavich: The Buddha in the Jungle (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), p. 222, Figure 3.3
Bodies just cannot be tossed in forested areas today – this is considered a crime. We must abide by modern burial/cremation/funeral-laws, or in some cases whatever the last-wish of the deceased is, if it is considered legally appropriate. In modern Buddhist temples, a person’s dead-body is put into a coffin (wooden or metal box), and it is opened for monks and family members to consider and meditate on characteristics of death and decay for a short time, before being placed into the incinerator.

The two above photos are from the pre-cremation of the editor’s mother-in-law, who recently transitioned into her next life. Village children ordained as samanera (Buddhist monk-novices) to transfer merit to her body, with the aim that she attains a heavenly realm, as her final or next destination, for her next life.

Flowers are arranged artfully and thoughtfully. Cremation-coffins are designed artfully. Food is always placed on decorated plates and arranged artfully - to offer to Buddhist monks presiding over cremation ceremonies. We, the Buddhist masses, think about symmetry, we think about geometric arrangements – often without much thought.

Moreover, beyond the specters of death, we have the actual art preserved in the manuscripts, most of which is without a name of an author, but with interesting styles and patterns that deserve an additional examination. Jana meticulously goes through these ancient manuscripts and highlights the importance of not just the art, but the messages preserved – and preserving this art for future examination. In the days before widespread literacy, temple-art and images drawn in manuscripts served as additional methods for educating others, when words couldn’t affectively function, readers could describe the images in their own regional language to convey to the villager listening to the sermons. Often the images were drawn skillfully enough to articulate the accompanied message.
Likewise, we have other people who draw from being inspired and are glad to contribute their labor and art for notable causes. Mr. Dan Jenkins is one such artist, now residing in Thailand, but can create numerous styles of work, here working on a mural, his meticulous wood-work on Thai-style spirit-houses, and other illustrations.\textsuperscript{16}

Other Buddhist and culturally-inspired artists, such as Mr. Atipong Padanupong blend culture with modernity, elaborate arts with contemporary living, and through his illustrations and paintings, captivates audiences with his intricate details:

\textsuperscript{16} If you wish to contact and commission Mr. Dan Jenkins, for any sort of illustrations or word-work, please contact him via his Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/dan.jenkins.31?ref=ts
These artists, Dan Jenkins and Atipong Padanupong are very different from one another, one is American working within Thai culture, and Khun Atipong is Thai but mixes Thai tradition (such as the Ramayana Epic Tale) with Tibetan accents. Both artists do fascinating work, and if you consider commissioning pieces of art, perhaps you will choose a spirit house from Dan Jenkins or a beautiful piece by Atipong. Imagine a Buddhist temple painted by Khun Atipong Padanupong. It would rank as a masterpiece for Buddhism.

Beyond illustrative art, is the audio form of art. Mr. Ofosu “Born Infinite” Jones-Quartey, has injected the American form of hip-hop, with Buddhism, since beginning his musical-career in 2002, releasing his first album in 2004. His videos often feature Buddhist imagery, and effectively uses Buddhism to convey his intended messages. He’s honored on wall-murals across his hometown of Washington D.C., this particular mural is found on U St., between 13th Street and 14th Street:

17 As he describes from his own Facebook Page: “Hanuman, the great monkey warrior, was one of the most illustrious characters in Ramakien (Thai version of Ramayana). In this scene, he ventured down to the demon Maiyarap’s subterranean world through various gateways guarded by supernatural beings, one of which was his own illegitimate half-fish-half-monkey son, Matchanu, born of the mermaid Suwanmatcha. In this playful composition, the actor playing Hanuman was battling two giant mosquitoes, while the child playing Matchanu was distracted in the background. The mermaid Suwanmatcha from the previous act peeked from behind the curtain against the set’s dramatic backdrop, the lotus pond with black crocodile, a hint representing of Maiyarap.” See, Mr. Atipong’s work, and for commissioning inquiries, please send a private message, to purchase any pieces: https://www.facebook.com/Atipong-Padanupong-743204035798845/

18 A drawing of Atipong Padanupong, found on another friend’s Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10152247925052004&set=t.717807128&type=3&theater

19 Born I Music’s Youtube Channel can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/user/bornimusic/videos
Also, apart from making deeply lyrical and conscious hip-hop with Buddhist inspired lyricism, he is also creating a Buddhist-inspired jewelry-line, which he hopes will inspire mindfulness to the wearer and the observer. Ofosu is also a dedicated and sought after meditation teacher, across the United States of America. He gives meditation talks in schools, through Minds Incorporated, across the country, and is an influential meditation teacher at the Insight Meditation Community of Washington DC, a teacher for the Spirit Rock Meditation Center in California, and the Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts. He often attends and presents academic articles at the United Nations Day of Vesak Conferences.

Art can also be in the form of artifacts and religious-sermons, for instance, here is archival editions of the late President of Lao Buddhist Fellowship Organization, The Most Venerable Dr. Maha Phong Samaleuk’s work on the Vessantara Jataka20:  

20 Photos are used, courtesy of Venerable Sayadaj Ekaggacitto, of Wat Ongtue, Vientiane, Laos: https://www.facebook.com/sayadej
Although the work appears to be stamped, there is a construction process and additional efforts that go into preserving and presenting palm-leaf manuscripts, an art form in itself.

The art of Mr. Poldej Worachat, a former diplomat with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Kingdom of Thailand, features circular techniques and he often uses Buddhist ideas to create his images. If you are interested in his art, comic-book illustrations and other works, as seen below, he can be commissioned for book illustrations and exhibitions.21

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21 For commissioning Poldej Worachat, please contact him via his Facebook Page:
https://www.facebook.com/poldej.worachat?fref=ts
The creation of art can also be done on digital platforms. One such artist is Professor Somparn Promta, of Thailand, one of Thailand’s leading Buddhist philosophers. Apart from writing great authoritative academic works, he creates digital renditions portraits and landscapes; but his work is very interesting, and often inspired by Buddhism. He often illustrates portraits and landscapes:

Returning now, to the contents of the 5th IABU Journal: Professor Dipti (Mahanta) Vissuddhangkoon discusses the art of Thailand’s Chokchai Tukpoe. This article features the images and discussions on the interpretations of those images in the Buddhist or social context. She mentions that Chokchai illustrates or creates his art for the sake of some purpose, not art for the sake of art, but contextual-art with transformational value. According to another document, this Isan School of Art produced art for life’s sake. Within this school of arts, they express localism (Isan)

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22 For commissioning and purchases of Prof. Somparn Promta’s books, please contact his Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/wannee.wannee.77
23 See, p. 86 of Visual Art for Life’s Sake: Constructing Identities of Esan Artists (multiple authors) - http://dean.foa.swu.ac.th/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zXBfnfZWrkc%3D&tabid=5628&mid=10062
and Nationalism (the Thai ideology), and globalization. She also incorporates wisdom from the venerable Ajahn Chah, a famous forest-monk from Thailand, and expresses the common appreciation for dhammic-principles, espousing the world-transcending viewpoints of both. More of Chokchai’s art can be seen which expresses Buddhist principles. The first piece here is entitled: Please Give Me a Title (2009). We can see that it is a representative of a figure from a bygone era where civil servants might have begged their way up the social ladder and wanted Royalty to grant them privilege through a greater-name or a title to be bestowed upon the civil-servant. The image is scrawled on a waded-up piece of paper, perhaps illuminating that a title may not be worth the paper it’s printed upon. What is in a name? What is in a title? Is it the character of the person that is judged, or just what name is being put on the placard? Too many people will beg and do corrupt actions, just to crawl up in social mobility.

The mixed-media work, despite or regardless of each piece’s title, is difficult to interpret, perhaps each shape and color, or material used from certain places is for a particular function, having a certain aim or aspiration. Chokchai calls this piece below, Enigma of Dharma28, and we may have to peel away the layers to fully comprehend it:

Chokchai Tukpoe’s work can be describes as using art as a form of meditation, in a sense fulfilling the aim of Art for Life’s Sake, the idea of the Isan School of Art (a style and peer-group movement, featuring over a hundred different artists). He may put his pieces together without thinking, because any thought may lead to an unknown, so refraining from thought is knowing. He emphasizes that his work is Buddhist-inspired.29 Here is a different piece, similar to the one Prof. Dipti uses in her paper given to a previous conference, and re-published here; Chokchai takes another look on

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25 This is a mixed-media piece, entitled: 50 Years Peace of Thai - http://www.rama9art.org/artisan/artdb/artists/home.php?p=profiles&name=Chokechai%20Tukpoe
26 http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-uVnhPY6qNhg/VJeoGV1jm3I/AAAAAAAAI2k/u-AtYCeK6ps/s1600/5.jpg - more mixed-media art of Chokchai Tukpoe.
27 Mixed-media, photograph taken from Chokchai Tukpoe’s publically accessible Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/chokchai.tukpoe/photos_stream
28 http://rama9art.org/artisan/2003/june/chokchai/work01.html
a similar idea. All of these pieces are dark, in a forest, and illuminate a monk’s kuti, his dwelling or meditation-hut. The images appear as a mirage in a forest, maybe meeting it unexpectedly? Seeing a house through the trees is an odd concept, usually trees are not transparent, and objects cannot be seen behind something blocking them. Again, in some art, literalism cannot be the deciding factor for interpretation:

The Phe Bach, Ven. Thich-Nguyen-Sieu, Edward Bureau collaboration on the *Art of Living According to Spiritual Leaders*, suggests five ideals that are deeply entwined with nature, for living a better life. They discuss the origins of religion and how it sets up the five points: flexibility, continuity, resiliency, patience, and unattachment – illustrated as living like: bamboo, river, tree, earth and clouds. Although this short article is simple, it conveys expressions that can be taken up for deeper considerations. For instance: bamboo is often a feature in Asia-style art, particularly in art inspired by the ecology of Northeastern Asia, where Mahayana Buddhism flourishes. Presenting a piece of art, such as this, could have been helpful, having nearly every component expressed in the article:

The article by Prof. Vibha Upadhyaya is an extensive survey of the archeological remains of ancient Buddhist places in Rajastan, India. She chronologically traces all of the Asoka-edicts and textual references to real places in Rajastan, and what sect/variation of Buddhism was practiced at that location. She discusses the foundation of the various major sects, still practiced today: Theravada,

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31 [http://www.chineseartnet.com/Aisingioro/Yunjia/NYJ7a.jpg](http://www.chineseartnet.com/Aisingioro/Yunjia/NYJ7a.jpg)
Mahayana, and the Vajrayana versions of Buddhism. She discusses some of the basic core doctrines of the sects, and supposes that Theravada Buddhism takes ten qualities of a layman as ideas for propagating as a system to follow, but according to the Tipitaka, there are numerous other principles that would make Buddhism a stronger system that contains four assemblies of adherents. Some illustrations are given; but if updated photos were given and arranged into the text when and where that place was mentioned, the reader could take more from the article and have a better experience with the extensive compilation of source-data. From these textual relics, inscription and other evidence, people can ascertain what type of Buddhism was practiced in the days when the mentioned sites were thriving centers of Buddhist culture, before being laid into waste and ruin from various circumstances. Likewise, Prof. Anand Singh discusses temples found around the Ganges River system, and the article could have benefited readers better with the inclusion of some images; but if we are more concerned, we can run internet searches for images of these places, at our convenience.

The final piece is a contribution detailing Banaras Hindu University’s Buddhist and Pāli Studies Program. As a member of the IABU, the IABU is happy to present what this school offers to Buddhism and Buddhist studies in general. The piece also presents some of the struggles and difficulties that the program faces, in a country that has seen its support of Buddhism become victim to partiality. Leadership is an art; teaching is an art; arts can be a greater factor in the education of our university-level youth and students. If our universities cannot gain your support, we may not have any remaining Buddhist Studies programs, universally. This is an issue that the IABU is taking seriously, and is one reason of many that the IABU exists.

As a final thought: art is for interpretation by the masses. Lately, government agencies think they know better than the broad masses of citizens. Governments decide to ban movies or censor movies that they determine to be sensitive. One recent example of censoring art is the Thai movie: “Arbat” – a movie featuring scenes that are objectionable to some Buddhists with an ideological agenda - claiming in their defense:
the movie doesn’t uphold principles of Dhamma or the established values of Thai society. One headline reads: Should movie on Buddhism be banned for disclosing the truth? What has actually happened, rather than cleaning up the corruption in the Buddhist temples, the easier target for social-outcry is against the actor playing the role and the director of the movie. One criticism about the movie is the scene where the monk touches the women, in an apparent act of intimacy:

The audience should be able to think for themselves, and learn what is right or wrong about what they are viewing. The role of art is to make people think, to make them face some emotion. People in society, the Buddhist laity, should become more familiar with the Buddhist texts. The National Office of Buddhism would rather censor a monk touching a woman – a violation that everyone already knows, but keep scenes where peta (hungry ghosts) are present and haunting. This seems like another battle of science over mythology; or mythology over science. Learned Buddhists know what happens to monks when violating the patimokkha. Let violations be punished when exposed and brought to the sangha-forum where acts are scrutinized. The vinaya-texts teach us how to behave in a forum where an accused is brought before the accuser. The movie does not destroy Buddhism, rather it was designed to bring these issues into the public-debate, to get people to think about right and wrong. Now an agency is taking away the right of the people to think for themselves? Several years ago, controversial art, sparked a protest:

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32 http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/general/727352/ministry-bans-arbat-film-for-blasphemy -
33 http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/should-movie-on-buddhism-be-banned-for-disclosing-the-truth-the-nation
35 https://buddhistartnews.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/14430114371443011709l.jpg
36 See: https://www.academia.edu/1363482/Aparagathasamganika - by Dr. Dion Peoples
37 https://buddhistartnews.wordpress.com/2015/10/01/horror-film-may-destroy-buddhism-activists-warn/#more-16205
38 http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/IK15Ae01.html
Monks protested the exhibit and apparently the image itself was destroyed, according to the article. While the art was designed to get people to think about what is right and wrong – ideological forces are taking the rights away from the people to think for themselves, and force the interpretation that they themselves determine to be correct, as the public-position, without asking the silent majority. Special interest groups are boosting up and promoting a false reality. Censoring art is another way at muting whistleblowers and those concerned with the true values of Buddhism found in the Tipitaka of Theravada Buddhism. The issues or representations of crows are not viewed the same way in other Buddhist cultures39, where a crow brought on an auspicious circumstance.

There are new organizations springing up in some Buddhist nations, like Knowing Buddha Organization (http://www.knowingbuddha.org/), and the 5000s organization (www.5000s.org). Their posters can be seen in many tourist places:

Knowing Buddha is an organization that is promoting the proper use of the Buddha as represented in material form. They are against the use of the Buddha in places that serve alcohol and are against images of the Buddha used in music videos. Sri Lanka bans international artists from their country if tattoos or other uses of the Buddha is determined to be inappropriate.40

40 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9hazmsUxrM – David Guetta featuring Akon, has registered over 93 million views on Youtube.
There is also an endeavor to clear up art created by pornography companies. Many adult-entertainment or pornography production companies try to feature a Buddha-statue in their sets when filming movies featuring an Asian woman pornstar – as if just putting an image there qualifies as an authentic Asian scene. Sometimes the production-company neglects to utilize an Asian woman and uses a Hispanic woman instead – and utilizes a fake massage-parlor or some other contrived setting to generate a sense of calm and relaxation – as a therapeutic session. Many people could consider the adult-entertainment industry to be highly ignorant and racist, towards the diverse global ethnities with various religions or social guidance systems. I’m not going to reference the sites where these images are found, in order to inhibit additional traffic to those websites; but these representations of the Buddha are the sole-responsibility of the production-company, and are widespread from production-companies featuring Asian-themed pornography. Please maintain maturity and solely focus on the art of the placement of the Buddha-image and not the performance-actors. Moving from the top-left to bottom-right, comments follow: There is no need to have a Buddha-statue in the massage-parlor, nor is the Buddha-image suitable to hold a candle; the heads as art and object, the head should be reconnected to the body – in one case, the placement of two images on the coffee-table is ridiculous and unnecessary; and the other uses are just as arbitrary as determined by the set designer assembling the rooms):
What is one lesson to be learned from this. My personal lesson was taught to me over a decade ago, after meeting my wife; for instance, when meeting my wife, and making-love to my wife, she would never make-love to me in a room where there is a Buddha-image. She refuses when a Buddha image is present. She told me: “Not here...”, and of course I asked why? She taught me this cultural aspect of Thai Buddhism or enforces this perspective that is not gained from reading the Tipitaka. Although the Buddha-statue is stone, he is determined to be alive, since many Buddha-statues are charged with sacred power, as adherants belive. She, a very good and strong Buddhist woman, is fully conscious and respectful of Buddha images, and would never have sex in a room where there is a Buddha image. Likewise, no one would have sex in front of a monk or the Buddha. People take their togetherness to the confines of their own bedroom or other private location. It’s likely that these performance-actors are not Buddhists, are just being paid for their performance, and don’t mind if being shameless or disrespectful is part of the positions they are playing. I didn’t want to just put one or two images of the Buddha featured in a pornography set, more needed to be shown to highlight that this is widespread, and disrespectful to Buddhists. This is no isolated circumstance. Viewers of such forms of media may never learn the right way to present a Buddha-statue, and may never know what the proper altar-display looks like, so here is one form of a Theravada Buddhist altar:

The Knowing Buddha organization is doing good work, but more work needs to be done elsewhere to educate people on the proper uses of Buddha statues and other Buddhist works of art. Condemning missteps is one thing, but educating and presenting proper ways, and behaving properly is a true re-presentation of Buddhist ideals, and often a proper contextualization may be necessary, or an apology or a retraction by the artist becomes necessary after they have been re-educated. Proper use and placement for Buddha-images should be taught to interior designers and architecture schools – or the related academic/professional genre - they should respect proper cultural ethics and morality, when replicating a scene. What was more shocking recently was the recent crime conducted where a Buddha-statue was used to stab an assailant. The flame-tipped head of the Buddha is like a weaponized spike.

**Conclusion:**

We have to be more conscious of our presentation of our Great Teacher – the Buddha Gotama. His words are contained in the Tipitaka. Buddhists need to read and examine the Tipitaka in order to know the contents for themselves. Our artists, knowing dhamma, would produce greater works that inspire the masses to embrace and perform better, in Buddhist ways. The articles, again, in this journal, speak on how Buddhism overcame a former tradition and prospered into a wonderful new culture – although it adapted some of the previous ways, in order to seamlessly move forward. Death rituals have been examined and illustrated, mixed-media art and other paintings have been illustrated and presented for the Buddhist-inspiration that the artist possessed to create the art. The art of seeing self in nature – an aspect of interdependence – this too was illuminated. Buddhist sites and educational-institutions also provide the rooms to learn more about Buddhist arts. Sites found in Rajasthan possess artifacts, just as translated Khmer-inscriptions are artifacts – both of these types of ancient-relics can be examined in our Buddhist university classrooms so that we can learn more about our wealthy tradition and move forward with more dignity and wisdom as Buddhists. If our classrooms had access to these inscriptions, we can learn more and know more, and become wiser in our forward movements. We have to also learn about the ugliness of our civil-society and think for ourselves, and see through any attempts at censorship – censorship damages interpretation; someone else’s interpretation inhibits our own perceptions. The masses ought to know for themselves what is right or wrong, and don’t need dictated to, and are thus forced to accept an interpretation. The masses would never learn to manage their own affairs. Censorship is anti-democratic – people should be mature enough to handle what goes into their own sense-doors, and don’t need protected from an ideological-agency.

Thank you for your interest in our academic offerings, in this Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Universities. This is our 5th JIABU. We hope these offerings on various perspectives on arts – loosely stated, will be satisfactory. We welcome any response in article form, pertaining to anything stated or presented within these pages. Please be additionally attentive towards our future journals on the topic of Buddhism and Peace, and Buddhism and Philosophy. In conjunction with the 13th UNDV, for 2016, we will publish a special addition of the JIABU on Mindfulness. Enjoy, please, the 5th JIABU.
BUDDHA-YOGA-ŚIVA HYBRIDITY AMONG THE OLD KHMER AND SIAMESE

Sritantra1
ASCETIC-ARTS RESEARCH AND CURATION

In Search of a Method

This essay explores some cultural fusions, infusions and confusions among the Old Khmer and Siamese kingdoms, two geographically contiguous neighbors in the Lower Mekong River Basin—a region remarkably rich in enigma but regrettably shrouded in disregard. This essay furthermore aims to provide an array of access tools that would at once explain and counterpoise the prevailing neglect within “etic” colonial erudition for “emic” indigenous methodologies that are basic to the subjects that it seeks to uncover. We place great store on the cultural distillations that largely stem from Vedic India beginning as early as the 1st century CE at Funan (or Īśānapura) in the Mekong Delta, a Brāhmaṇicized pre-Angkorian realm whose social organization stretched westward from the coast of southern Vietnam to the Andaman Sea and present-day Yangon. We lay foundations for the medieval period and offer hints to how the mighty neighbors, Angkor and Siam, expressed their thirsts for mixed elaboration invited by the process of transculturation. The degree of exuberance for combining seemingly opposing doctrinal, ritual and visual content was striking among the early Khmer and old Siamese. The late eighth-century conflation of Śiva with the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and the subsequent adaption of Lokeśvara are eminent examples of elements blending to produce a novel hybrid strain. Inherent methodology furthermore attempts to attest a very rare trivenī saṃgama or “three-stream-confluence” of Śaiva, Yoga and Baudhāyaṇa currents reflecting an immersive triadic aspiration with feminine component intermedially layered. The “grafting” metaphor is willfully employed. This takes for its rootstock a re-elaboration of the canonical Buddha as symbolically imbued by the Nāga Mucilinda. In no other manner, this paper asserts, is Southeast Asia’s yogic heritage expressed more profoundly than through the numinous fourteenth-century Angkorian depiction of the fauncled Kuṇḍalinī Buddha.

Further, our process traces how imported yoga-techné achieves refinement through gracile handling, and how elegance ensues and is rapidly exchanged between bordering and often warring territories. Still, our focus shall not be solely trained on the striking mélange of natural selection. Neither shall we place our whole concern on the discontinuities, jarring breaches and visceral purges that arose among these seemingly cognate realms. Alternatively, we comb for the presence of native genii who have stood to the pressures of globalization and emerge unflapped midst a new social architecture, breathing self-generated mutant proofs. In a theoretic mood, we dare to gain awareness of their enigmatic character, charm and utility by mapping their intrinsic contiguity and trade. Yogic germinations are especially prized, and by utilizing

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broad eclectic tools with complete somaesthetic-cum-ethnographic license we assess the modulation and diffusions of these primitive forms preserved in contemporary South, Southeast and Far-East Asian soteriological transmissions. In cultural study and artistic practice, equally our procedure acquiesces to an inadvertent naturalistic color-field tendency whose outcomes exemplify not the expression of the individual or its cult but serve the collaborative documentation, curation and advancement of ascetic-arts knowledge.

Speaking less majestically, we aim to differentiate extant relics, be they primitive, indigenous or adventitious to Angkorian, Sukhothai and Ayutthayan forms and marvel over which, if any at all, may strike a telling chord with contemporary ascetic-arts manifestations. Legendary gurus play a part here as well, both as markers and vectors of lineage conduction spanning millennia-long lines of allegiances to kings, royal teachers, and wandering ascetics reroute to the āśramas of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu (1906-1993) and Saint Guru Chot (1900–1988).

The Aim of Post-Structuralist Research Theory

Some comments on the state of the academic field are in order. For more than a century scholars have lengthily deliberated, debated and meticulously detailed the munificence and divine affiliation of Cambodian kings: what religion, what sect, and what god did they worship? Cambodian monarchs worshipped themselves.

Regarding methodology, we cautiously express our area of attention as ascetic-arts research methodology with strong infiltrative cum ethnographic data-acquisitional bias. Our work is rigorously non-institutional aside from the fact that the varieties of South, Southeast and Far-East Asian ascetic-arts traditions we closely observe are invariably institutional in and of themselves. Part of our discipline throughout this chapter is to avoid and supplant the habitual, obsessive and indeed misconceived, unbeautiful and unhelpful nineteenth-century neologisms “Buddhist” and “Buddhism” - to replace these, we say, with the far more penetrating emic, endemic and indeed yet operant single appellation “Bauddha.” This should not increase or take away anything.

We are very impressed and indebted to the work of Oxford professor Alexis Sanderson, likely the world’s top authority on Śaiva-tantra. In his 2003 work “The Śaiva Religion among the Khmers (Part I) (349-462),” Sanderson demonstrates profound erudition in the history of Indian tantric traditions and great innovation in applying this knowledge to the Greater Overseas India theater. Did he drop his plans to write Part Two and publish instead “The Śiva Age” (2009) with its chapter devoted to Southeast Asia? He has contributed masterfully to Old Khmer studies and in charting the history of Śaiva influence on ritual performance right across to Far East Asia (2003, 2009). However, through prodigious scrutiny of source materials and its analytic overlay to overseas developments, could it be that Sanderson has gone too far and distorted the scene by foregrounding exogenous-precurory legacies and staging them as if they were universal yardsticks for everything that popped up in mainland Indo-China, the Malaya peninsula, and the southerly and easterly archipelagic spheres? The intricate approach of the Metropolitan Museum of Art curator John Guy (Lost Kingdoms: Hindu-Buddhist Sculpture of Early Southeast Asia, 2014) is a useful contrast to Sanderson’s approach, especially for its stunning but delicate handling of source materials provided to the project by a billionaire list of honored trustees; and against such developments the Oxford philologist stands determined to publish his

2 See particularly Guy’s, “Introducing Southeast Asia,” 2014, 3-13
entire database. Another leading scholar in our field of discussion is Professor Ian Harris, *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice* (2005). Like high spar galleons, their works loom large and share a distinctive frontline command and over-generalization that reflect increasingly out of hand trends towards highly contorted textual presentation in a drive to compact divergent data into tapering confines, and that through micro-embellishment endeavor to maintain a semblance of consensual schematic uniformity.3

Still, every branch of academic study takes for granted its specialized set of protocols for the formalization of textual products. From a reading of Hayden White’s “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact” (1978), we extrapolate the following. ‘To a large degree the historian’s practice consists in measured manipulation of the meanings of events by stressing certain elements and attributes as set within chronologies traditionally contrived and maintained.’ The discipline of history has been picked on surely, and, similar to the fields of anthropology, Buddhism and increasingly Yoga, has been critically deterred, commandeered and weaponized.4

**Has scholarship been overly obsequious to Buddhism?**

Legend avers that a fifth or sixth-century CE Indian ascetic called Bodhidharma delivered a variety of *dhyāna-yoga* to spiritual communities in southern China. This *sadhu-rṣi* hybrid must have set sail from the Chola port of Kāñcipuram, a keel full of silks and aromatic cargoes. You can almost see him poised at the helm, Tumburu of a well-built Pallavan ship, his four *bhaginīs* on the deck catching rays and sails billowed full by the monsoon trade winds heading for the entrepôts of Java and beyond - then taking on consignments of tropical forest goods: deerskin, sandalwood, camphor, lac, and benzoin resin for production of incense - nutmeg, clove, black peppercorn, deerskins, betel-nut, bird’s nest, and a vast assortment of medicinal herbs. Everything stowed for dawn’s embarkment, moored to the pilings beneath the quiet moon. The squeaking of her wood as she gently rocks on the shallow inlet waters.

Yet still, and in the light of our ingenious *Brahmin*, would Baba Bodhidharma have conceived himself a “Buddhist”? Really? In the cultural milieu of sixth-century Chola, would the *Mahāsvāmin* have accepted rites of passage to ‘complete and total self-abnegation’ in the strained and institutionalized sense of the Bauddha—or rather to a wider, unaffiliated sense of a sovereign *samnyāsa* with accommodating spatial free-state aśrama? For we know that the Bauddha once flourished amidst the Pallava, prevailing over Jaina, Śaiva and Vaiśṇava in the open market of imperial patronage. Therefore, again: if *samnyāsa* culture was expressly marked by its full repudiation of sectarian bonds, then how could this subversive have upheld himself a “Buddhist”, or was it Buddhism precisely that drove him out to sea?

It is relevant to note that in modern Siam the Indic term *dhyāna - jhāna or jhan* - is pronounced as *chan*. When the *senso stricto* yogic Chan School surfaced in China we can notice how lithe juicy shoots were inserted, grafted and interspersed with sound old native cultivars on proto-stock of unknown provenance. Groups of cross-values and tendencies budded, retained quite a lot of the old road notes and pushed out flowers that had never been seen. A new sort of Structuralist paideia thus blossomed whose shedding petals in the dappled foreground helped to elucidate the highly influential hermeneutic ploy of “forgetting words after getting meaning.”5

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Similarly the aim of post-Structuralist theory is, among other things, unveiling the strength of taxonomies, procedures and ministration. Take the methodologies of śraddha and bhakti (faithfulness, faith) where faithfulness itself commands pre-eminence, not the hypostatized objects themselves as envisioned in the minds and hearts of the faithful. Do all faith-organizing agents necessarily share an analogous organizing impetus, or router, irrespective to the stereotyped object of faith? This is faith as the alpha and omega of the path that starts and ends with bhakti possession. 

How is this structured process to be studied? Why are hypostatized shells only studied - the religious, sectarian and cultic links? What is religious study really? What is faith, the process of faith, and its very possession? What is its telos? To what extent may śraddhāvimukta (release by faith) be viewed as a ‘faith-structure’ in-and-of it-self, completely unaffected by fixedness? Is analogous impedance mirrored through mokṣa-mārga? Is the path to be cherished any less then the goal? These experimental tiles of inquiry.

In other words, why are we driven to unnaturally isolate the entire registry of ancient Indic ascetic-arts customs? Our obsessive dependence on the “-ism” still reveals this. To ask the same question, can a scholar get darśan without having darśan? Is “Buddh(a)-ism” the path of the srotāpanna or “the path to the path” of the srotāpanna? Is it possible for normative “ism-ized” ingredients preserved in the Lower Mekong Basin, the broader Indo-Chinese region connected to the southwest sweep of Malaya, Nusantara and les îles de la Sonde to be studied in a state of ‘isolation without consideration of the socio-ideological ecologies through which they are ritually and obsessively directed via normative paideia’ (confer Peter Skilling 2007, 182)? Why have our cultural screens been disabled to detect interpenetrating civilizing forces? Because essentialization runs the risk of “literality,” expecting words and everything else to conform to the meanings we consensually consigned them, hence construing all implicitness devoid of normativity?

Carefully polishing the shell of Oral Paideia is enough to understand that in an Asian context, we humiliate, denude, and expose ourselves to the accusations of being Orientalist tools. Is it worth it?

In the Realm of Disruptive Patternization

In search of a method, then, how do we precede though the realm of disruptive patternization? By going first with, then against the breath as a consequential practice that should under no circumstance ever condescend to the quirks of leisure time? (How much less to the lure of public pandering?) Was it by the transubstantiation of aesthetic quandary as owning to a genus of poetical-yoga where for all intents and purposes the prima materia undergoes initial sieving procedures through native apparatus, and never by those arriving on ships?

How to describe such acute exogenous localization processes that are marked by their clinical and readied designs for rapid deployment at the crucial fork where potholed road of the census taker turns well paved thoroughfare of accredited scholarship that controls the region through its operant blueprints and philanthropic bids to vouchsafe endangered heritage sites whose hitherto yield is put on display in the reconverted palaces of the métropoles? Each with its own implicit treaty of the subjugation of whatever compels it. A plea for her protectorate (the underage girl) as a draft resolution of formal strictures for the preservation and trusteeship of her own

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undervalued and misapprehend good, giving ample demonstration to superior skills of exploration, extraction and refinement in the aptness to amass, reformulate and stabilize pictorial systems that camouflage intention via ardent concern over theoretic vocables, commissioned pamphleteering, human rights abuses, internal security, restoration issues and long-term storage: to square their little play pens and bring them all round to the charts and the charters of authorial displacement, dispatching savvy envoys and toady intermediaries with clear-cut mandates to bring all parties to the talking table with believable schemes for co-opting rebel factions and unaligned bodies through incentive-building pledges of technical transfer.

Yet providing neither evidence of counter-objectivity, fossilized registries or lifted lines from the overheard dialogues of “flowers and mute things,” 7 we would track James Elkins (2007) 8 and propose that our practice effects richer meaning ‘when we take not only our subject matter but our interpretive methodologies from the very societies we investigate,’ and re-imbue them with the values of fortuitous misreading, persuasive mutability and primitimacy. Postmodern thought plays a role as well by providing us a kit of analytical tools, complicit to which are the hermeneutic ploys of deconstruction and defamiliarization, dissidence and wariness, the last through which we finally arrive to surmise that the glaze of modern academe is as ‘thin and flaking’ as it ever was - these performative panes that oblige little more than a gentle abrasion, scratch or buff to expose the bones of the colonial sacrifice secreted beneath their mounted burnishments.

**Early Siamese Indic Creeds**

The śāsana, or religion as it were, of the modern Siamese (and Khmer for that matter) is by and large “Bauddha” (a cultural sphere that is sadly if habitually-obsessively misapprehended by the modern incongruity “Buddhism”—that mere two-centuries-old neologism that demands great vigilance not to reemploy), and yet surely of a Southern early-Buddhist sub-group that only since around the mid-1950s has come to be regarded as “the Theravāda,” “the Doctrine of the Elders.” What exact “elders” (theras) are we talking about? What precise doctrine or vāda, for that matter? 9 As an ethnogenic-complex this may better be depicted as “Sri Lankan Bauddha” since that’s where the structures assumed their early shape whilst thriving in amongst the island’s elite. It may also be described as “Pāli Bauddha” on account of its devotion to Pāli literature compiled from ancient Ceylonese translations of an allegedly primitive Pāli text-strata, the material evidence of which no longer existed from that time forward. This nominal entity under discussion furthermore regards the Pāli language as its paramount ecclesiastical authority, forfeiting all allegiance to Oral Tradition. With that being said, it needs to be suggested that the term Theravāda is an out and out ahistorical edifice, a misnomer, a ghost word, a back-formation 10 completely dislocated from any sense of originating context. Still, the following may be said: our subject represents a highly differentiating class of Bauddhic religiosities with a steely predilection for conceiving itself in a state of protracted contradistinction to all things roundly “Hindu,” on the one hand, and for a broadly shared perception of doctrinal corruption into which every other Bauddha camp has strayed, on the other hand.

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10 See Peter Skilling, Re: QUERY>Modern use of “Theravada” (Skilling), H-Buddhism Discussion Logs, 22 Dec 2006, online posting.
But for a period extending roughly nine hundred years before the thirteenth-century appearance of Sinhala Bauddha in what we today is called the central and southern regions of Thailand, a broad conglomeration of soteriological, religious, non-religious, and mixed ascetic-arts heritages coexisted throughout what we furthermore regard as mainland, peninsular and archipelagic Southeast Asia. Looking at Old Siam alone, these ranged from Brahmīṇical forms of ecstatic, enstatic and tāpasic strivers, to the sundry systems of Śaiva-Śākta worship, to Kṛṣṇa-bhākta Vaśīṣṭva schools and Pure Land cults of the Mahāyāṇa. Yet in striking contrast to modern Thailand with its high conformity-imposing schematics, Thai citizens themselves might be thoroughly stunned to learn by the broad diversity of spiritual forms that flourished in the region prior to the 14th century. They would be very hard put to accept that a range of ascetic-like figures such as shamans, sādhus, yogins, tāpasvin and rṣi once thrived in glory beyond the pale of standardized cult-specific ascetic-arts convention. These homegrown and extraterritorial adepts moved free as the breeze and practiced now-vanished ascetic-arts technologies. Such holy men were often skilled healers and commanded high respect from orthodox religious authorities.

Thais today find it rather hard to fathom the religious fabric that formerly loomed between the ancient ruling houses of Tun-sun, Panpan, Lopburi and Nakhon Ratchasima, Grahi (Chaiya)11, Si Chon and Tambringa, Sathing Phra, Langakuka, Phatthalung, Pattani, Nakhon Si Thammarat and others. Spanning an era of nearly one millennium beginning as early as the 5th century CE, a variety of Bauddha and Brāhmaṇical traditions prospered amongst the sovereign kingdoms, principalities and polities from the Central Plains to the narrow southern-lying Isthmus of Kra. Brahmīṇical, Śaiva and Tantrayānic, Mahāyānic Pure Land and Lokiteśvara sects developed side by side in the overlapping realms in a spirit of mutual appreciation, with no single custom lording over others. The fifth-century kingdom of Sathing Phra (Songkhla province) is an elusive yet fascinating case in point. It was a very ancient maritime kingdom with one of the earliest ports on record. From 5th to 8th century it was purely Brahmīṇical. Early Buddhist sects prospered there from the 7th and 8th century. From late 9th to the early 11th century Mahāyāna orientations from Nalanda and Java took root and grew. A cursory survey of the Bauddha schools alone is enough to show that, comparatively speaking, the specimens attested in early Siam were far more diverse than those in Tibet.12

The manifold appearance of early Buddhist sects is amply acknowledged. Archaeological data suggests that an alliance of Mūlasarvāstivāda threads was the dominant expression that thrived in Phatthalung and Sathing Phra from the 7th to 8th century right alongside varied Brāhmaṇical customs. Mahāyāna parties had already appeared in the region at this time. By the 9th century Vajrayāna organizations reached the Śrivijaya kingdom, possibly through Java. Its distinctive sentiment was brilliantly expressed through highly evolved modes of religious statuary. Chinese records, local inscriptions and archaeological remains show that from the end of the 7th through the 11th century the Mahāyānic Mādhyaṃika and Caityaka (or Mahāsāṃghika) groups were especially active along the eastern and western coasts of the narrow southerly Isthmus. So was Pure Land Amitabha and Avalokiteśvara devotion that spread from China along maritime trade routes. Pure Land veneration was central there, as well, between the eighth and eleventh centuries. Khmer-influenced idols of Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya (7th-9th cen) were found further north in Lopburi (an old Mon capital) and

in villages around Nakhon Ratchasima and Buriram in the region known today as Northeast Thailand (Isan).13

While the intricate tapestries bequeathed by these states have been rendered highly tenuous with time, one fundamental fact is known for certain. Around the second half of the 13th century Sinhalese alignments began to diffuse through the Central Plains and the Southern Peninsula of early Siam and steadily displaced the earlier traditions.

What is more, the post-twelfth century Lower Mekong Basin, with its latitudinarian and monoculti habitats, would likely have fostered a superb array of highly innovative ascetic-arts environs. Provocative hybrid initiatives are inferred from fourteenth-century Angkor, as well, where the royal bilingual Khmer/Pāli stele K. 754 (dated 1308 near Siem Reap) luxuriously refers to an elder cleric (mahāthera) as “Mahāsvāmī” while suffixing “-deva” to his actual name. It furthermore records the installation of a Buddha figure named Mahādeva, an epithet for Śiva, in the mahāthera’s newly constructed “āśrama.” This is all in a time and a cosmopolitan-neighborhood where, according to resident Yuan court diplomat Zhou Daguan, “people from the king down, men and women, all wore their hair wound up in a knot and went naked to the waist wrapped only in a piece of cloth, and when out and about they simply wound a larger piece over the smaller.”14

As a major leitmotif we reiterate the fact that all of the traditions, schools and theories alluded to throughout the course this essay are culturally speaking primarily Indian, products of the Greater Indic cultural milieu. Naturally, the elements that made their way to Southeast Asia arrived through the process of infiltration, sifting through the various cultural screens and by the gradual processes of localization, accretion, adaptation and evolution. Certain Vajrayānic features therefore came directly from Nalanda in Northeast India while other slightly altered forms arrived via Java. Khmer Vajrayāna from the Mekong Basin was introduced around the 12th century and established itself in two different regions. One infusion came overland through the Northeast regions and Central Plains while another via sea to the southeast coastal kingdom of Nakhon Si Thammarat.

Brāhmaṇism

Prior to the thirteenth-century introduction of Pāli-based Sinhalese Mahāvihāra strains into the area known today as the Kingdom of Thailand, a rich diversity of Indic, Brāhmaṇical, Maha-, Vajra- and Tantrayanic persuasions prospered throughout an array early kingdoms. An influential strain of interpretive thought advances that the dominant socio-religious force of the time would best be described as Brāhmaṇism. This is aptly demonstrated by the Vedicization of local language, particularly via Old Khmero-Sanskrit and classical Sanskrit, and Pāli to a lesser though significant degree.

Yet though profoundly a production of Ancient India, the abstract agency we are attempting sequester, abstract and illuminate this is not at all analogous to “Hinduism,” a colonial period ethnonym with scant analytical or taxonomic relevance. Art historian Philip Rawson (The Art of Southeast Asia 1990) conveys a common overview of early India as ‘one of the world’s most civilizing forces for the lands that stretch beyond Burma and the Gulf of Siam and that are widely scattered around the Java Sea, and which virtually owe their very existence to the creative influence of Indian ideas. No invasion or conquest, no forced conversion was ever imposed. Their ideas were embraced because the people understood them as opportune and beneficial.

They naturally imported their code of life, conceptions of kingship, law and literature along with their profound philosophical traditions. They naturally intermarried with esteemed local families and dynasties arose.’ Somewhat unexpectedly, the earliest Brahmanical inscriptions yet recovered in Southeast Asia are those of King Mūlavarman (r late 4th to early 5th c) at Kutei Borneo (Kalimantan) in associations with a temple to Śiva as Vaprakeśvara and of King Purāṇavarman (c. 450) of West Java (Coedès 1968, 52, Sanderson 2003, 351).\footnote{Kutai’s rulers probably maintained their Śaiva-Baudhāna religious culture until they were converted to Islam in 1568. See Polkinghorne, Makers and Models: Decorative Lintels of Khmer Temples, 7th to 11th centuries, 2007, 106-107.}

Brahmanism or “Brāhmaṇa culture,” then, is known to have provided both the driving force and the cultural design for a very wide range Indianized kingdoms that blossomed in overseas, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Malay, Champa, Cambodia, Siam and the rest. In the case of the Khmer, their Vedicized kingdom evolved into the powerful Angkorian Empire with its center at the Great Temple City of Angkor Vat. From there the Angkorian Khmer extended domination over nearly the entirety of what we understand today as Thailand. What is more, this same fundamental Khmero-Vedic matrix continues to sustain Thai national culture. Centuries of chauvinistic disinheritance have rendered its legacy obscure and untraceable. It nonetheless reveals itself in unexpected ways; most strikingly, the fact that the Thai state religion, known over the recent decades as “Theravāda Buddhism,” is partially derived from Vedicized culture. This further calls to question the doctrinal supposition that Gautama the Buddha had markedly developed his ascetic movement on an anti-Brahminical socio-political reform platform. Santosh Desai (Hinduism in Thai Life 1980, 2-3) attempts to confront this crucial issue. He contends that ancient Baudhāna polemics indeed do speak against the practices of untouchability, ritual pollution and Brāhmaṇa claims to superiority and entitlements based on birth alone. This mainly applies to ascetic communities. Benefactors of the Baudhāna up to present times continue to live in their respective cultural milieux conventionally regarded as Hindu, Brāhmaṇa, Jaina, et al. Celebrated early Baudhāna scholars such as Aśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, though thoroughly Brahmins, adopted and interpreted Baudhāna-paideia while remaining entirely within a so-called “Hindu” heritage. They were simply being themselves.

Mongkut, hybridity and the Brāhmaṇization of the Bhikkhu saṅghas

Our immediate set of themes is apropos to two upcoming considerations. This is firstly in connection to the previously mentioned bilingual Khmer-Pāli inscription dated 1308 that inclusively refers to the bhikkhu mahāthera as “Mahāsvāmī” (K. 754). This should secondly hold relation to the measured usurpation and re-INSTALLMENT of high-caste priests in the appearance of Bhikkhus in the Ratanakosin period of Bangkok, though with one significant differentiation. In vivid contrast to the divinely sanctioned and genealogically construed Brahmin caste, the exalted status conferred on the Bhikkhu was perpetuated not by ancestral purity but by a state-sanctioned system of clerical induction caulked on top of self-serving lineage (paramparā). In the modern period, this was largely the effort of the energetic Siamese prince Mongkut. From the time of the Reverend Mongkut’s cloistral induction, he embraced the role of an administrative cleric who studied a wide range of classical texts. He was furthermore attentive to foreign contacts, and the highly cosmopolitan Ratanakosin capital proved exceptional for that in its continuance the Ayutthayan tradition. Indeed, according to
Reid (“Cosmopolis and Nation in a Plural Peninsula” 2004), ‘all the early population estimates for Bangkok agree that the Thais constituted a small minority in a rich cultural tapestry composed of Mons, Lao, Chinese, Vietnamese and many others’ (Reid 2004, 8-9). In 1820 the traveler Pecot observed that “In Bangkok the Siamese…like and respect foreigners very much, and protect them in an astonishing way.” Still, the 17th century Ayutthayan law against Siamese women marrying foreign nationals and the similarly effective Bangkok law, which bars local women from owning land if wed non-Thais, tend to cast different lights on the perceived broad acceptance ascribed to the Thais in their administration of international trade relations. Further worth noting is Pecot’s report from the southern region of the Siamese kingdom. Crossing the Malay Peninsula, he observed that, “Here (Nakhon Sri Thammarat) the government is Siamese, but the people consist of three nations: Siamese, Malays and Chinese.”

One of Prince Reverend Mongkut’s early projects was to found and direct a highly influential reformist cloister within the walled city of old Bangkok. Here the abbot ‘placed himself under the tutelage French and American missionaries. He became well versed in traditional Buddhist learning and western sciences’ (Dhammasami 2007, 12). The cloister or vihāra named Wat Bovonnives was sponsored by Mongkut’s own royal family and marked the establishment of a new quasi-orthodox sect named Dhammayuttika-nikāya, quite literally “stick-to-the-doctrine division.” He then proceeded to divide the population of gāmavāsī or “town dweller” clerics into two distinct parties within the whole collective. Ranked first was the former king’s recently conceived Dhammayuttika-nikāya, extremely small and elitist in nature. The rest, comprised the vast majority, was conveniently styled Maḥā-nikāya, literally “large majority division.” The royal sponsored Dhammayuttika-nikāya gained instant prestige among the civilian population to whom it was generally made to appear as the much more austere and regimented group among the urban dweller clerics.

Ascetic-artistry beyond the pale

It was also at this time that Bangkok-centric religious authorities systematically ignored another major segment of traditional clerics or bhikkhus, the ascetic ‘forest-dwellers’ or arahāṇavāsī who subsisted in quite severe conditions and focused their attention on austerities (tapasyāa). This mainly self-regulated sector of the saṅgha tended to live aloof from the others; and though largely overlooked by religious authorities, it was certainly not forgotten. In her valuable article, “Two Paths to Revivalism in Thai Buddhism” (1995), Marja-Leena Heikki-lä-Horn reports that after the turn of the 20th century all “unauthorized” wandering ascetics were increasingly marginalized and systematically discredited as aberrant, ill-disciplined and heretical elements within the government-sanctioned bhikkhu saṅgha. However, what this government policy spelt for a far less specific, hence highly uncontrollable ascetic-arts community is anyone’s guess.

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18 Pecot 1821, in SME; cited in Reid 2004, 11.  
We broadly allude to ascetic-arts genres that significantly conform to Vedic-Sanskritic soteriological regimes and to a range of practitioners diversely identified as bhikkhu, ṛṣi, yogin, tāpasvin, siddha, sādhu, samana, tāntrikā, brāhmaṇa, et al. We furthermore acknowledge less specified genres with their micro-customs that nevertheless observed the protocols of lineage or guru-śisya paramparā. These dwelt at the margins or beyond the pale of an increasingly intrusive centralized drive for the regularization of ascetic-art observance. These latter persuasions would also have included variations on the Siamese phram (Skt. brāhmaṇā), the phra yokhi (Skt. yogī) and the highly significant prah ṛūēsi (Skt. ṛṣi, English rishi).

**What happened to the ṛūēsi?**

The Thai ṛūēsi holds great importance to our study. Even today in contemporary Thailand the ṛūēsi - or recluse, hermit, sage - is often depicted in popular media and visual art, but even still more in the traditional Thai cult of amulets. What precisely was the ṛūēsi, really? What was its history in the pre- and post-Angkorian eras? The presence of this ‘shadowy and intriguing’ agent looms large and inexplicable right across the region. The ṛṣi/ṛūēsi is a benchmark figure in the ascetic-arts history of greater Southeast Asia. A study of the region’s ascetic culture invites a thorough probe of the fabled Khmero-Siamese holy hermit. It was known as early as the seventh-century, from the pre-Khmer kingdom of Chên-lâ (Zhēnlâ), attested by chronicles, inscriptions and bas-reliefs of Āśrama Maha Rosei, the early pre-Angkorian sanctuary. The small stone temple of the āśrama (‘hermitage, institute’) rests below the hilltop ruins of Phnom Da about 80 kilometers south of modern Phnom Penh. It was constructed in the late 7th to early 8th century under the king Bhavavarman. In fact, according to an earlier mythic account, the origin of the name Cambodia (or Kampuchea) derives from the rosei named Kambu Svayambu. We furthermore know that the Cambodia’s earliest kings declared themselves descendant from this marvelous and semi-divine ṛṣi/rosei; but alas, this topic goes beyond our present limits.

**Internal Colonization in a Bangkok-centric world**

We return to the topic of Prince Mongkut who joined the bhikkhu sangha in 1824 to retire from his monastic vows 26 years later and be crowned as the monarch King Rama IV (reigned: 1851–1868).

King Mongkut had long been careful to cultivate contacts with the various foreign emissaries and study the rise of colonialism in the region. While the neighboring countries of Burma and Cambodia were warring against their British and French foreign masters respectively, Mongkut managed to preserve a semblance of diplomatic relations and a nominal independence for the Siamese kingdom. The Bangkok elite took advantage of this period to consolidate its centralized political authority over newly emerging frontier areas in its push to engineer a modern nation-state. The blatant use of institutionalized religion as validating force in the negotiating

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21 We note the modern usage of the Thai term phra, an honorific derived from Old Khmero-Sanskrit vraḥ. Phra- as a prefix functions to exalt the noun it precedes, and as a stand-alone a noun it mainly designates a Bauddha cleric, though may also be used ecumenically for any type of religieux, priest or ascetic. A nineteenth-century Thai translation of the Christian Bible rendered the phrase “Thy hallowed name” as phra-nām. Vickery (2004, 10 ff.) traces its pattern of usage as a royal Angkorian title and its phonological shift from vraḥ to braḥ by the 16th century.

22 See Justin McDaniel, “This Hindu holy man is a Thai Buddhist,” 2013, 309-313.


24 The Old Khmer rosei is derived from Sanskrit rṣī, as is the Khmero-Siamese ṛūēsi. See Henri Mauger, “L’Asram Maha Rosei,” BEFEO, 36/1, 1936, 65-95.
process of state formation was marked. It was not without its historical precedence. Since the early thirteenth-century emergence of the Sukhothai kingdom, it was understood that the Baudha-cult performed a principal manipulative role in legitimizing and normalizing political actors, and thereby shaping the new “Thai” state. Sukhothai’s legendary founder king Ramkhamhaeng was alleged by some to have left inscriptions that at once praised himself, his Baudha virtues, and his intimate relations to Baudha clerics. In recent years, however, the inscriptions have come under a great deal of scrutiny. Whether they are ‘real’ or ‘invented’ history, they nonetheless stand as crucial early documents of state formation that were granted authenticity through ecclesial structures. In the later Ayutthaya dynasty (1350-1767), as well, ‘we know that the state provided protection to the established saṅgha from religious competition, while in compensation the clerics conferred legitimacy and power to various state actors by ritually accepting material support and attending state pomp and pageantry’ (Heikkilä-Horn 1996). This trend has continued into the 21st century.

**The Thai Sangha Act of 1902**

A characteristic element the Thai Baudda-sangha is that it is under virtual state control. With the passing of the Sangha Act in 1902 by Mongkut’s son, the position of the saṅgha within the Thai state became legally defined for the first time. In fact, this same legislation still stands today to demonstrate the totalizing state-centric locus. When the heir to the throne passed the famous Sangha Act this imposed a regulatory body of religious statutes along with the kingdom’s expanding authority and induced the inculcation of a highly brahmanic court-centric sāsana (religion) in the name of religious dispensation. The laws proclaim that ‘the administration of religious affairs is just as important as the administration of the state,’ and that ‘if systematically administered, religious affairs shall be sure to attract more people to the study and practice of religion under the guidance of Buddhist doctrine, hence leading them to the correct mode of living in accordance with Buddha’s vision.’ One by one, the various regions came increasingly under the centralized state-control of Bangkok’s elite bureaucratic visionaries. Purely political changes followed. With the bloodless revolution of 1932, Thailand ceased to be an absolute monarchy and moved toward its present day constitutional monarchy on similar lines of the British model. Still, royalty remained a sacrosanct pillar of the ThaiTriumvirate, monarchically ritualized in the initiatory cult of the Devārāja as adopted in a modified form by Siamese kings of Ayutthaya from their royal Khmer predecessors as early as the 14th century. After that the state passed a host of other religious reforms “to consolidate state power over the whole kingdom” (Bunnag 1984). Beyond these purely legislative acts, the new reformist Dhammayuttika party provided additional guarantees to the “functioning saṅgha-state relationship.” Members of the sect have “ever since occupied leading positions in the state saṅgha hierarchy” or Council of Elders,” Bunnag writes.

Siamese enthralment with Angkorian culture continued into the modern period. King Mongkut had a model of Angkor Vat built in Bangkok, and even sponsored a failed attempt to disassemble two towers from Ta Prohm in Cambodia and re-erect them in his capital (Chandler 1976, 55, n. 427; Harris 2005, 32). In a similar fashion,

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after the passing of the 1902 Thai Saṅgha Act that the Siamese monarch developed a lavish new Bangkok court-style form of religious mannerism greatly inspired on the Khmer model. These changes represented a deep permeation of the sentiment of royalty through ecclesiastic office where clerics turned into sacrosanct princes. This additionally functioned to widen distinction between ascetic elite and mass congregation, the stature of the latter increasingly reduced to approximate that of social untouchability, only feudally bound throughout their lives to attend to the two preeminent castes, ruler and cleric. This new state-centric court-style Baudhā with formalized, decorative and elongated phasing was again largely built on the Royal Angkorian precedent. Brāhmaṇical culture thus continued to exert tremendous influence at every level of Thai social life. The well-pronounced culture of “Theravada Buddhism” appeared in Thailand in the mid-1970s.

A Conceptual Mandala-shift

Here amidst freshly emerging elements we find ourselves presiding over an architectural mandala-shift. The traditional epicenter of tantric conventionalism, so vaguely construed in the popular mind, begins to re-emerge in the Lower Mekong River Basin, a region incredibly rich in enigma yet sadly shrouded in abandonment and ruin. After more than a century of hyper attention on the Indian and Tibetan archetypes, this natural progression ought to be commemorated.

It was the Siamese-born Guru Chod (1900-1988) who seeded the present writer’s brain just a few weeks before his decorporealization. The present essay may therefore be seen to have commenced upon a narrow trail of clues and directives that emerged from a private conversation with the saint while relaxing after lunch one marvelous day. Chod spoke casually, a cup of jasmine tea in hand. “In ancient times Cambodia was an extension of India,” he said, and then he told the meaning of his family name: Harṣavarman. “It’s royal Khmer,” he said with a smile. Harṣavarman is a Sanskrit name. Harṣa means literally “that which causes the hairs on the back to stand up” and signifies Indra, the king of the gods. Varman (lit. “coat of mail”) is a suffix that is often attached to the names of Khmer kings and implies “protector” or “protégé.” The name debuts in Cambodian history with the ascendancy of the first Harṣavarman king in the 9th century as attested by a terse stone inscription dated 834 recording the “donation of the king Harṣavarman to Śiva.” Nothing more is known of this early Khmer monarch beyond the fact that his posthumous name is Rudraloka, an epithet denoting “the abode of Śiva.” There were later Khmer Harṣavarman kings as well. Guru Chot was therefore of royal ksatriya legacy as marked by the suffixed title varman.28 Yet we also know of an element of mixing, or hybridization from the intermarriage of ksatriya and brāhmaṇa, rulers and priests, at the highest rung of Angkorian society.

Chod spoke further of priestly Brahmin families that in fact still live in Bangkok today, and whose community is centered at the well-known Bot Phrām or “Brahmin Chapel” within Old City. He explained its location near Sao Ching-Cha or “The Giant Swing,” the famous city landmark where spectacular annual festivals where held in honor of the largely vedici ruler and cleric. This new state-centric court-style Baudhā with formalized, decorative and elongated phasing was again largely built on the Royal Angkorian precedent. Brāhmaṇical culture thus continued to exert tremendous influence at every level of Thai social life. The well-pronounced culture of “Theravada Buddhism” appeared in Thailand in the mid-1970s.

to tell by examining the names. They frankly admitted that they weren’t Khmer but had emigrated up from the old southern kingdom around the beginning of the century.”

**Suvarṇabhūmi and the Early Khmer**

Three hundred years before the Common Era, Indian kings were already informed of the far-off region called Suvarṇabhūmi, an almost mythical “land of gold” distinguished quite literally for its gold reserves and other natural material. From those early days the entire region experienced intensive Vedicization, Brahmanicization or Indianization (call it what you will). Cambodia was a colony called Kambuja-deśa that appears to have achieved near epical acclaim as an Indo-Chinese El Dorado. The highly fertile and well-watered region corresponded roughly to the broad geographical basin that stretches today from southern Burma eastward to the Mekong Delta. Indeed, there are ancient Sanskrit treatises that classify Cambodia as one of the great sixteen states of India.

The earliest Cambodian realm emerged no later than the 1st century CE coinciding with a prosperous Indianized kingdom known by its Chinese name Funan. Most of what we know of this early kingdom comes from Chinese dynastic annals. From the 2nd to the 6th century the Funanese dominion spread all the way across from what today is the southern part of Cambodia and the Mekong Delta. Its wealth came mainly from maritime trade being favorably positioned at the ancient crossroads of major sea routes that linked the Mediterranean with the China Sea. Commercial exchanges with Rome are certain, and by implication Egypt as well. Roman coins of Antonius the Pious dated 152 and others representing Marcus Aurelius have been unearthed. Eight hundred years after Funan’s founding the great Angkorian Empire emerged with its power center at Angkor Vat. The complete historical movement of the Khmer monarchs extended more than a thousand years until its eventual decline in the 13th century.

Still, in its heyday Khmer Civilization spread throughout the mainland Southeast Asia from the Bay of Bengal to the South China Sea, and in a southerly direction to the Isthmus of Kra and the northern portion of the Malaya Peninsula. Its rulers bore Hindu, or Vedic names such as Harṣavarman, Jayavarman, Yaśovarman and Sūryavarman. They learned the elements of classical Sanskrit and introduced many of its forms into their own Old Khmero-Sanskrit language. These facts reflect an intense assimilation of Indic culture. Yet the thoroughness in which this culture was imported and absorbed into the fields of statecraft, literature, science, art, philosophy and religion is hard to be explained by an intimate connection with India alone. Such marked propagation was likely also due to the flourishing numbers of cultural institutions and conservatories, and to diverse ascetic āśrama or hermitages that were founded all across the country. Cambodian rulers were themselves responsible for sustaining these citadels of Indian civilization.

Yaśovarman ascended the throne in 889. He was a highly educated monarch with liberal religious views. A devotee of Śiva, he lavishly patronized the Vaiṣṇava cult too, as well as various early-Buddhist and Mahāyānic Bauddha cults. He is said to have founded one hundred ashrams throughout the realm where ascetics engaged in piety and study were provided with their daily necessities and where ascetics were free

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30 Our understanding owes much to R. C. Majumdar, *Kambuja-desa, or An Ancient Hindu Colony in Cambodia*, 1944.
31 Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia*, 1991. According to Shawcross, Funan was the seedbed for a fusion between Indian and local culture that produced the new civilization called “Khmer.”
to live in accordance to their own specific customs. Epigraphs attest throughout all eras ‘the establishment or restoration of temple-deities, temples, hermitages and other pious institutions by royalty, high dignitaries and local leaders. Endowments consisted of land, gardens, male and female slaves (Khmer khnñum, Skt. dāsah) to work these properties and to serve as cooks, musicians and the like.’ Such religious foundations were furthermore provide with ‘pearls, gold, silver, cows and horses, buffaloes, livestock and elephants, ritual implements and other treasures.’

**Khmer caste system**

Elite Khmers theoretically understood the Indian notion of varṇāśrama-dharma. *Vārṇa* signified (among other things) the hue or tint of social-class character. *Āśrama* specified four life ‘stages’ along with four platforms of professional opportunity. Dharma meant ‘duty along natural lines.’ Typically explained in modern education as “the Indian caste system,” this essentially colonial imputation has overly concerned itself with “caste-division.” In its application to Indian society, the derogatory “caste” was likely brought into the English language in India at the early 17th century from Portuguese *casta* (‘breed, race, caste’). Traditionally, in India, each of the four standard castes was expected to honor the caste above it, except for the priestly Brāhmaṇa caste that honored the gods.

From very ancient times this organization of social classifications was a principal force in Brāhmaṇized India and canonized duly in the *Laws of Manu*. This was jealously guarded down through the ages by implicit adherence to strict prohibitions regarding, in particular, inter-caste marriage and many other aspects of social mingling (Guruge 1991, 124). Eventually the system was exposed to attack by cultural theorists who were prone to be indignant over social inequalities and human rights violations, the stratification of social classes based on the patrimony of racial exclusivity and the enthralment of despotic ruling cliques. According to Wales (1931), we know that in India the brāhmaṇa or priestly-caste gained early domination over the other three castes. They did this largely through maintaining a monopoly on intellectual and spiritual knowledge and by making themselves considered to be indispensable to the governing kṣatriya-caste (57-58). Was the case the same among the old Khmer?

Khmer society did not adhere to a “classic” varṇāśrama-dharma scheme. Following Lustig (2009) we note the importance of varṇa development among the Old Khmer as remarkably distinct from its Indian precursors, particularly in regard to ingrained misunderstandings by people with western educational backgrounds. For neither in the case of South Asia or Cambodia did the varṇa of so-called “caste traditions” ever denote a broad scale division of the general population. One needs only to reflect that the late-eighth century king Jayavarman V declared to have created two new varṇa. Further, that the early-ninth century king Suryavarman I reorganized varṇas to ‘assume the appearance of professional associations or guilds, such as artisans, gardeners or parasol bearers. These were typically established under an individual after whom the varṇa was named’ (Chakravarti 1972-73, 154; Lustig: 71). Hence the inscription K. 257N dated 994 that records a member of a ‘Boxers varṇa borrowing silver, metal objects and garments from a local [lending institution?] in order to make a purchase. In accordance with a court, the value was repaid by members of the varṇa’ (Coedès 1952, 148; Lustig 174). Nor was admission to varṇa in Cambodia solely based

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on hereditary. Even within a single generation people could shift to a different *varṇa*’ (Chakravarti 1972-73, 152; Lustig, 70). At the higher tiers, the notion of *varṇa* indicated more of an elitist social stratum (Chakravarti 1972-73; Mabbett 1977, Lustig, 24). To a large degree, they functioned as syndicates or even corporations, and at the topmost levels they were commissioned by the king. By appointing people to specified *varṇa*, ‘kings were effectively granting privileges and establishing bonds of obligation’ (Mabbett, 433; Lustig, 70). How essential were *varṇa* to the functioning of state? Was the Khmer aristocracy an oligarchic *varṇa*? According to Coedès (1975, 120), the government in Kambujadeśa: was in the hands of an aristocratic oligarchy, and the great offices were held by members of the royal family. [But] the offices of chaplain of the king, officiating priest of the Devarāja, and tutor of the young princes were reserved to members of the great priestly families, within which offices were transmitted in the female line.37

Now we gain a glimpse of the vital roles that Brāhmaṇa priests and gurus played as conductors of rites and sacrifices, thaumaturgic advisors and royal teachers. It was the special intimacy of this *ksatriya-brāhmaṇa* caste alliance that furthermore fostered the new state religion called Devarāja at the very early part of the 9th century. Here, recognizably, traditional highborn Brahmīn priests become the mark of a hugely influential traditional *varṇa* in Angkorian society.

**Khmer Yoga**

Yoga and asceticism enjoyed great favor in Old Khmer society. This aspect of its culture deserves due notice.38 Sacred places were set aside and announced in royal epigraphy. Śiva was regarded as the ascetic-yogi par excellence and Cambodia’s national god. Grottoes for ascetic practice (*tapas, tapasyā*) are often mentioned. Speculations on the syllable OM frequently appear in early Khmer writing.39 The Vat Phu temple overlooking the Mekong River at a distance of about six kilometers was a special place for yoga practice. Vat Phu was built at the base of Mt. Phu in southern part of present-day Laos. Its ruined remains are near the western bank about 100 kilometers upstream from the Laos-Cambodian border. From the body of Old Khmer and Sanskrit inscriptions we know that the mountain Phu Kao was called Liṅgaparvatath or Liṅga Mountain, a ‘self-created’ *svayambu līngam* formed as the mass of the mountain’s face (1416 meters). The mountain was venerated as Bhadreśvara, an epithet for Śiva, reflected through the name of the first Cham king Bhadravarman I (ca 400 CE).40 Inscription K. 583 (v. 6)41 describes this natural outcropping as *Nīskala Liṅga*, which we take to mean ‘complete of its own innate becoming untouched by human agency, interiorly grasped as Śiva’s pure Presence through the intimation of the force of his *bhāva*’ (Dasgupta 1955).42 The preceding noun *nīskala* (‘formless’) qualifies the *liṅga* as completely “undifferentiated” – ‘if broken into pieces the divinity remains uniformly present in each of the fragments; if a fragment of the mountain is detached

37 George Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, 1975, 120, brackets added.
through erosion, it is installed for worship in another place’ (Sanderson 2003, 412). The Vat Phu temple-complex in Champasak province, aligned with the linga of Mt. Phu Kao, is dedicated to Śiva Bhadreśvara the national god of the Khmer empire and protector of the monarch. From inscription K. 723, recovered from a cave 1500 meters north of Vat Phu temple, we know that veneration of Lingaparvataḥ predates Angkor, and that the cave itself was as a place set-aside for ‘every type of ascetic to practice’ (sarvatapodhanāṇāṃ).  

There is specific reference to the practice of yoga in relation to the tradition of worship and austerities that were carried out around Phu Kao and Bhadreśvara. This comes from inscription K. 300 (vv. 7-10), dating from the 14th century and considered the last of Sanskrit inscriptions. It was discovered in a ditch in the northeast corner of Angkor Vat. The inscription tells of a Śaiva Rāguru named Sarvajñāmi of Vidyeśa lineage. He is said to have employed a yoga technology to arrive to Cambodia from Āryadeśa (northern India) in order to worship Bhadreśvaraśiva, and ‘having done that for quite some time he departed this world for his ultimate goal.’ An undated (probably ca. 968) Sanskrit inscription by Jayavarman V (K. 111) from Vat Sithor, Kompong Cham details a devotional trend that was current from the 10th to 13th century in Cambodia and indicates plainly that the king was an enthusiast of the Baudha Yogatantra Mantra-mārga. The text is an administrative brief for royal sponsorship of ritual-based institutes throughout the land. Each is to engage a skilled officiant (the term purohitāḥ is used). It furthermore reports on a teacher named Kīrtipanḍita, who was an expert in the esoteric Mantra rites of the Yogatantra, and who was taken in by the royal family as a kind of rājaguruḥ. In his inscription the king lavishes great praise on his teacher for propagating yoga throughout the land.

Buddha with Nāga, an esoteric reading

Philosophically, nirvana both represents the summum bonum and telos of all ancient Indian ascetic-arts procedures. From the post-Vedic period to our present day, it is important to grasp that throughout this millennia-long course of history, all sincere Indian seekers of knowledge, whatever their sectarian persuasions may have been, pursued one thing and one thing alone: a consummate reality beyond human pain. Moreover, they pursued this aim through the means of yoga. Hermann Oldenberg (1918) explained that Nirvana was widely known from around 500 BCE. It was essential to Jaina and Baudha literatures as well as to other ascetic communities.

Entering the mythic cycle, if we may, Gautama Buddha never denied the existence of a naked reality or unconditioned truth the knowledge of which could usher the boon of emancipation to ignorant men. It was just that he exhibited extreme discretion by declining to openly speak of these things for fear that discussion would only obstruct a person’s passage to the goal itself. This is why Buddha categorically denied the validity of experiencing or even discussing this topic so long as man remained unawakened.

Assuming veracity of the Pāli scriptures and barring possibility that the Buddha may have uttered things that not recorded therein, we may cautiously infer that the Buddha denounced neither the doctrine of atman (substance) nor brāhmaṇ (ultimate reality). Rather, that the Buddha largely aimed to reproach such professors for their

44 Ian Harris, Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice, 2005, 12, 232.
unrestrained loquacity in regard to those themes that he felt ought to be treated as ineffable. Maintaining the position that “atman exists, is real and permanent,” was according to Buddha an unsupportable affirmation. Conversely, to claim “substantiality does not exist, has no reality and does not continue” is an equally unreasoned declaration. Still, trying to determine what Buddha did hold as the ultimate object or aim of the seeker, it could only be “freedom in the present life.” Such a person may be classed a jīvan-mukta, or ‘liberated being,’ who in the scriptural words of Buddha himself is “even in this life cut off, nirvan-ized, aware of happiness within himself and living with his soul identified with Brahman,”47 or “godhead” in the parlance of comparative religion. Two remarkable equations may be drawn from this: (i) see the Buddha, see the Truth, (ii) Buddha = Brahman = Dharma. In this way, Buddha is not an approximation of Brahman, but is Brahman, the lord of the world, natural law, the omniscient master of dharma. The Vedic term dharma means ‘to hold, support,’ it is that which forms a foundation and ‘upholds.’ Dharma signifies the universal infrastructure. Dharma is the interpreted order of the world. In theological parlance, dharma equals god and is equated to śakti. In an epistemological disposition, dharma is the scaffolding of human perception, conception, and thought intent on grasping ultimate things. The knower thus becomes the incorporation of the knowable, a self-awakened being, sammasambuddha, buddhatva (the condition of buddha).48

The Cosmic Axis: being in the body

The Indian subcontinent presents itself as a very different world a millennium following Gautama’s passing. A baroque revolution of vast dimension is in full swing. Yogis preach a new alchemical philosophy based on the notion of a “cosmic body.” Their philosophy also lays great importance on the mystical implications of prāṇa as “life-force.” This tantric philosophical and ascetic-arts advancement is seen to have exerted a profound influence on every aspect of Indian cultural life. The diverse Buddha signatories are not aloof from this astounding pan-Indian revolution. The esoteric Buddha text Hevajra-Tantra depicts the Buddha as Bhagavān who extols the virtues of physical fitness: “Without a perfectly strong and fit body one cannot know bliss.” In the compelling symbolism of Baudh Tantra, the body of the Buddha is equated with the cosmic universe. His spinal column, called the merudanda, is a single bone that exemplifies reality beyond time and space, a withdrawn, autonomous zone of purity and non-differential void called śūnya. This mystical backbone is additionally described as a secret cavern within Mount Kailāśa, a reflective, crystalline interiority where esoteric truth is revealed to the yogin while immersed in the unexcelled state of absorption (chan). This helps to decipher why, according to a legend, the Buddha was unable to turn his head, but had to turn his entire body around because his spinal column was fixed and motionless just like a pillar. This is furthermore read as the axis mundi, the center of the world or cosmic pillar, a primordial emblem representing a pole at the center of the world that supports and connects the cosmic spheres of heaven, earth and netherworld. As a “pillar” it ensures support of the universal order. It further corresponds with the vertebral column and interiorly traversing the center of the universe.

The spine is crucial in yoga practice. Emphasis is placed on the 33 bones whose hollow portion surrounds the spinal cord.\textsuperscript{49} We detached it from the skeleton for close examination. It’s a beautiful structure; its slim configuration from the tip of the coccyx gently curving upward through sacral, lumbar, dorsal and cervical vertebrae bares amazing likeness to an up-raised cobra. This might be the reason why the symbol of the cobra has long played a role in ancient cultures. It is the \emph{nāga} of India. It is known as \textit{kundalinī}, too, a “the coiled little she-serpent” dozing at the base of the spine. With dilated neck taking shape of a hood, the cobra has always been a royal emblem, feminine, majestic and deeply mysterious. The cobra is therefore an archetypal symbol for the transfigurative power of primordial nature. For reasons like this the Yoga-tantras have emphasized developing graceful posture.

Largely unacknowledged in Buddha heritage, this universal symbolism nonetheless appears in the well-known legend of Mucalinda Buddha or Mucalinda Sheltering Buddha. The episode occurs in the sixth week after Gautama’s astonishing elucidation as he dwelt in bliss beneath the Mucalinda Tree near to the shores of Mucalinda Lake near Gaya. Suddenly a torrential storm breaks out. But the fledging Buddha is absorbed in trance and pays no attention to the raising waters. As the lake is about to drown the Buddha, the \emph{nāga} of the lake, named Mucalinda, protectively coils his body around the Buddha and shields him with his seven-headed hood.

A deconstruction of the Mucalinda legend could prove very useful to our present study. Does the legend reveal the metaphoric rising of the serpent in the body? Does this represent the stirring of psychic \textit{kundalinī}? But how appropriate, really, is the \textit{kundalinī} notion in examining the ancient Baudhā fable, considering the neologistic \textit{kundalinī}-\textit{yoga} specifically, a compound first attested in 1935?\textsuperscript{50} We cite the valued article by Wibke Lobo, “The Figure of Hevajra and Tantric Buddhism” (1997) wherein the writer adopts the terminology of industrial yoga, vis-à-vis “the \textit{cakras},” as implanted in the minds of present-day consumers, to interpret what “yoga” would have meant to its votaries a millennium prior.

It would be strange if the image of the erect serpent had not been brought into association with the awakening of cosmic energy. In this connection it would also be possible to recognize a system of mystical numbers in the seven heads and three coils [of the \emph{nāga}], for they can be linked to the set of seven centers of energy (\textit{cakras}) in the human body and to the three highest of these in the throat and head, where Enlightenment takes place.”\textsuperscript{51}

Should we leave this reading to the twentieth century?

Still nowhere is the depth of this esoteric schema more keenly expressed than through the stunning image of the Buddha with Nāga, otherwise known as the Mucalinda Buddha and indeed, if one wishes, Kūndalini-Buddha. The Khmer in particular have displayed great intensity in expressing the trance-like nature of the epitomic yogic \textit{leitmotif} with extraordinary sculptural virtuosity. Gracefully adorned, the Buddha sits splendidly in the posture of \textit{dhyāna} or other distinct mudras. Three thick coils of the \emph{nāga}’s body form the Buddha’s seat while the serpent’s dilated seven-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{49} “Spinal Column is known as Meru Danda. This is the axis of the body just as Mount Meru is the axis of the earth. Hence the spine is called ‘Meru.’ Spinal column is otherwise known as spine, axis-staff or vertebral column… The vertebral bones are piled one upon the other thus forming a pillar for the support of the cranium and trunk. They are connected together by spinous, traverse and articular processes and by pads of fibro-cartilage between the bones. The arches of the vertebrae form the hollow cylinder of a bony covering for the passage of the spinal cord” (Swami Sivananda, \textit{Kundalini Yoga}, Madras: p.K. Vinyagam, 1935).
\item \textsuperscript{50} Swami Sivananda, \textit{Kundalini Yoga}, 1935.
\item \textsuperscript{51} Wibke Lobo, “The Figure of Hevajra and Tantric Buddhism,” 1997.
\end{itemize}
headed hood rears up from the back in a broad cocooning manner to protect the Buddha’s head. In no other manner is Khmer-yoga legacy better expressed than by the symbolism of the Buddha with Nāga. What is more, this icono-syncretic-hybrid mélange of Śaiva, Yoga and Baudhā¯ga streams unequivocally declares a triveni sarīgam, or ‘three stream convergence’ of near inconceivable power and grace where concealed femininity, intermediately immersed, inconspicuously anoints itself caturbhadrā, the ‘immeasurably blessed.’ It is plainly the milieu of Khmer Yoga-tantra that imbues this figure its profound and extensive ramifications. Where else in South or Southeast Asia has this quintessentially ascetic-yoga icon gained such acceptance as among the Khmer? Still, the emblematic import of the Buddha with Nāga rests not on its allusion to enchanting fables of Gautama’s nascent hierophantic mission, but on its plush esoteric contextualization and nimble kindling of inner heat, or ascetic-arts technē known as tapas.

Are we firmly in the realm of reality here? Does the notion of tapas hold clear correlation to that which we normally perceive as yoga? Does the non-standard phrase “ascetic yoga” connote non-soteriological tapas? Are alternative words or notions available? Can a line be drawn between these two? What are the respective aims of tapas and yoga?

Historically the aim of tapas is power. What kind of power? The power of yoga? What sort of yoga? Sober assessment is rarely pronounced. Power-seeking practices are typically dismissed as lower, self-centered and motivated aims confined to the realm of social and material ascendancy and dominance. In contrast, the notion of renunciation with its non-specific aim of spiritual redemption is stereotypically regarded as a pure pursuit. Discussion never leaves these bipolar vacillations. How may we progress? By considering the power of a strong and healthy body for the purpose of developing a strong and healthy mind? Then what is the value of a strong and healthy mind? To better confront life’s problems and difficulties? Nothing more than that? Does yoga in its highest sense teach nothing more than surmounting life’s hardships and not to evade responsibility?

The Khmer inscription K. 410 (dated 1022 or 1025) by king Śūryavarman I from Lopburi reports of Sthavira and Mahāyāna clerics who live as neighbors with Brāhmaṅical tàpasas (specialists in tapas) as well as other groups of ‘Sthaviras, Mahāyānas and tàpasas.’ The inscription is essentially a royal command to the broad community of diverse ascetics to dedicate the merit of their austerities (tapas) to the King. ‘Disrupters will be ousted and heavily punished.’

Anūraha: the proto-tantric Buddha

What follows is a brief but compelling illustration of how the Buddha-cult’s narratological heritage authorizes dominance-expressing austerity. Arguably, this passage represents the earliest strata of the Baudhā¯ga-movement’s entire scriptural preserve. We come across the character Anūraha, a somewhat conflating epithet applied now and then to Gautama the Buddha. The name debuts in an intriguing scene from the opening portion of Vinaya-Pitaka (i.25). This is Buddha as tapasya (body

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52 For comparative analysis note the negative Sanskrit form avenī, ‘without convergence, commingling, influence,’ hence ‘single, by itself, entirely unique.’ Look also to the Baudhā¯ga-cult-specific compounds avenīka and avenīka-buddha-dhārma.


54 See Diśhanitāya iii.196; Saṁyutānītāya i.196; Anguttaranītāya iii.239; Theragāthā v.536; Jātaka i.116.
heat master).\(^{55}\) Shortly after his eminent awakening Gautama is wandering alone through the countryside. Night approaches and he needs a place to rest. He finds an āśrama and requests accommodation. He is taken to the sauna, the only space available. He is told that a terrible nāga lives inside, but Angīrasa shows no concern. He passes the night in ascetic inner heat ‘with brilliant flames streaming from his body.’\(^{56}\) In fact, the Buddha generates so much heat that smoke starts spewing from the roof of the sauna. The resident hermits all rush outside and remark to each other, ‘That shaman must have done himself in.’

Not so. ‘At the end of the night’ the narrative alludes, ‘as the multi-colored flames are finally quenched, the Buddha emerges from the sauna radiant—deep green, crimson, yellow, red and the colors of crystal.’ Here the Buddha’s blazing body should substantiate the presence of shamanic and proto-tantric traits at the earliest strata of the Baudhāyana.\(^{57}\) The story yields two strong interpretive suggestions. Firstly is the hint that the Buddha was encountering episodes of psychic metamorphosis weeks beyond the moment of his grand illumination. Secondly is the virtual attestation that the ascetic practice of producing psychic heat is by no means a later baroque innovation. Through ill-defined and outmoded idiom, the text\(^{58}\) represents a credible depiction of tapasya obtained through the prāṇāyāma and kumbhaka. Elsewhere the Buddha is made to explain, ‘As two big men might lift up a weaker man and hold him over a barbecue pit, when I finally stopped my [kumbhaka] practice a terrific heat arose in my body.’ Dhammapada (v. 387) describes the Buddha as being “on fire.”\(^{59}\) Another Dhammapada verse (31) portrays the ascetic as “moving like fire, burning all his fettters, small and large.”\(^{60}\)

The Buddha with Nāga was a main cult icon installed in the central shrine of Prasat Bayon within the walled temple city of Angkor Thom - built by king Jayavarman VII (r. c.1181-1218)—immediately adjacent just north of Angkor Vat. The king enshrined the Buddha with Nāga icon and identified himself with the spirit of its divinity. When built at the end of the 12th century, the Bayon marked the center of Jayavarman’s capital. Prominence was given to Bauddha devotion. It’s still unknown if a Buddhārāja notion had ever displaced the “god-king” tradition of the Devarāja. Other major questions remain unanswered. What do the four gigantic faces on the

55 Ang clearly indicates ‘limb’ or ‘parts.’ Rasa (‘passion, juice, flavor’) requires some interpretive flare. Handled broadly—‘brilliance, essence, semen, sap, living water, the ambrosial seed of Śiva Himself’—rasa finds its home in Indian aesthetics and the discourse on rhythm, time, beauty and taste, with allusions to ‘that which distinguishes a work of art (or poesis) from mere predication’ (Thomas Merton, [on rasa], The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton, 1973, 396, n).

56 Anga raviyo samaranti. See discussion in Thomas, The Life of Buddha, 1927, 22.

57 Mahāśaccaka Sutta (MN 36) caricatures the Buddha’s prāṇāyāma training: ‘restricting respiration at the mouth, nose, and ears, feeling violent winds tearing at the belly, the feeling of the stomach being stabbed with a butcher’s knife; a violent burning inside the body as though one were rolling in a ditch of burning coals.’

58 This is our interpretive translation of Majjhima-nikāya (Middle Length Sayings, trans. Horner, vol. I, 1954-59, 244). The text clearly speaks of the magical “heat” produced by holding the breath. Here we see the ancient and widespread notions of “magical sweating” and “inner light” found among various shamanic peoples. See Horner (trans.) vol. 4, 1993, and Mahavagga, 1951, 35, note. For “Lo! See Angirasa, illuminant / As the midday sun, all radiant,” see also Anguttara-nikāya (Gradual Sayings vol. III, trans. E.M. Hare, 1952, 175.) For the Buddha as “burning,” see also Eliade, Yoga, 1964, 331.

59 Verse 11. For more on ‘psychic heat’ or tapas, see Allen, “The Indo-European Prehistory of Yoga,” 1998: 1-20. Allen approaches the subject of tapas from the standpoint of an ‘Indo-European cultural comparativist.’ He compares the heroic ordeals of Odysseus with ascetics from pre-historic Indian traditions. Hence when “he sleeps in his pile of leaves, the Greek hero is likened to a firebrand (dalon) carefully kept alight under a heap of ashes (5.487).” Allen then points to scriptural Svetambara Jain stories where a king that becomes an ascetic similarly ‘undertakes intense austerities and is likened to ‘fire confined within a heap of ashes.’ If accepted, “the rapprochement has bearing on the history of the notion of tapas (‘heat”),’ (n. 12).

60 Cf. Mascaro, trans. The Dhammapada, verse 387.
temple represent? While the Bayon sanctuary has been variously regarded as a temple unto Śiva, Brahma, Avalokiteśvara or Buddha, it may have been all of these and something more added. Still, the often mentioned ‘break in the Vedic tradition’ that marked the reign of the seventh Jayavarman is likely more apparent than existing in fact. Michael Vickery (2004, 9) discusses the bilingual Khmer-Pāli inscription (K. 754) ascribed to king Śrīndravarma (1308) the third reigning monarch after Jayavarman VII. Following Coedès (1964, 328-329), Vickery peers closely at the replacement of Sanskrit with Pāli words; but even if king Śrīndravarma had indeed converted to a Pāli-based Baudha-cult, supplanting longstanding Śaiva-cult supremacy, the king’s inscription, according to Vickery, “shows no change in the structure of society, in spite of the new religion.” In Bhattacharya’s view, as well, the older forms of worship never subsided, and the local adorations, whatever the persuasion, were reunified in the late 12th or early 13th century Prasat Bayon, “a veritable pantheon that functioned both as the kingdom’s center and its image in small.”

Syncretic and Restorative Elaborations
The predominant religion among the Khmer was clearly based on the worship of the Vedic god Śiva described as “a great ascetic with many names.” Through many of his epithets Śiva is identified with the sacred mountain and variously worshipped as Girīśa, “mountain lord,” Girikr “reclines as mountain” and Giritra, “protecting mountain.” The importance of this great spiritual Spartan as deity in the early 7th century Zhēnlà or Chēn-là period is attested by the fact that king renamed his capital Iṣanapura, “Śiva city” (Daweewarn 1982, 30).

It needs to be mentioned that the religion of Viṣṇu (or the Vaiṣṇava), and the closely allied Bhāgavata cult (devotees of Krṣṇa) prospered from as early as the fourth-century pre-Khmer Funan period. Krṣṇa was the favorite of certain Khmer queens and princesses. An inscription dated from the pre-Angkor reign of Jayavarman I espouses the central Vaiṣṇava doctrine that ‘a man may progressively purify himself in the course of his various existences and thereby free himself from successive rebirths, either good or bad, resulting from action (karma).’ Khmer dedication to the cult of Viṣṇu is compellingly confirmed by the piety of king Suryavarman II, responsible for building of Angkor Vat during first half of 12th century. Angkor Vat (near Siem Reap in northwest Cambodia) is unreservedly taken as the greatest Vaiṣṇava temple known to the world. Unlike all other temples of the Greater Angkor complex, Angkor Vat faces west, the direction of the setting sun, the symbolical pole of the after-world. Thai scholar Dawee Daweewarn holds the view that the incarnation concept of the Devarāja is a purely Vaiṣṇava belief (1982).

Viṣṇu appears famously in Khmer iconography reposing on the primordial multi-headed serpent Ananta-śeṣa depicted in lintel at the famous Phnom Rung Temple in present day northeast Thailand. The decorative eastern lintel of the central shrine (maṇḍapa) of the temple is a brilliant sample of distinct Khmer stylistic handling. The extraordinary carving is an illustration of the Puranic re-creation myth. Viṣṇu reclinies with Ananta-śeṣa (the eternal one) in the primordial ocean of eternal bliss in the period just before the creation of the world. From Viṣṇu’s navel stems a lotus blossom upon

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63 Bhattacharya 1997, 49.
64 Bhattacharya 1997, 38.
65 Dawee Daweeewarn, Brahmanism in Southeast Asia, 1982, 30.
which a tiny Lord Brahmā (world creator) sits in yoga-trance. A uniquely Khmer innovation on the theme is the appearance of a dragon in place of the serpent that supports the ensemble.

It needs to be said and boldly underscored that the worship of Viṣṇu found far less acceptance than that of Śiva among the Khmer. The great preponderance of Śaiva-themed inscription demonstrates the favor that the faith enjoyed, particularly together with phallic Sīva-Līṅga through which the god was mainly worshipped. Stone-hewn bas-reliefs of brāhmaṇa ascetics worshipping Śiva bear further testament to Cambodia’s affinity with Vedic heritage. We see two bearded ascetics dressed in nothing but loincloths; their hair is tied in topknot fashion. They sit on the ground in a casual manner and gracefully repose against a decorative pillar. Each of them holds between their hands a ritual chillum in performance of the quintessential Vedic rite of honoring Śiva through a sacramental offering of smoke. Such baked clay conical pipes would be filled with herbal mixtures consisting in part of cannabis-derived substances. This bas-relief is at the hilltop fortress Prasat Phnom Rung, in present-day Buriram Province, Thailand. It is Śaiva sanctuary built between the 10th and 13th centuries.

Khmer Śaiva Philosophy

There were varied forms of Śaiva-based worship and speculation among the Khmer. Śaiva Pāśupata appeared in the 7th and late 9th centuries. Monism with its “multiple bodies” notion was especially influential. This was doubly inspired by Adi Śaṅkarācārya’s Advaita Vedānta and by the southern Indian Śaiva Āgama texts. In a remarkable inscription dated 1100, Bhattacharya (1997) identifies the most distinctive aspect of Indian Śaiva Āgama tradition, the feature of dīkṣā (initiation) mentioned often in Khmer inscriptions. Śiva’s śakti (energy, power), by assuming two different attributes, initially strengthens the bonds of the soul and then subsequently disburdens the soul from them. Such ties that have existed for all eternity are firstly reinforced or brought to maturity for the singular purpose of helping people take their innate capabilities to complete fruition. When the bonds are ripe they are broken by the power of Śīva’s grace or by the god himself in the form of Bhairava or the Goddess, or in the form of a guru who descends to perform the dīkṣā (preparation) that induces different states in different entities depending on their capacities. What is missed in the study of Khmer philosophy of any persuasion is the absence of native Khmer philosophers.

Harihara (Viṣṇu-Śiva)

Syncretic tendencies are marked in Khmer religion. This may possibly reflect a disposition or appetite for great religious acceptance. Alexis Sanderson (2003) studied Old Khmer and Sanskrit inscriptions and found that ‘relations between the faiths appeared generally tolerant. There were Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva and Baudhā family lineages among the nobility. In the palaces as well, though principally Śaiva, marriages occurred between the different faiths’ (Sanderson 2003, 433). Was it the deep-seated Indic notion of the “unity of self” that provided validation for these remarkable features?

The syncretic half-Viṣṇu half-Śiva image called Harihara appeared from the early pre-Angkorian period. What are the basic distinguishing criteria in the worship of the compound deity Vishnu-Śiva? The worshipers of Viṣṇu, or Vaiṣṇavas, believe

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67 Bhattacharya 1997, 46.
in numerous _avatāra_, incarnations or messiahs, if you will, who quite literally “descend” or appear on earth at precarious junctures to restore the path of ethical rectitude. Contrastingly, the worshippers of Śiva, known as Śaivas, disclose the complexity of Śiva’s nature through the invocation his 1,008 mantric names and descriptions. Viṣṇu signifies the ontic emergence or arousal of primordial consciousness conveyed by the slumbering Mahā-Viṣṇu. He also indicates the cosmic axis that sustains world order. In this way Viṣṇu is seen as the “Preserver” who is exalted as the supreme personification of godhead from among the pantheon of lesser gods. Śiva, by distinction, dwells apart from any god-friends and is worshiped as the archetypal lone-ascetic who at times displays a virulent, wild and contemptible nature. Thus Śiva is regarded as the god of destruction who is typically surrounded by a company of _pāśū_ or fiendish devotees who may symbolize the psychological barriers of fear. Śiva’s chief object is destruction of the ego by way of which he saves his multitude of followers. He represents the sixth sense, _kāla_, or time, which is typically conceived as both inescapable and inexhaustible. Death is not the end of life enactment but an ignorance-abolishing site of transformation. In this sense Śiva is the god of creation. He is furthermore regarded as the patron god of yoga and creative arts. Śiva’s _linga_ or phallic is aniconic, a nonfigurative mark that is often installed in the sanctum sanctorum (_garbha grha_) of a Śiva shrine. For Śiva’s celebrants the _linga_ denotes what the _śālagrāma_ does for the followers of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu’s _śālagrāma_ is a coil-shaped fossilized black-colored shell that symbolizes his potency or seed. Both of these insignias, _śālagrāma_ and _linga_, are believed to retain miraculous qualities and emanate the deity’s boundless presence. Other correspondences arise from the fact that the Śiva-_lingam_ and Viṣṇu’s _śālagrāma_ are kept in temples or on people’s private altars and are regularly ritually bathed, anointed and perfumed. The water that is used for these ritual baths is believed to possess sin-dispelling qualities and devotees may drink it after the enactment.\(^{68}\)

To return to the subject of Harihara, the syncretic half-Viṣṇu half-Śiva icon: its early importance among the Khmer and early Siamese is clearly demonstrated by the seventh-century royal pre-Angkorian town of Hariharālaya, ‘abode of Harihara,’ founded by king Jayavarman II, the ninth century founder of the Khmer Empire. Hariharālaya is today known as Roluos, a dusty hamlet situated around 20 kilometers southeast of Angkor Vat, just south off of National Highway 6 in Siem Reap province. It was immediately preceded by King Yaśovarman’s founding of the first true Angkorian capital Yaśodharapura.

**Śiva-Buddha Fusion**

Even before the seventh-century founding of Aninditapura by Jayavarman I, Khmer theological speculation had mainly revolved around the worship of Śiva. It is also clear that a more profound level an indigenous penchant for intermingling notions of an all-embracing theocratic Supreme abided among the Khmer elite, a fact borne out by the reconciliation and fusion of divergent metaphysical advances appropriate to the hybrid-mélange Harihara icon.

A far more compelling illustration is observed in the fusion and confusion of Śiva and Buddha. In a Khmer inscription (K. 397) dated 1110 from the great Phimai temple (northeastern Thailand), Śiva and Buddha are invoked in a way that reveals their concepts merging very closely. In another inscription, about 19 years later, we witness

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\(^{68}\) _Śālagrāma_, the fossil of an extinct species of molluscs particularly found in the Kali Gandaki River and at Dvarka. See Stutley, 1977, 101-2, and Narayanan, “_Śālagrāma_,” in _Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism_, 2015.
an expansion of the “classical Hindu trinity” (trimūrti) of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara (Śiva) to include and combine the historical Buddha in an astonishing Śaiva-caturmūrti, or “Śiva in four-forms” tetrad. The inscription records the installation of a Śiva-lingam along with statues of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Buddha.69 From the standpoint of Indian Monist philosophy in which both Śaiva and Baudhada engage, such blending seems as natural as it is preordained. At their highest metaphysical concentrations there is hardly any variance between the two trajectories.70 Śiva, who is absolute, “one in his essence,”71 manifests through a massive multitude of forms. Yet in spite of being many, he is empty and devoid of all discernible substantive cause. Congruently, Buddha, though construed beyond implicitness, assumes four very distinctive “bodies”: sambhogākāya, nirmanākāya, dharmākāya and śivakāya.72

It is furthermore fitting to remind ourselves that the central image of the great Phimai temple (mentioned just above) was “most likely” (Woodward 2004) the Buddha with Nāga, though named there, revealingly, Lord Vimāya (‘free of illusion’) to which Thai phimai corresponds. Of additional interest, Woodward advances the theory that Phimai as “Vimāya” is attested in a southern Indian text as an epithet of Śiva, but only from around the 14th century. From this he infers the important instance of a Southeast Asian religious development transferred to the Indian subcontinent directly.73 We should not be surprised that the Sanskrit-Khmer inscription dated 1129 from Trapan Don On, Siem Reap (K. 254), ‘relates that a consummate Śiva-Buddha fusion is conclusively achieved’; but as Bhattacharya (1997) wisely advises, ‘we must always keep in mind that the Indian texts seem to never grow weary of repeating the adage that Truth is one, only worshipped by the followers of different religions under various names and forms.’

The Bilingual Khmer and Pāli Royal Inscription K. 754 (1308)

Along this speculative syncretic vein it is worth returning to the bilingual Khmer and Pāli inscription (K. 754) from Kok Svay Chek, near Siem Reap. The royal stone-inscribed statement dated 1308 records the donation by king Śrīndravarma of land, human resources, and a single item of religious statuary to the Mahāthera (senior cleric) named Sirisirindamoḷi of assumed Bauddha-lineage affiliation. The Pāli inscription thus proclaims ‘an endowment of the king to Mahāthera Sirisirindamoḷi of land for construction of an ascetic institution, and an entire village named Sirisirindaratanaṅgāma, men and women laborers, and a Buddha statute.’ While the initial side of the inscription is in Pāli, the second part is written in Khmer.74 This second part furthermore offers details not included in the Pāli section. In the Pāli part the king’s name is given as Śrīndavamma. But in the Khmer text all proper names are in Sanskrit. The name of the king is Śrīndravarma and the name of the village Śrīndraratnagāma, both of these literal translations from the Pāli. The donor’s name is also in Sanskrit, but given as Śrīndramaulideva. This is somewhat odd. Why would

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69 Bhattacharya 1997, 46-47.
70 Bhattacharya 1997.
71 Regarding “absolutes” we cite Frits Staal, Discovering the Vedas (2008, 331): “The most serious difficulty that affects all absolutes is that they are all alike. An absolute is defined by having no attributes that distinguish it from anything else. It is anirvacanīya, nothing can be asserted of it. But if ‘emptiness’ or ‘nothing’ is different from ‘fullness’ or ‘everything,’ one of them must be different from the other in at least one respect which provides it with an attribute so that it is not an absolute. I conclude that absolutes are not only all alike, they are all identical.”
72 Bhattacharya 1997.
74 Coedès, “Études cambodgiennes” (1936, 15): “La première face de la stèle est couverte d’une inscription en pâli, qui comprend 20 lignes formant 10 śloka. La seconde face porte 31 lignes en khmer.”

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“deva” be suffixed to a name that is aptly rendered into Sanskrit as Śrīndramauli? Is the element “deva” a kind of encodment? Or conversely, could the word have been detached from the Sanskrit name when rendered into Pāli?

A few more points are curious here. Regarding the king’s donation of a Buddha statue (buddharūpa[ḥ]), it is given no name in the Pāli text. But in the Sanskrit text it is named as Śrīndramahādeva or vraḥ vuṇḍha kamrateṅ ‘aṅ śrīśrīndramahādeva (K. 754, line 8). For Vickery (2004, 9) this represents the royal inscription’s most important discovery, as Mahādeva is a name for Śiva. In addition, the full honorific that the stele confers upon the venerable recipient of the Buddha statue is not just Mahāthera but Mahā-Svāmī-Thera, mahāsvāmī thera śrīśrīndramaulīdeva. The broad idyllic syncrétic scene that a careful reading of the text evokes is absorbingly balanced by gazetted notice that the village bestowed to the Mahāsvāmī was under the authority of “The Venerable Suvarṇaliṅga Sanctuary,” vraḥ śakti kamrateṅ ‘aṅ suvarṇaliṅga (K. 754, line 26)

For Coedès the 1308 inscription gives material evidence of the presence of Pāli at the beginning of the 14th century. The incorporation of Pāli words marks a clear departure from the earlier Sanskrit-based epigraphic custom. K. 754 may also represent the first appearance of Pāli text among the Khmer; but it goes too far to interpret as Vickery (2004) who regards Śrīndravarma’s retiring gesture as a move to institute “Theravāda Buddhism” as a royal cult of Cambodia. “Theravada Buddhism” is entirely out of place here, a highly ineffectual analytic neologism postdating these events by a good five centuries.

We would be hard pressed to presume the formal protocols involved in the production early-fourteenth century royal Khmer steles; but is linking “verbal idiom” to “lineage loyalty” any less discrete than presuming that all who don the ochre cloth observe en bloc the self-same ideology? Is it feasible to ascertain and measure creed-compliance? Is it specious to assume that religious institutions are that much different from civilian entities, familial or corporate? Does the richer analysis oblige us to reframe our linear construal of ascetic-arts traditions (paramparā) to something more peripheral or horizontal? Is it time to attribute a greater meaning to kinship relationships and to reduce the importance ascribed to ideology? Do people belong to ascetic-arts lineages simply by virtue of what they believe, or by the kinship patterns that effectively mirror their counterparts in secular society? In a similar way we see that the narrative derived from the bilingual Old Khmer and Pāli inscription K. 754 is ultimately wrought from the human dealings that the royal stele itself sought to chronicle. Even if there were important agreements in what individuals wished to believe, the fundamental bonds are not strictly ideological. Viewed as such, are we prepared to revalorize the hybrid nature of all social intercourse, both in and out of lineage life?

**Primordial Śakti and Sacrificial Human Slaughter**

The early Khmer stand out as unique among world practitioners of human sacrifice. This may be the outcome of extreme, perhaps excessive forms of Śiva worship. We begin with a loose clutch of ‘proto-tantric’ viewpoints. Historical records

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75 From the Pāli portion of the text, verse VII, line 14.
77 Coedès 1936, 14.
78 Confer, Ian Harris, Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice, 2005, 25.
79 See Baba Rampuri on ‘the need to privilege kinship relationships over ideology in comprehending ascetic-arts lineages’ developed in a number of talks and blogging.
go back to at least the beginning of the 5th century CE and the earliest Cham inscriptions that reflect the devotion to Bhadreśvara by the first Cham king Bhadravarman I (ca 400 CE) at My Son (present day Vietnam). The same cult emerged in the Cambodian sphere around Mt. Phu, present-day southern Laos. Mt. Phu was also known as Līṅgaparvāth for the natural ‘self-created’ phallus-like formation at its summit that was venerated as Śīva in the form of Bhadreśvara. How to gain structural sense of this devotion? It was not aimed solely at the figure of Śiva but the outgrowth of Śiva’s consort Śakti, the personification of the primordial power. Fecundity is Śakti main association, the life-giving energies of earth. As Śiva’s bride she is furthermore connected to The Sacred Mountain and variously worshipped as Pārvatī, “she of the mountains,” Umā Haimavatī, “the golden goddess,” and Śīkharavāsinī ‘who dwells on the summits.’ Śakti’s domain is specifically Śākta, largely distinguished by symbolic adoration of the female energy and the supreme divinity as Divine Mother. Other strong features of Śakta worship are the use of mantras (formulas), sorcery and the propitiation of the Goddess Herself with ritual blood and wine offerings. Together with Śiva, her consubstantial consort, they represent the paradigmatic divine family. The Goddess is eternally at Śiva’s side. She gazes admiringly whether Śiva is dancing in cosmic bliss or slaughtering his opponents. The love between them is deep and abiding. In one illustration we observe their family serenely engaged in religious activity. Pārvatī holds their small son Kārttikeya in her lap while their elder son, Gaṇeśa, helps his father string together garlands of severed human heads.

Only in its most outrageous forms does Śakta worship incorporate human sacrifice. Where did such practices originate? India’s cults of human sacrifice have left an indelible mark on her history. They are said to have begun around the 7th century in kingdom of Kāmarūpa (present day Assam), a marginal border-zone lingering between Vedic (civil) and primordial (savage) cultures. Some have regarded the semi-mythic land of Kāmarūpa as the “Tantric country par excellence.” Gorakhnath, the twelfth-century tantric yogi-saint and legendary inventor of Hatha-yoga may have come from Kāmarūpa, along with the sect of Aghora yogis famous for their despicable cruelties and licentiousness. From the terrifying histories of such ascetics the label “yogi” came to insinuate the most frightening and extreme of tantric practitioners (Bhattacharya 1997, 51).

E.A. Gait (1926) speaks of the infamous tantric Kāmākhya (Kāmākṣya) temple near present-day Guwahati, Assam. The temple is situated on a hill named Kāmāgiri. It is worshipped by sacrificial offering and eroticism, and considered a great pīṭha or center of pilgrimage in honor of the Goddess through ritual sexual symbolism. Its enormous sanctity is explained by a legend. It’s the place where Śiva and his consort Pārvatī met for their eon of pilgrimage in heaven and earth. After her death Lord Śiva went mad and carried her sacred corpse over his shoulder and wandered through the universe dancing obsessively. To cure Śiva’s madness Lord Viṣṇu cut the Goddess’s body into fifty pieces with his razor sharp discus (cakrī). The pieces represent a garland

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82 The name Aghori is usually translated as a-ghora, “not-terrified,” “fearless.” They are homeless ascetics who frequent crematories, eat from human skulls and once practiced ritual cannibalism. Reports tell of members degusting corpses at cremations sites. Aghoras believe that all of man’s conditioned tastes and aversions, his notions of good and bad should be destroyed. Apart from god in the form of Śiva (or his consort Kālī/Devi, etc.), they only respect their guru. They seem to be descendants of a very much older and widespread Kāpālika, lit. “Skull adepts.”
83 E. A. Gait, A History of Assam, 1926.
(vāṇamālā) of the Sanskrit syllables (aṅśara). The places where the pieces of her body fell became Her sacred pilgrimage and practice sites (śaktipīṭha or yogapīṭha). Devī’s vulva (yoni) dropped at Kāmākhya making it the most sacred site of all. The inner sanctum (garbhagṛha) is formed by a rock with a natural cleft that resembles a yoni. It remains ever moist by a natural spring. Once a year when the monsoon starts the water runs red with iron oxide.

Kāmākhya was renowned for performances of human sacrifice. The cult interpreted the Vedic injunction svarga kāmo yajeta (‘the heaven-desiring must sacrifice’) to its most distressing end. In 1565, 140 victims were beheaded in a single sacrificial ceremony. Eliade (Yoga 1964, 305) offers gripping details of the human sacrifices performed in Assam. ‘Those who volunteered were bhogis (enjoyers). From the moment they announced their intention of giving themselves to be sacrificed they became almost sacred. Everything they wanted was placed before them. They had their pick of any woman.’84 The “voluntary victims” were offered to the Goddess on huge copper trays. According to sources and archaeological evidence, kings alone performed these sacrifices. The British stopped the practice in 1832.85

The worship of the Earth Goddess Teri among the Kondh is worth mentioning. Derived from their early creation myth, the Kondh believe “there can be no fertility for their community without human blood falling on the ground.” The sacrifice seems to imply two things: (i) the deity, considered both impersonal and amorphous, can be made tangible; and (ii) communication is obtainable between the abstract god and its surrounding community.86 Over time the worship of Goddess Teri evolved the notion that human sacrifice was indispensable not only for securing the prosperity of the Kondh but the entire world. This gave rise to the Meriah sacrifices, the victims of which were usually children procured by the nearby Dom community. The children were strangled and cut into pieces and buried in the fields for the agricultural fertility.87 Victims were never “served” to the god. The god was not a cannibal. Similar to the bhogis, for the length of the ceremony meriah victims were believed to incarnate the divinity. It would seem that the Kondh achieved communication with the Goddess Teri through the agency of the leader-priest.88 The Kondh tradition of human sacrifice is likely not of great antiquity, perhaps post-medieval. The British put an end to it in the 1850’s. Present-day Kondhs still practice sacrifice—at least those not converted to Christianity—but bulls and other animals have replaced child victims.

Perhaps this explains why in India and Cambodia where the human sacrifice was made to the Goddess in the forms of Kālī, Durgā, Bhairava and Bhadrakāliī et al., it could only be performed by the king, a kṣatriya. Brahmins never performed human sacrifice.89 Harris (2005, 53-55) states without reference that ‘ritual suicide and probable human sacrifice in association to goddess cults also took place in the southern Indian Pallava kingdom from the seventh through ninth centuries.’ Making no mention of the middle Mekong riverside site of Lingaparvath, Harris puts forward the possibility that the Pallavan rites “were exported to Cambodia.” He also affirms that ‘Cambodia’s

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84 Eliade, Yoga, 1964, 305.
85 George Weston Briggs, Gorakhnāth and the Kāṇpha Yogī, 1938
86 According to Stephen Hodge, the Kondh inhabit the entire highland region of Phulbani, most of the highlands in western Ganjam and much of Koraput and Kalahandi in Orissa. See Hodge, “dombii as scavenger woman,” Archives of Indology (24 Apr 2000). For Meriah sacrifices, see Barbara Boal 1997.
87 Bhattacharya 1997, 39.
89 Bhattacharya 1997, 40.
final human sacrifice took place in 1877 at Ba Phnom when two prisoners of war were ritually beheaded at a royal sponsored ceremony for raising up the ancestors. It significantly occurred in the month of pisakh, sacred to Kālī.’ Harris furthermore alludes to evidence suggesting that Baudhāṇa clerics (ascetic priests), based around Ba Phnom, performed certain rituals such as prayers for the dead in the first few days of the just mentioned ceremony, but they left sometime before the final day when the coup de grâce occurred. Rain forecasts were apparently determined by the gushing of the blood from the headless necks. Sacrificial decapitations were reported at two other nineteenth-century Cambodian sites (Poree-Maspero 1962–1969, 1:246-248; Harris 2005, 55). Harris (2005, 257-258, n. 20) cites two further sources; Try (1991, 288) ‘asserts that a human sacrifice took place at Ba Phnom as late as 1884’ while Bonnefoy (1991, 2:923) proposes that ‘human sacrifices may have been offered to the tutelary deity (neak ta Krol) of Kompong Thom until 1904’; but as times progressed such practice were halted and underwent adjustments. Buffalos in rut replaced human victims but the fundamental aims of fertility and fecundity remained the same (Chandler 1974, 216-202; Harris 2005, 55).

Chronologically, sacrificial human slaughter among the Khmer was known as early as the 6th century. Are earlier occurrences recorded in Indian? Referring to a time before 589 CE, the Chinese History of the Sui Dynasty (Suì shū) contains the record of a Khmer tantric temple. ‘Near the Capital is a mountain named Ling-kia-po-p’o. Its summit is a temple that is constantly guarded by a thousand soldiers and consecrated to a spirit named P’o-to-li to which they sacrifice men. The king visits the sanctuary once a year to perform the rite at night.’ Coedes (1968, 66) identified the temple as Vat Phu overlooking the Mekong River in Champasak province, present day Laos (as mentioned above) and positioned at the summit of Liṅgāpārvata (Ling-kai-po-p’o), a sacred mountain. According to Wales (1953), “Vat Phu always remained a holy place of the utmost sanctity and received the constant gifts and homage of kings.”

**Mountain, Menhir, Liṅgam and Sacrifice**

Was Southeast Asia the original Kāmarūpa? Could the rites of human sacrifice, mountain worship, and the worship of the liṅgam all be traced to primordial cults that prevailed throughout ancient monsoon Asia? Were these early ‘proto-tantric’ forms of ritual supplication initially designed to promote agricultural and feminine fecundity? May the culturally sophisticated śivaṅgam—symbol of the fertilizing energy of Śiva—be read as a primitive phallic symbol “descended from the uncarved stones of earth cults”? Was the rite of setting up large long stones in the soil and then performing human sacrifice in front of them a widespread feature of primordial cultures throughout the Neolithic world? For Wales (1953) the earliest stage of “simple animism” was founded on the notion of the sacredness of soil. This later transformed into a “religion of sacrifice” where a people were compelled to spill human blood before the vastly amorphous divinity-as-nature. Then came the need to establish sacred sites where the sacrifice secured a means of contact with divinities living in alternate

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94 Bhattacharya 1997, 39.
95 Mus 1934, 8-11.

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spheres. Then they chose a place to raise a mound of earth where latent peripheric energies converge (Wales 1953, 43-45).

Concerning the linga there are varied opinions vis-à-vis its origin, function and purport, especially regarding its application in the elite religion of the early Khmer and the adoration of the Devarāja. Vertically the linga signifies an axis. Laterally it serves as a spatial locus, the hub of the tangible maṇḍalic perimeter. Hence the linga signifies the essential center or primal source of its specific locale. Formally established via consecration, the lingam also marks the essential plumb of an ontic topology to which every subsequent centers correlates. Contrasted to the menhir (‘tall upright stone’), the linga reckons more with the primitive conception of substitute bodies and the tribal leaders’ perception of ‘a consubstantial presence in the linga-like stone – as in himself – the sanctified “magical” forces of the earth and macrocosmic domain’ (Wales 1953, 43-45).

The character of the cult is furthermore expressed by its predilection for human sacrifice. The ritual offering of human sacrifice (or preserved severed heads in the case of certain tribes) may thus arise from the notion that the ‘soul force’ of enemies can be used to increase the fertility-giving forces of the local divinity for the good of the community.96 For Wales (1953), the intrinsic primordial notion supposes that every spatial-territorial unit possess its own distinctive ambiance relating to the group of people living there. Originally a naturally occurring stone outcrop97 became the site of the great divinity, and around this axis the town grew up. Not only a mound, but a tree as well may have been required to entreat and commune with the spirits of the soil in accordance with the animistic outlook that the site where a well-grown tree survived marked the point where fecundating energies converge (Wales 1953, 43-45). But these sacred mounds may symbolize more than the concentration of natural forces. We may also view them as macrocosmic loci, “magical centers” that laterally and vertically combine the axis mundi or cosmic pillar and thereby fashion a way for the people’s oblation to pass to divinities in alternate realms, on the one hand, and for receiving their benefactions in exchange, on the other hand. The proto-mañḍala of the fundamental center functions as an ambidirectional channel of mysterious immersion, diffusion and expanse to the far-flung spheres of interior foci.

The Cult of the Devarāja

In the ninth-century reign of Khmer king Jayavarman II this religion based chiefly on fecundity and the life-giving energy of Mother Nature was modified anew and finally supplanted by a politicized form of the Śaiva cult that was founded on rites of the Devarāja (divine rule). Through the prescriptive rites of the Devarāja the king sought empowerment as a cakravartin, ‘lord of the world,’ which denoted nothing less than an absolute merging of the monarch’s soul with the essence of Śiva’s ontic eminence or deification. From this time forward the Tantric rites of the Devarāja and the consecration of the king’s royal linga were the primary sources of royal legitimacy. At the popular level, too, adoration of the linga became supreme as sculpted stone phalli representing Śiva were enshrined throughout the expansive realm at the summits of pyramidal “temple-mountains” symbolic of Mt. Kailāsa, the navel peak of the universe.

Śiva’s correspondence with “the sacred mountain” has been mentioned above. Juxtaposed, however, with the Śiva-linga as installed in the central shrine of a temple,

97 Svayambhu, ‘naturally occurring’ or ‘self-born.’
itself symbolic of “the sacred mountain,” this does nothing but swell the connotations and ramifications of the primordial concept. As cosmic pillar or axis mundi, the royal temple that enshrines the linga specifies the sacred mountain Kailāsa, “the abode of the gods” and functions to consolidate the primal locus or essential center of the sacred-royal domain (cakrātīrtha).

Cambodian monarchs made exacting calculations to determine the kingdom’s essential power point, and there they erected the royal temple. This mysterious “point-zero,” as previously described, additionally functioned as the vital criterion to which all peripheral centers aligned. The linga of the king was the primal locus of not only the immediate geographical locale, but by extension the entire universe. In raising temple-mountains to enshrine the royal linga, each succeeding king was essentially constructing a personal quincunx, a geometric layout based of five points; four points forming a simple rectangle, the fifth point marking its center, its pole. The imperial līṅgam was therefore installed at the center of this religio-architectural maṇḍala as a “four-cornered-force-field,” a pyramidal complex of power and protection that mirrored the cosmos. Yet maṇḍalas, we should verify, connote far more than mere microcosms of the universe. Maṇḍalas are in fact receptacles of the gods, and as Eliade reminds us (1964), in Vedic India the deities actually “descended into the altar,” a conception that may have been “extremely widespread and existed far beyond the frontiers of India where the symbolism of royal cities, temples, towns, and by logical extension, every human habitation was based on a similar valorization of the sacred place as the center of the world and thereby the site of communication with heaven and hell.”98 Not at all disconnected, one can hardly help reflecting when exploring the ruins of the Greater Angkor Archaeological zone, that while thieves and archaeologists have divested the place of nearly every linga that ever stood, abandoned yonis remain in abundance.

The Sdok Kak Thom Inscription (K.235)

It was Khmer king Jayavarman II (770-850) who vowed that the Royal Chaplain would be chosen matrilineally, solely from the family of his venerable guru Śivakaivalya. From the history-yielding Sdok Kak Thom inscription dated 1052 from the temple of the same name in Prachinburi province, modern Thailand, we learn that the king led a strangely shifting peripatetic court life. During his approximate fifty-year reign, the king moved the capital at least five times. Debatable reasons for the king’s roving rule may in part be the pressures exerted by Java, a general term for the southern realms. More to our interest though, the royal inscription crucially attests the close alliance of Khmer ruling kṣatriya and priestly brāhmaṇa. “Whenever His Majesty King Jayavarman II and his family settled,” the inscription states, “the esteemed poet-guru Śivakaivalya and his family settled as well.”

After this the stone-hewn text introduces a character of novelty, mystery and color, Hiranyadāma a brāhmaṇa priest of presumed Indian birth. At the king’s request, in 802, Hiranyadāma accompanied His Majesty and His Majesty’s guru into the depths of the moss-laden forests of Mahendrapārvata (present-day Phnom Kroul). And there the Brāhmaṇa satisfied the king by performing the rites of the Devarāja ‘so the king may become the cakravartin or single ruler in the Land of Kambuja free from its dependency of the Javanese Empire.’ Next he turned to the king’s own guru ‘to reveal the secrets of the tantric rites and teach him the pertinent Tantric texts.’ P.C. Bagchi

98 Eliade 1964, 220.
(1929)99 identified these texts as four in number, named Vināśaika, Sammoha, Nayottara and Śirascheda. The four-part teaching cited in the epigraph comes from the Vāmaśaiva cult of Tumburu (a form of Śiva) and his four sister-goddesses (Caturbhaginī) known in India in the 7th and 8th centuries. These have also been portrayed as “The Four Faces of Tumburu” in which Tumburu is a four-faced variant of Śiva (Śaiva-caturmūrti), “Śiva in four-forms.” Only one of these four texts mentioned in the Sdok Kak Thom inscription presently survives, the Viṇāśikha-tantra.

To serve the stated interest of our central theme—that is, Buddha-Yoga-Śiva hybridity among the Old Khmer and Siamese—we make further mention of the worship of Tumburu and his four girl associates, also called goddesses (bhaginī) or sisters (kumārī). The origins of Tumburu are diverse and unclear. The speculated meaning of the name is enigmatic. He appears in Central Asian Tocharian literature as Dimbure and in Old Turkic writings as Dimburi, vis-à-vis recensions of the Maitreyasamtri-nātaka. In the Sanskrit nātaka, ‘theatrical production,’ Tumburu appears as one of three gandharvas, along Paṇcasikha and Citrasena, all of whom follow Dhartrāstra, a lokapāla, one of the “Four World-Guardians,” specifically of the East. But Tumburu is also the name of a yakṣa while the four-girl team or Caturbhaginī are similarly described as mahāyakṣinīyah (Viṇāśikha-tantra). They are pictured as standing on moving ships and entirely at home on the seas. The sisters appear repeatedly as Jayā, Vijayā, Jayanti (or Ajitā), and Aparājitā while their brother is sometimes called Kumāra, though apparently different from Kārtikeya. His true name seems to have been Tumburu. A strict-sense Baudhā version of the cult appears to be taught in Maṉjuśrīyamīlakalpa, the source that illuminates the four bhaginī sailing on a ship with their brother at the helm. Tumburu is also styled as sārthavāhah, ‘caravan leader or international trader.’100 For Sanderson (2009, 50, n. 22) the Śaiva Viṇāśikha-tantra, which centers on the cult of Tumburu and his sisters, represents a very early Śaiva Tantric complex that entered the orb of Baudhā devotion.

To summarize briefly, the Sanskrit-Khmer language Sdok Kak Thom stele of Prachinburi (Thailand) dated 1052 (K. 235) records the debut of the Khmer Devarāja and verifies the intimate relations that endured between priestly Brāhmaṇa rājaguru and ruling Kṣatriya for two and a half centuries. The inscription opens on the rājaguru figure, a religious agent we will speak again of later, and concludes by ascribing its authorship to the blue-blood Brāhmaṇa Sadaśiva, a direct descendant of Śivakaivalya, exactly 250 years after the great political event it commemorates. From the medieval seventh-century period in India and throughout much of Southeast Asia as well, we know that Śaiva Brahmin gurus commanded prestige in emerging kingdoms as royal instructors (rājaguru).101 Let us just observe that compared to priests (ceremonial officiants or purohitas), the Śaiva rājaguru was far less constrained by normative ritual operations that consisted in large of dramaturgic filler. Yet by interesting contrast, the Śaiva rājaguru relished the mobility and independence to subordinate “ritual” to the rites of a yoga that conceived the body as an ontic fount102 and furnished mantric

99 p.C. Bagchi, “On Some Tantric Texts Studied in Ancient Kambuja,” 1929, 754-769; and 1930, 97-107. Śiva is typically referred to as “four-faced” (caturānana, caturmakha, etc.) in Khmer inscriptions.
100 Maṉjuśrīyamīlakalpa (47.29b, 52a, 54c, p. 413, l. 12, etc.) as cited in Sanderson, 2009, 50, n. 22.
102 “as well as a means of ensouling of the ‘flower-body’ (puspāśarīra) in the Śaiva-Baudhā postcremation rites” described in the Old JavaneSE kakawin Desawarnana vis-à-vis the JavaneSE queen of Majapahit.” See Prapañca, Desawarnana (Nāgarakṛṣṭagama), (64.5; 67.2), trans. Robson, 1995, 7, 26, 71, 74, 99.
content to confirm initiation. The practice of “ritual,” contrasted to “rite” then basically aimed to establish and uphold the remembered immemorial prescriptive commands upon which the powerful maintained support, or at least acquiescence from a crucial support base. It must have been the visible, empirical results of his highly skilled and refined elaborations in responding to the needs of patrons individually that ultimately earned the Śaiva rājaguruḥ acclaim from society’s highest rung.

**Brahmins in Siam**

The thirteenth century brought rapid decline to the greatly expanded Khmer Empire. As the center retracted islands of culture appeared on its waning peripheries, self-sufficient polities thriving in their substrates. Events corresponded in some degree to the Mongol invasions of northwest India that turned Kashmir into a vassal state. Toward the end of the century Mongols forces occupied parts of Punjab for decades. Collaboration between Cambodia and India was interrupted during this period. Locally, diminishing Angkorian supremacy invited incursions from its northern, northwest and western edges, much of which was highly Khmerized. This was also the time that a quasi-historical Ramkhamhaeng began consolidation of his Sukhothai kingdom that laid the foundations for a Tai national identity. To emphasize their recent liberation from Angkor the Sukhothai rulers gave a new definition to their ethnic appellation and in one fell swoop the Tai became the Thai, which was said to mean, “free.” Along with the Siamese-Tai penetrations, a new religious format also took root; the Singhalese Pāli-based dispensation that, in Bhattacharya’s view, “made Cambodia what it is today.”

With the steady decline of Angkorian court life Khmer Brahmin families shifted allegiance to evolving courts of neighboring Siam, particularly Ayutthaya. For despite the insertions of Bauddha-cult prescriptions and making such schemata their state sponsored faith, the pomp-thirsty rulers of Old Siam endeavored keenly to surround themselves with the appurtenances of Indo-Iranic civilization. And to bolster the façade of theocratic eminence the Siamese recruited court Brahmins from Cambodia who, as émigré priests, may have suffered greatly as grossly over-qualified foreign relics in a land less evolved in Vedic knowledge. The Siamese capital of Ayutthaya was established in 1350. It was named after the ancient Indian city of Ayodhyā (Ayothayā Si Rām Thep Nakhon), the legendary birthplace of Vedic god Rāma of the epic period Rāmāyana, a text well familiar throughout the royal courts of Southeast Asia. Given this outlook it seems rather clear that Khmero-Siamese Ayutthayan leadership demonstrated two strong ambitions from the start: the comprehensive soaking up of all things Vedic and the military expansion of its territory. How might Wales in 1931 have observed these events? ‘Ayutthayan troops moved steadily east annexing Angkorian province after province? According to some, though not all four of the divergent Ayutthayan chronicle traditions, the Angkorian center suffered unremitting violence by Ayutthayan forces, and in 1431 it was finally sacked.’ For reasons unclear, Ayutthaya chose not to occupy the city and, perhaps distrustful of its intricate waterways, had them destroyed. In this way the Great Temple City was abandoned and Cambodia became a vassal of Ayutthaya “unnoticed and almost

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103 ‘[G]nosis, not ritual was the supererogatory adornment’ (Sanderson 2010, 12).
105 “Thai” is a loosely used word both in Thai and in foreign languages. See Smalley, Linguistic Diversity and National Unity: Language Ecology in Thailand, 1994.
106 Bhattacharya 1997, 50.
unmentioned” in history. Here Shawcross (1991, 41) would seem to accept the tradition of Wales (1931), et al, that Ayutthaya attacked and sacked Angkor Vat. But this reading of the sources contested by Vickery (2004) who cites later studies such as Wade (2000)107 describing the various Ayutthayan annals as “hugely dislocated accounts.” Vickery (2004, 22-23) in turn voices favor for a ‘growing consensus that Ayutthaya actually arose from Hsien (Chinese: Siam) as a coastal power.’

With the devastation of Angkorian center we can easily imagine a mass conscription of Khmer Brahmin families by Ayutthaya and other regional vassal courts as political advisors, scientists, astrologers, artists, doctors, and conductors of sacred Brāhmanical rites; but who really knows? Ayutthayan-produced historical data concerning these events would have gone up in flames along with Brahmins when the Burmese razed and pillaged city in 1767, thus ending the Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty. In any case, royal Khmer chronicles recount Cambodian Bauddhas taken as captives when Siamese troops sacked and plundered Angkor (Mak Pheun 1984, 144; Harris 2005, 30). For Harris, this raises provocative questions concerning the direction of a Pāli-based Buddha in fifteenth-century Ayutthaya where ‘inclusion of human and cultural assets of specifically religious character as booty may suggest that the Siamese longed for the opportunity to strengthen their bonds with the venerable system.’ Harris further cites evidence of a “curious schizophrenia” exhibited among the Siamese who, deeming Cambodia a fount of cultural wealth, felt compelled to exterminate its ethnic heritage (Harris 2005, 31). The Ayutthayan monarch Prasat Thong (1629–1656), the builder of Wat Chaiwatthanaram in honor of the destruction inflicted on Cambodia, sent architects to study Angkorian temples (Fouser 1996, 31; Harris 2005, 31).

Ayutthaya to Bankgok

Unrestrained adoption of Khmer Sanskritic heritage was a well-established rule in the Menam basin by the 14th century. Khmer influence on the sense of kingship was also apparent from the founding of Ayutthaya. Departure from an earlier tribal leader concept prevalent in thirteenth-century Sukhottai is also evident. The Khmer formation of kingly divinity explicit in the rites of the Devarāja was far more appealing to Ayutthayan royalty. But subsequent Tai kings did not enshrine the royal liṅgam. ‘Divinity was rather imparted to the kings through their occupancy of the sacred palace, undergoing ritual bathing (abhiṣeka) and the rites of coronation. Khmer Brahmin priests conducted all these rites. We are thus provided with a clear example of the role these émigré Brahmins priests performed in conferring state legitimacy in Old Siam. Even to this day through the rites of coronation when the sovereign is identified with Śiva and Viṣṇu, the divinities are held to impart their śakti or celestial power to the sovereign king. In is further worth noting that Khmer-style temples were in almost every city of the Menam delta region and its immediate hinterland in the 14th century, in particular Suphanburi, Ratburi, Phetburi and Lophburi (Vickery 1996, 14).108 Would the highest prized gurus and most sought out priests for the Menam basin courts have belonged the lineage of Śivakaivalya? Did legends still live of the famed tantric family that alone held the keys to the rites of consecration for the awesome cult of the Devarāja that could elevate a king to the stature of a god?

Indigenized Buddha guilds (saṅghas, nikāyas) underwent important transformation as well through the long four-hundred-year Ayutthaya period. These were formally divided along traditional lines of habitat or living space and accordingly

rationed out two distinct Lebensraums\textsuperscript{109} - namely, \textit{araññavāsī} and \textit{gāmavāsī}. The \textit{araññavāsī} or “forests-dweller” mendicants engaged in \textit{tapas} and other forms of asceticism encompassed by yoga. The ‘village or town-dwelling’ \textit{gāmavāsī} clerics (including the urban \textit{nagarāvāsī} clergy) - resided cenobitically in populated areas to pursue education and teach common people, and typically accept bureaucratic offices. Their municipal cloisters “were under state control in a profitable symbiosis with the state hierarchy” (Heikkilä-Horn 1996, 93-111).

Prior to the founding of the Ayutthayan dynasties (1351-1767), the riverine archipelagic entrepôt appears to have been a vassal polity of Khmer domination (Khanittanan 2004, 2005).\textsuperscript{110} The capital was a flourishing cosmopolis. Its administration was highly sophisticated, its population extremely international. ‘Nearly half of the kingdom was peoples with Peguans, taken in war, and many Lao. The royal guard was Chinese and Muslim while the standing army was composed in equal measure of Thai, Mon, Khmer and Lao’ (Choisy 1687, 242, cited in Reid 2004, 11). Simon de La Loubère (1693) underscored the mixed or ‘hybrid’ character of the dominant regional population, and the freedom of the kingdom’s trade regulations that attracted many of foreign merchants and brokers, the “great multitude of strangers of different nations, who settled there with the liberty of living according to their own customs, and of publicly exercising their several ways of worship.” Every nation had its own living quarter. Each nation chose its chief.\textsuperscript{111}

Ayutthaya was also very literate. A high percentage of educated aristocrats and other elites could read and write in both Khmer and Siamese (Khanittanan 2004, 375-77). ‘They must have been living in the same neighborhoods’ (Khanittanan 2005, 324). In fact, bilingualism may have even been strengthened and sustained by Ayutthaya’s successive assaults on Angkor Vat in 1369, 1388 and 1431, and by the massive numbers of Khmer-speaking captives they would likely have returned with (Kesetsiri 1999: 25, Khanittanan 2004, 375). Quaritch Wales (1934, 3-4, 47-48) invokes a more explicit depiction of the final vanquishment of Angkor Thom resulting in ‘an inflow of Khmer \textit{kṣatriya} and \textit{brāhmaṇa} elites who influenced the Ayutthayan king Trailoka (1448-1488) to completely reshape his administration on the lines of Angkorian principles and methods.’ Vickery (1996, 4-5) however, describes Wales’s assertions as “entirely speculative.”

**Language shifts: \textit{rāja-sap}**

Around the middle part of the 18th century in approach of Ayutthaya’s annihilation by Burmese forces, a language shift would seem to have occurred. The descendents of bilingual Ayutthayans dwindled and the residents became increasingly Siamese-speaking monoglots. But after more than four centuries of living side by side an abundance of Old-Khmer and Khmer-Indic verbal elements had pervaded all aspects of Ayutthayan language (Varasarin 1984; Khanittanan 2005, 324; Diller, 573). How to represent such an indistinct vernacular that retains more words of Khmer derivation than actual “Tai” cognates (Khanittanan 2005, 324), and whose honorific-register, which comprises more than a thousand words for polite or formal usage, is modelled on royal or courtly contexts (Diller, 567-568)? Are its non-Tai lexica “foreign” derived? How to describe the majority of its lexical items: as calques and

\textsuperscript{109} For use of Lebensraum in a contemporary context see Tambiah 1992: xiii, xv.


\textsuperscript{111} La Loubère, The Kingdom of Siam, 1969 [1691], 112, also 10-11; cited in Reid 2004, 11.
loanwords? How are we to characterize the Ayutthayan language? Is it Khmer, Siamese, an ambiguous hybrid? Vickery (1974, 6) argues that Ayutthayan linguistic and administrative patterns may both be attributed to a long autonomous local Khmer heritage; and that even if directly influenced by Angkor, the Siamese defeat of the Angkorian capital in 1431 or any other date, could not entirely account for this process. It may well be due to Angkorian power having taken hold in the Menam/Chao Phraya River basin two or three centuries before Ayuthaya’s rise, Vickery suggests.

About four centuries after the inauguration of the Ayutthayan dynasty, king Ramatibodi (Rāma I) founded his new deltaic line down river in Bangkok in 1782. For the name and emblem of his new royal house he adopted the mytho-magical chakri, a Sanskritic reference to the discus-like missile (cakrī) that is typically held in Viṣṇu’s right hand. The most handsome version of this razor-sharp weapon is the sudarśana cakrī that boasts 108 serrated edges. The cakrī holds other denotations, as well, the wheel of a monarch’s chariot, for instance, rolling across his expansive dominion. But it was not the Viṣṇu’s cakrī that alone became the symbol Siam’s fourth traditional center of power. This emblem of the Ratanakosin realm also incorporated Śiva’s triśūla whose three-pronged spear pointing vertically upwards from the axis of the cakrī demonstrates clearly the syncretic intertwinment, or amalgamation of the two divine symbols.

Not to depart from established custom, the House of Chakri acquiesced to precedence and sought reliance on Khmer stately grandeur. The rulers must have also found late-Ayutthayan language forms essential to the new realm’s administrative architecture, and they became the standard-bearers of “Bangkok Thai.” This may also account, at least in part, for the remarkable presence in modern Thailand of honorific words that intriguingly befit its holiest and most decorous institutions. The honorific Siamese “royal-language” called rāja-sap (Thai ra:cha:sàp),112 which initially developed in Ayutthaya, expanded much further under Chakri rule. Diller (2006) researched etymologies of honorific forms and confirmed their derivation from a blend of Old Khmer and “Khmero-Indic” linguistic elements (Sanskrit and Pāli) originally borrowed through Old Khmer before their partial assimilation in Siamese.113 This polite, honorific “royal register” that developed in the early Ratanakosin period was based on earlier Ayutthayan Old Khmer forms for speaking directly to or about the royal monarch, his household and nobility. Their aim was to elevate His Royal Majesty high above the common level of his subjects and to clothe him in the fabric of mystery and sanctity (Wyatt 1982).114 Similarly ascetics, sadhus and śrāmaṇa, and religious specialists generally speaking,115 commanded a higher status than commoners, though naturally far short of the royal family. In this way an analogous, though much less lavish “priestly register” evolved for modulating discourse with and on individuals holding religious status. It is interesting to note that when engaging this ritual “priestly register” people were effectively speaking Khmer with Siamese syntax (Khanittanan 2005, 324). In the broader context, Cooke (1968) shows that these hybrid ceremonial languages show how the obtrusion of pronominals and particles expressing regal

112 Or rachasap, ‘racha’ is derived from Sanskrit rāja (‘king, sovereign’), ‘sap’ from Sanskrit śābda (‘sonorous, sound, word, speech’). See Wilaiwan 2005, 315-335.
115 “śrāmaṇa, brāhmaṇa, tapasvī, yati”: a clutch of synonyms (line 42) from the Khmer-language Inscription 4, Wat Pa Mamuang, Sukhothai, (C.E. 1349); cited by Skilling (2007, 208, n. 14) to illustrate “the hybridity of religious personnel and objects of worship in Sukhothai” (185) at a time just before the founding of Ayuthaya. See Coedès (1924) [EHS 11 Part I, Section 5, (text), 486, Face I, lines 52–53 (tr.), 491].
grandeur and “elegance-in-deference” methodically replaced “Tai” colloquial pronouns resulting in completely new sets of word-units.¹¹⁶

Sakdinā and the status of Brāhmaṇas

Brāhmaṇas in Ayutthaya played important roles in ritual duties that were often performed in conjunction with members of the Baudhā sanīgha, and in deciding legal judgements in the courts (Skilling 2007, 199).¹¹⁷ Thus the founding Chakri monarch designed his Bangkok administration on the model of Ayutthaya, its court, bureaucracy and state ideals (Handley 2006, 28; Skilling 2007, 204). It was furthermore the custom among pre-Modern Southeast Asian kings who ruled as “absolute proprietors of the land”¹¹⁸ to issue usufruct property grants to its nobility. Ayutthayan kings made specified rankings using sakdinā or “status marks”¹¹⁹ to standardize this practice. The system classified the social hierarchy comprised of royalty, government officials and brāhmaṇa officiants in a way that reflected their title, rank or position held, and which furthermore determined both the quantity and quality of allotted acreage. The greater the number of “status-marks” the greater the amount of land received, at least in theory. This indicates a feudal post-slavery social order that was based on birth within the Royal Household, the Aristocracy or the Brahmin lineage that ensured the apportionment of Crown Property. In effect this created a moneyed class that controlled the means of agricultural production, i.e. the land and the people who occupied the land. It imposed taxation on indentured peasants and thereby encouraged the nobility to enter politics (Reynolds 1987, 143). The Ayutthayan ranking of royal hierarchy placed princes highest at 20,000 sakdinā. Brahmins were listed in the civil code hierarchy along with important department ministers. The Mahārājaguru was the highest listed Brahmin with entitlements equaling 10,000 sakdinā (Griswold 1969, 111; Skilling 2007, 199).

Skilling (2007, 204) expresses the need of further research on the history of Siamese Brahmans. The aristocratic status of the Mahārājaguru that is glimpsed from Three Seals Law Code suggests that Ayutthaya’s brāhmaṇa community were powerful, privileged and socially unique. Still the fate of the brāhmaṇas after Ayutthaya’s collapsed remains a mystery. Were important court officiants and their families destroyed in the Burmese assault on the Ayutthayan capital? Might this partly account for the conspicuous absence of Brahminical performance in the transitory fourteen-year Thonburi Kingdom? The Thonburi era stands utterly silent on Brāhmaṇical shrines and rites performed. Were Ayutthayan vassals such as Lophburi, Suphanburi, Rachaburi and Phetburi undesirably affected by the maelstrom at their center?

Initiation of the Monarch

Brahmins were essential to the working of the state and indeed the initiation of the king. The perpetuation of Brahmin heritage was therefore incumbent on the royal palace in order to maintain of a prosperous realm. Numerous Siamese centers of power had Brahmin communities, shrines and histories. We learn from Skilling (2007, 199) that the states of Phetchburi and Nakhon Si Thammarat had ‘giant swings’ (sao ching-

¹¹⁶ Cooke, “Pronominal Reference in Thai, Burmese, and Vietnamese,” 1968, 4-68.
¹¹⁹ Modern Thai sakdinā (<Khmero-Siamese śakti-nā) seems to be a ‘loanword compounded neologism’ with constituents from two different languages, Skt. śakti, ‘power’ + Siamese nā, ‘land, field,’ thus rendered literally as “power over land.” Griswold (1969, 111) offers “dignity marks” that “became a measure of a person’s value.”
cha) as Bangkok still retains today. Similarly Phetchburi, Phatthalung and Nakhon Si Thammarat had Brahmin chapels (devasthāna) as found in the current Ratanakosin capital. In fact, nearly from the start of Chakri dynasty in 1782 the Brahmin community has centered itself at the geomantic heart of the old walled city. Here the Devāsthāna, ‘place of the devas,’ reflects the importance of brāhmaṇa community in Old Siam, and by association throughout Southeast Asia. This is absolutely clear by the fact that the first Chakri king erected his private Brāhmaṇical complex at the center of the capital’s mandalic core in replication of Ayutthaya. Founded in 1784, it is a one-minute walk from Sao Ching-Cha, or “Giant Swing,” the famous city landmark where spectacular festivals in honor of Īśvara (or Śiva) used to take place each winter solstice. Devasthāna is a charming walled compound. The Thais call Bot Phrām, “Brahmin Hall.” This again goes to show how Indic rites and the ceremonial protocols of late Khmer kingdoms, especially between 1100 and 1300, influenced the perspectives Siamese royals; and how the fusion of ritual and state ceremony defined their present belief structure. Brahmins remained essential to the state and just as in Ayutthaya so in Krung Thep where Brahmin priests continue to preside over royal rites and participate alongside Bauddha clerics in ritual performance,120 like consecrating pillars for vihāra construction,121 and thereby show the syncretic and hybrid manner of devotion expressed in Siam. Still, the grandest yearly ritual that the Brahmans enact is the annual Royal Ploughing Ceremony that marks the beginning of the rice-growing season and ensures rich harvest for the realm. Nonetheless, the most preeminent and imminent formality performed by Bangkok’s Brahman priests, as led by Phrā Rājaguruḥ Vamadevamuni, is the abhiṣeka or coronation rite that marks the prescribed investiture of the monarch and/or consort with regal power with particular attention the ritualized placement of the crown upon the head of the Royal Initiand and the presentation of other articles of regalia. The Ratanakosin Devasthāna is a fully functioning spiritual institution.

With the passing of time the great prestige once conferred on Brahmins by the Bangkok court showed marked depreciation and their status grew increasingly subservient. It was during the Fifth Ratanakosin Reign that traditional Brahmin-held positions in the legal system ceased to be exclusive Brahmin preserves (Skilling 2007, 199). Then around the turn of the 20th century a certain outstanding Cambodian family left the royal service altogether and carried off with them sacred manuscripts with instructions for conducting important state ceremonies. In attempt to recover these sacred texts, the government imprisoned the head priest’s mother. To win her release some of the manuscripts were handed over. According to Wales (1931), the government actually feared the commotion that a forceful effort to obtain the remaining documents might have caused and dropped the whole affair.122

Closing remarks: Hybridity, syncretism, grafting, crossbreeding, commingling & creolization

The initial interests, intentions and motivations in pursuing this study were to locate extant ascetic-arts elements primordial, indigenous or adventitious to early Khmer-Siamese religious culture. Might any such elements be traced to the rise of a hybrid soteriological advance? Primordially directed artefacts retain the highest compelling appeal to us as drawn from the wellspring of elements tempered in the luster

120 Ian Harris, 2007, 8-9.
121 McDaniel 2013, 307-308.
122 Wales 1931, 55.
of contiguous loci pondered. This needs to be adopted, adapted and developed, and in every conceivable manner evaluated.

We have taken the notion of hybridity as parable. Peter Skilling (2007) seems to disregard this metaphoric facet. He expresses some aversion to “syncretism” “with its implications of adulterating an imagined ‘pure’ religion,” and possibly unconsciously elevates “hybridity” to a kind of rhetorical figure. “Even if ‘syncretism,’” Skilling writes, “is acceptable as a descriptive term, it is not an accurate model or teleology” (“it doesn’t describe what’s going on”). And by contrast, he delineates “hybridism” as “creative and selective use of diverse forms, an expression of ideologies in which the boundaries are fluid, if they exist at all” (Skilling 2007, 186).

But is there any real distinction between the two terms? Hybridity originates in biology and taxonomy, the apparent result of quasi-spontaneous instances of animal husbandry, the offspring of a domesticated swine and a wild boar for example. The term derives from Latin *hybrida*, a variant of *ibrida*, literally “mongrel.” “Crossbreeding,” then, may just as well occur in the wild—as may the broad trope of vernacularization. In this regard we call upon Françoise Vergès’s “Writing on Water: Peripheries, Flows, Capital, and Struggles in the Indian Ocean” (2003). She examines the natural occurrences of vernaculars and chronicles the threat that these historically posed in the context of European colonial empires. When ships arrived to distant shores they “wished to destroy vernacular cultures of hybridity and creolization” in order to establish control over markets, insert their rigid ‘vocabulary of trade and forge tightened networks that serve their strategic and financial interests’ (Vergès 2003, 248). What about contemporary impositions such as “Buddhism,” “Theravāda,” and “Theravāda Buddhism”? Do these usages reveal comparable indications? Does colonial scholarship continue to this day? How to speak precisely of those products neither driven nor superintended by the wardens of ideological imperative; but rather by the natural commingling that results from kinship relations, the merging of feelings and the politics of conciliation? We would have to speak of Jawi in a later paper.

By way of concluding, we restate our aims to assist new students as they find their way through the Lower Mekong River Basin, a transcultural zone that is shrouded in obscurity and tragic neglect. As a consequence, this paper has intended to provide postcolonial and cultural studies practitioners with a meaningful array of access tools that at once explain, counterpoise and connect with the flanking spheres of mainland, peninsular and archipelagic Southeast Asia. At the forefront of this project is the conscious acceptance of routinely overlooked indigenous, emic or inbuilt approaches that exogenous, colonial or etic scholarship has falsely represented through distortive constructs like Primordialism, Animism, Shamanism and Brahmanism, Buddhism, Shaivism, and Modern Postural Yoga, et al. But at the end of the day, we shall likely acquiesce with the youthful sentiment of George Coedès (1927), that ‘the marvelous variety of civilizing forces existing simultaneously and successively in this region make for a fascinating study and research.’

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124 See Sritantra 2014, 12.
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Meditations on the Foul in Thai Manuscript Art

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Introduction

Meditation is an essential part of Buddhism. Texts on meditation form a small but important fraction of canonical as well as post-canonical literature. Meditation aims to develop mental discipline and to cultivate a wholesome, awake state of mind which eventually expands to practice of the Dhamma. It is regarded as a world-renouncing activity and, sometimes combined with chanting and visualization methods, helps to reach a mental state of happiness or delight (pīti) that is one of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment (satta bojjhāṅgā), which apart from happiness include mindfulness, investigation, effort, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity.

Happiness in the Buddhist sense, however, is not to be misinterpreted as a state of individual happiness or temporary emotional contentment. Happiness cannot be self-centered or selfish in the Buddhist context. It is rather a peaceful state of mind that has overcome all desire (taṇhā) and attachment to worldly things, situations, persons and even one’s own body, which are the principal causes of suffering (duḥkha). Duḥkha is often described as suffering or emotional pain, but it also refers to the effects of impermanence and change, as well as conditioned states of the mind; referring to the human mind that is dependent on, or affected by, something/someone or an event/situation. Meditation is one powerful tool to overcome conditioned states of the mind by focusing in different ways on the body, on emotion, on the conscious mind as well as unconscious states of the mind. Common methods are contemplation of the breath and body movements, contemplation of a meditation device like an image (for example image of a Buddha in samādhi posture, mandala drawing, yantra design, mosaic, painting), or an object (for example Buddha statue, kasiṇa/meditation disc, candle flame, water, beads, a natural object, or the empty space between two objects), but also contemplation of sounds and smells in order to reflect on one’s own senses and emotions. To advance their meditation skills, monks can choose to enter an unfavorable or polluted environment to practice meditation, where they are exposed to unpleasant temperatures, darkness, harmful animals, as well as disturbing smells and noises. Examples of such places are (tropical) forests, caves, mortuaries or cemeteries (charnel grounds). The theoretical foundations on the latter can be found in Buddha’s discourse on the practice of mindfulness (Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta). Buddhaghosa, a 5th century Buddhist scholar active in Sri Lanka compiled extensive commentaries on major texts of the Pali canon, including texts on meditation. His commentaries are constantly used and quoted in Southeast Asian Buddhist countries where his Visuddhimagga is regarded as the principal text on meditation. (Shaw 2006, p. 5)

Meditations on the foul in Thai manuscript art

Meditations on the foul, or morbid meditations, may be the most efficient of all meditation practices that aim to overcome conditioned states of the mind, attachment
to the world and to one’s own body, and emotionality - particularly the emotion of disgust which is perhaps one of the strongest human emotions.

The highest state of meditation is reached when both attraction and repulsion cease to exist. “In the arahant, there is neither liking nor disliking: he regards all things with perfect equanimity, as did Thera Maha Moggallana when he accepted a handful of rice from a leper.” (Francis Story)

The method of meditation on the foul belongs to the earliest teachings of Buddhism, as laid down in the before mentioned Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, which in the Theravāda tradition forms the tenth discourse in the Majjhima Nikāya. Navasivathikapabbāṁ, the section of the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta on the “nine charnel-ground observations”, gives detailed explanations of meditations on the nine states of decay of the dead human body.

Meditations on the foul were widely practiced in Thailand. It is a topic that is very well documented in Thai manuscript painting of the 18th and 19th centuries. Many manuscripts containing the popular story of the monk Phra Malai include one or more scenes of morbid meditations. Phra Malai is the well-known legend of a Buddhist monk who is believed to have travelled to heavens and hells by his acquired merit and the power of meditation. These manuscripts were often commissioned by families of deceased persons as funeral presentation books or commemoration volumes. The Thai, Lao and Cambodian Collections of the British Library hold over 20 such manuscripts, all of them beautifully illustrated with scenes from the monk’s encounters and his teachings to the lay people. But not only Phra Malai manuscripts contain illustrations of meditations on the foul. There are also other manuscripts containing small collections of extracts from the Pāli canon or post-canonical texts that are illustrated with scenes of monks meditating on the foul. Manuscripts containing pictures of all nine or, according to Buddhaghoṣa, ten types of meditations on the foul are relatively rare, compared to manuscripts that include only one or two such paintings. However, looking through a variety of manuscripts, it is possible to find depictions of most of the nine or ten types of morbid meditations.

Illustrations of meditations on the foul according to the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

The oldest manuscript in the British Library collections dealing with meditation is actually just a fragment of a folding book dating back to the 18th century. The manuscript, as far as one can see from the fragment in Pāli language written in Khmer script, deals with various states of knowledge, or levels of insight. The illustrations in this manuscript seem to be similar to a 19th century manuscript that was found in Chaiya (Surat Thani Province) and described by Achārya Buddhāsā Indapañño (Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu 1969, pp. 68-93). Another comparable but more extensive manuscript in Sinhalese script from Sri Lanka, though without illustrations, was described by T. W. Rhys Davids as a “Yogavacara’s manual of Indian mysticism as practiced by Buddhists” (Rhys Davids 1896).

The illustration below on folio 4 of the British Library manuscript depicts a Buddhist monk contemplating the unavoidable exposure of the human body to suffering, here shown as illness and death. The latter is symbolized by the bloated corpse by the riverside. Until the early Bangkok period, the Thai practiced a variety of methods to treat the physical remains of the dead: they cremated or buried their dead, dropped the corpses in rivers, or fed them to vultures before the leftovers were cremated if the deceased wished to offer his body to wild animals.
Buddhadāsa Indapañño explains this scene as follows: “Auf dieser Wissensstufe hat man die Einsicht, das alle Seinsgebilde die Ursache des Elends sind, die man daher stets fürchten soll, als wenn man einem Löwen begegnete. Der Leichnam am Boden erinnert den Übenden daran, in welchem Ausmaß das Leben dem Leiden unterworfen ist.” (Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu 1968, p. 75) (Translation: At this stage of knowledge one has the insight that all forms of being are the cause of suffering, which one should fear as if one met a lion. The corpse on the ground reminds the exercising person to which extent life is subject to suffering.)

Manual of a Buddhist mystic on meditation practices (yogāvacara).
British Library Or.14447, fol. 4

This illustration also refers to the first of the nine charnel-ground meditations according to the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, describing the observation of the bloated, blue-black and festering corpse.
1) Bloated, blue-black and festering corpse

Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu seyyathāpi passeyya sarīraṃ sivathikāya chaḍḍitaṃ ekāhamataṃ vā dvīhamataṃ vā tīhamataṃ vā uddhumātakaṃ vinīlakaṃ vipubbakajātaṃ. So imameva kāyaṃ upasaṃharati: ‘ayaṃ pi kho kāyo evaṃdhammo evaṃbhāvī evaṃanatīto’ ti.

Again, monks, a monk, when he sees a dead body that has been thrown in a charnel-ground, dead for one, two or three days, swollen, blue and festering, regarding his own body considers thus: “Indeed, this body is of the same nature, it will become like that and cannot escape it.”

(Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (Pali-English version): http://www.tipitaka.org/stp-pali-eng-parallel)

Meditation on this first stage of the decomposing human corpse is among the most frequently depicted scenes of meditations on the foul in Thai manuscript painting. Such illustrations often follow a similar structure: there is a bloated, blue or festering corpse on the ground, usually with bulging eyes and a painful facial expression. Sometimes the corpse is partly covered with a piece of cloth, but usually it can be identified to be a female or male corpse. Shown either in the same painting or in a separate painting on the same folio is a monk, either in sitting or standing meditation. Near the monk one can usually see a tree, but often the corpse is also placed near a tree as shown in the illustration below from a central Thai folding book from the late 18th or early 19th century containing a selection of extracts from the Tipitaka together with twenty pairs of illustrations depicting scenes of various meditation methods, teaching of monks or novices, illness and death, and scenes of traditional healing methods. The texts may have been chosen for the purpose of recitation at a funeral or memorial service as the recitation marks in red color suggest.

Extracts from the Tipitaka, British Library Or.13703, f. 14

Another frequent appearance is the combination of two opposite paintings, one of them showing a meditation on the foul scene, the other depicting a scene where a monk pulls the pamsukula cloth that is wrapped around the corpse. The pamsukula cloth, according to the Mahāvagga, can be used as a robe by monks.
The illustration above is from a 19th century central Thai manuscript containing the legend of the monk Phra Malai together with extracts from the Tipitaka. The painting on the right side, again, shows a monk in sitting meditation, but this time included in the same painting is a blue-greyish, bloated corpse. This time, the monk is shown with some of his utensils, including a meditation mat, alms bowl and folded umbrella. On the opposite side, the monk pulls the pamsukula cloth from the corpse with his right hand while holding his fan in his other hand. This act is an important part of traditional Thai funeral rites and is often seen as a method of transferring merit to the deceased in practical Thai Buddhism. The second method of charnel-ground meditation is explained as follows:

2) Corpse gnawed by wild animals

Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu seyyathāpi passeyya sarīraṃ sivathikāya chaddītaṁ kākehi vā khajjamānaṁ kulalehi vā khajjamānaṁ giyjehi vā khajjamānaṁ kannkehi vā khajjamānaṁ sunakhehi vā khajjamānaṁ byaggehehi vā khajjamānaṁ dipihi vā khajjamānaṁ singālehi vā khajjamānaṁ vīvīdehi vā pānakajātehi khajjamānaṁ. So imameva kāyaṁ upasaṁharati: ‘ayaṁ pi kho kāyo evaṇḍhammo evaṇṁbhāvi evaṇamataīo’ ti. Again, monks, a monk, when he sees a dead body that has been thrown in a charnel-ground, being eaten by crows, being eaten by vultures, being eaten by falcons, being eaten by herons, being eaten by dogs, being eaten by tigers, being eaten by leopards, being eaten by jackals and being eaten by different kinds of creatures, regarding his own body considers thus: “Indeed, this body is of the same nature, it will become like that and cannot escape it.”

(ibid.)

Scenes of this method can be frequently found in Thai manuscript illustration, too. Often stray dogs or black colored birds, perhaps crows, can be seen gnawing on the corpses. In the Thai tradition, it was regarded as an act of merit if the dying person dedicated the flesh of his dead body to wild animals. Sometimes funeral assistants were hired to cut off the flesh from the skeleton to make it easier for the wild animals to feed on it. A report from the May 1866 edition of the Bangkok Recorder explains: “The
corpse was first to be offered to the vultures, a hundred or more... the sexton seemed to think that he too was making merit by cutting off parts of the body and throwing them to the hungry dogs, as the dying man had done in bequeathing his body to these carrion-feeders. The sexton gathered up the skeleton and put it back into the coffin, which was lifted by four men and carried around the funeral pile three times.” (Bradley 1884, p. 267)

British Library Or.15372, f. 28

The illustrations above are from a central Thai folding book dating back to the 19th century containing the legend of Phra Malai with a selection of short texts from the Tipitaka. On the right side, a monk is sitting in meditation in front of two corpses: one is bloated with bulging eyes and crows feeding on it. The other corpse is wrapped in a cover woven from long bamboo sticks and cotton rope. On the left side, a monk is practicing meditation while standing in front of a corpse that is bound by one long cotton string from the legs going up to the hands and neck. This was part of traditional Thai treatment of corpses which also helped to keep corpses in shape that had to be fitted in a seated position in large urn-like containers before they were driven on a carriage to the cremation ground. However, also smaller wild animals were used to illustrate this type of meditation as shown in the image below, which again is from a 19th century central Thai manuscript containing the legend of Phra Malai and short extracts from the Tipitaka. While the monk in the painting on the right side stands in meditation by a bloated corpse, on the left side the monk is practicing meditation in front of a bloated corpse that is chewed on by a small reptile. This is a relatively rare variance from the usual representation of dogs and wild birds in such meditation scenes.
Another example of wild animals that could mangle a corpse is shown in the already mentioned central Thai manuscript with extracts from the Tipitaka, Or. 13703 from which the image below originates:

These two illustrations show two corpses, one being eaten by a dog, black birds (representing crows or vultures) with a tortoise nearby; the other corpse is wrapped in a sheet made from bamboo sticks, with a monk touching the wrapped body with his walking stick while rapt in standing meditation. The third method of morbid meditations is described in the section on meditation on a skeleton with flesh, blood and sinews.
3) Skeleton with flesh, blood and sinews

Puna caparam, bhikkhave, bhikkhu seyyathāpi passeyya sarīraṃ sivathikāya chaḍḍitaṃ āṭṭhikasaṅkhalikaṃ samamsalohitaṃ nārūsambandhaṃ. So ānīmeva kāyaṃ upasaṃharati: ‘āyaṃ pi kho kāyo evamdhanno evambhāvī evaṃnatiīto ’ti.

Again, monks, a monk, when he sees a dead body that has been thrown in a charnel-ground, reduced to a skeleton with some flesh and blood attached to it and held together by tendons, regarding his own body considers thus: “Indeed, this body is of the same nature, it will become like that and cannot escape it.”

(Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (Pali-English version)
http://www.tipitaka.org/stp-pali-eng-parallel)

Illustrations of further decayed or partially destroyed corpses appear less frequently in Thai manuscript art. Where such paintings exist, the corpse usually is still complete with flesh attached to the bones, but it could be torn open with the innards hanging out. One illustration (seen below) in the above mentioned Phra Malai manuscript from the 19th century depicts three lay people meditating over two corpses of people who have been killed in the final battle of humans against humans before the coming of the future Buddha Metteyya. One of the corpses is torn open, clearly showing the intestines which are being eaten by dark-grey colored birds. The facial expression on this body appears very painful, with one bird pulling at the tongue.

Phra Malai manuscript, British Library Or.14559, fol. 73
In Thai manuscript painting, meditation on the foul is not reserved for monks alone. Frequently one can find lay people practicing morbid meditation, particularly in manuscripts containing the story of Phra Malai as this is one popular scene in the legend. Some older manuscripts with paintings in the Ayutthaya style also sometimes show morbid meditation scenes involving hermits or ascetics. Caves play an important role in the history of Thai Buddhism, not only as places for meditation but also as hiding places for Buddhist relics during times of war and political conflict.

A manuscript found at Wat Suwannaphum, Changwat Suphanburi, that contains extracts from the Abhidhamma Pitaka is illuminated with a variety of paintings in the Ayutthaya painting style. One folio is illustrated with scenes of two monks, one of them pulling the pamsukula cloth from the corpse and the other, shown in the image above, is standing in meditation in front of a corpse in further decay, only with sinews and some of the flesh remaining. The corpse is no longer bloated, but rather dried up especially around the area where the intestines would have been located. The explanations regarding meditations on the foul continue in the Navasivathikapabbāṁ of the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta with:
4) Skeleton stripped of flesh, but with blood and sinews

Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu seyyathāpi passeyya sarīraṃ sivathikāya chaḍḍitaṃ aṭṭhikasaṅkhalikaṃ nīmaṃ salohitamakkhitam nhārusambandham. So imameva kāyaṃ upasaṃharati: ‘ayaṃ pi kho kāyo evaṃdhhammo evaṃbhāvī evaṃvanatīto’ ti.

Again, monks, a monk, when he sees a dead body that has been thrown in a charnel-ground, reduced to a skeleton without any flesh but smeared with blood and held together by tendons, regarding his own body considers thus: “Indeed, this body is of the same nature, it will become like that and cannot escape it.”

5) Skeleton without flesh and blood, but sinews

Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu seyyathāpi passeyya sarīraṃ sivathikāya chaḍḍitaṃ aṭṭhikānaṃ chaḍḍitaṃ aṭṭhikasaṅkhalikaṃ apagatamaṃ salohitam nhārusambandham. So imameva kāyaṃ upasaṃharati: ‘ayaṃ pi kho kāyo evaṃdhhammo evaṃbhāvī evaṃvanatīto’ ti.

Again, monks, a monk, when he sees a dead body that has been thrown in a charnel-ground, reduced to a skeleton without any flesh or blood, held together by tendons, regarding his own body considers thus: “Indeed, this body is of the same nature, it will become like that and cannot escape it.”

The sixth section of the *Navasivathikapabbam* describes details of meditation on scattered bones, which is illustrated in several central Thai manuscripts from the 18th and 19th centuries. The text goes on as follows:

6) Scattered bones

Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu seyyathāpi passeyya sarīraṃ sivathikāya chaḍḍitaṃ aṭṭhikānaṃ apagatasambandhāni disā vidissā vikkhitāni, aṅghrena hatthaṭṭhikaṃ aṅghrena pādaṭṭhikaṃ aṅghrena gopphaṭṭhikaṃ aṅghrena jaṅghaṭṭhikaṃ aṅghrena āruṭṭhikaṃ aṅghrena kaṭṭhikaṃ aṅghrena phāsukaṭṭhikaṃ aṅghrena pīṭṭhīṭhikaṃ aṅghrena khandhaṭṭhikaṃ aṅghrena gīvatthaṭṭhikaṃ aṅghrena hanukaṭṭhikaṃ aṅghrena dantaṭṭhikaṃ aṅghrena sisakaṭṭhaṃ. So imameva kāyaṃ upasaṃharati: ‘ayaṃ pi kho kāyo evaṃdhhammo evaṃbhāvī evaṃvanatīto’ ti.

Again, monks, a monk, when he sees a dead body that has been thrown in a charnel-ground, reduced to disconnected bones, scattered in all directions, here a bone of the hand, there a bone of the foot, here a bone of the ankle, there a bone of the knee, here a bone of the thigh and there a bone of the pelvis, here a bone of the spine, there a bone of the back, again there a bone of the shoulder, here a bone of the throat, there a bone of the chin, here a bone of the teeth and there a bone of the skull, regarding his own body considers thus: “Indeed, this body is of
the same nature, it will become like that and cannot escape it.”

(ibid.)

The image below is from the aforementioned central Thai manuscript (Or.13703) dating back to the early 19th or late 18th century which contains a selection of extracts from the Tipitaka.

British Library Or.13703, fol. 35

The pair of paintings show monks standing in meditation while touching with their walking sticks a bloated corpse bound with red rope in seated position (right side) and a scattered skeleton (left side). Again, this expresses the Thai belief that the act of touching a corpse or skeleton with a rope or a stick during meditation can transfer merit from the monk to the deceased person. The following two sections of the *Navasivathikapabbaṃ* concern more advanced states of decay of human bones and include:

7) **Bones white like sea shells**

Puna caparam, bhikkhave, bhikkhave seyyathāpi passeyya sarīram sivathikāya chadditaṃ aṭṭhikāni setāni saṅkhavaṇṇa paṭihāgāni. So imameva kāyam upasaṃharati: ‘ayaṃ pi kho kāyo evaṃdhammo evaṃbhāvī evaṃphanatīto’ ti.

Again, monks, a monk, when he sees a dead body that has been thrown in a charnel-ground, reduced to bleached bones of conch-like color, regarding his own body considers thus: “Indeed, this body is of the same nature, it will become like that and cannot escape it.”

(ibid.)
8) A heap of bones

Puna caparam, bhikkhave, bhikkhu
deyathapi passeyya sariram sivathikaya
chaddita atthikani punjakitani
terovassikani. So imameva kaya
upasamharati: ‘aya pi kho kayo
evanndhammo evambhavi evananatito’ ti.

Again, monks, a monk, when he sees a
dead body that has been thrown in a
charnel-ground, of bones that are piled up
in a heap more than a year old, regarding
his own body considers thus: “Indeed,
this body is of the same nature, it will
become like that and cannot escape it.”

(ibid.)

Illustrations involving further decayed human bones are rather rare in Thai
manuscript painting, though not completely absent. The pair of paintings in the image
below is from a 19th century central Thai manuscript that covers the legend of Phra
Malai in combination with some selected texts from the Tipitaka.

British Library Or.14664, f. 79

On the left side one can see once more the popular scene of lay people
meditating in the wilderness, here hiding between huge rocks from the ongoing fight
of humans against humans. The painting on the opposite side shows one bloated corpse
with parts of the bowel hanging out, and by its side a heap of white bones, though the
shape of a skeleton is still perceptible. The last part of the Navasivathikapabba
describes meditation on the final stage of bone decay, that is:

9) Powdered bones

Puna caparam, bhikkhave, bhikkhu
deyathapi passeyya sariram sivathikaya
chaddita atthikani putini cuuakajatani.
So imameva kaya upasamharati: ‘aya pi kho kayo
evanndhammo evambhavi evananatito’ ti.

Again, monks, a monk, when he sees a
dead body that has been thrown in a
charnel-ground, the bones having rotted
away to powder, regarding his own body
considers thus: “Indeed, this body is of
the same nature, it will become like that
and cannot escape it.”

(ibid.)
Manuscript paintings illustrating this method of meditation could not be found in the consulted materials. The reasons why some sections of the Navasivatikapabbaṃ are not at all or only rarely illustrated in Thai manuscripts remain speculation due to the fact that 19th century or earlier painters hardly ever revealed their names nor did they provide any written explanation of their works. However, one explanation may be that perhaps from the 18th century on Buddhist cremation rites became more and more widespread and eventually replaced traditional Thai/Tai burial methods in earth or water. The availability of corpses in a further decayed state therefore became scarce.

Illustrations of meditations on the foul according to the Visuddhimagga

Buddhaghoṣa, in his Visuddhimagga, worked out certain amendments to the meditations on the foul. He described the object of meditation, the human corpse, in ten different forms which to some extent are similar to the explanations in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (Shaw 2006, p. 103). Each of the ten forms of morbid meditations described by Buddhaghoṣa are illustrated in one central Thai manuscript that has been discovered in Chaiya (Surat Thani Province). Its creation date was estimated to be in the 19th century, although the painting style has some elements from the Ayutthaya period. It could be possible that this manuscript is a copy of an earlier original. In the Thai manuscript tradition, heavily used and worn out manuscripts were re-produced in order to preserve their contents. The manuscript seems to be a rare example of illustrated manuals which were used to explain Buddha’s teachings. Most of the paintings are highly metaphoric and require special insider knowledge in order to be interpreted.

The following ten forms of meditations on the foul, also called asubhakammaṭṭhāna, are illustrated in the above mentioned manuscript. The explanations were provided by Achārya Buddhadasa Indapañño.

1) Bloated corpse and 2) Blue-black corpse

“This image shows two corpses: the bloated corpse (uddhumātakam) on top and below the corpse that has changed its color from green to dark blue (vinīlakam). This type of meditation shall lead the monk to insight towards the impermanent nature of the own body.” (in: Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu 1969, p. 57)
3) Festering corpse and 4) Corpse with cracked skin

“At the top we see a festering corpse (vipubbakka-jātam), and below a corpse that is cut open (vicchiddakam). Both serve the purpose of contemplation of the foul.”  
(ibid. p. 59)

5) Corpse gnawed and mangled and 6) Corpse cut to pieces

“The corpse in the upper part of the image is called vikkhāyita, which means that it is being gnawed and eaten by dogs. The second one is known as vikkhitta, which describes a corpse that has been mutilated and destroyed because it was left to the wild animals and to adverse weather conditions.” - (ibid. p. 61)
7) Mutilated corpse and 8) Bloody corpse

“The corpse at the top is called hatavikkhittaka: the corpse was cut badly with a sword. The corpse at the bottom is called lohitaka, smeared with blood and festering.” - (ibid. p. 63)

9) Corpse infested with worms 10) Skeleton

“The corpse in the upper part is being eaten by worms (puḷuvaka), and of the corpse in the lower part of the picture remain only the bones (aṭṭhika).” - (ibid. p. 65)
In this series of manuscript illustrations only four of the meditating figures are dressed as monks, the others have the appearance of hermits or ascetics, and particularly the latter represent the Ayutthaya painting style.

**Conclusion**

In most cases, the meditation scenes in Thai manuscript paintings depict one monk (in the context of the legend of Phra Malai this could be the monk Phra Malai himself) sitting or standing in meditation near one or more decaying corpses. The monk sometimes has his paraphernalia like a fan, an alms bowl, an umbrella or a walking stick. In practice, the walking stick fulfils various purposes: to scare away small animals when the monk is walking to avoid harming them, or to provide support during standing meditation, but sometimes the monk can be seen touching a corpse with his walking stick which is believed to be a method to transfer merit to the deceased during the process of meditation on the foul.

The artists have always paid great attention to detail when it comes to the facial expressions of the meditating monks, which consistently show calmness, peacefulness and kindness. There is never a sign of disgust, fear or distress. This may be the artists’ way to express what Achārya Buddhādāsa Indapañño put into words as follows: “True renunciation is only achieved when one has overcome all desire and attachment; because it is not the (worldly) things that are attached to us, but our attachment to (worldly) things.” (ibid. p. 55) The facial expressions of the meditating monks could be interpreted as an artistic visualization of pīti, the Buddhist concept of happiness.

The corpses of the dead are mostly shown bloated and in a blue, black or greyish color, often with wounds discharging blood and pus, wide bulging eyes, and in various states of decay. Sometimes animals can be seen feeding on the corpses. The condition of the corpses is used in manuscript paintings to illustrate one particular method of meditation on the foul as described either in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta or in Buddhaghosha’s Visuddhimagga.

In Thai manuscript paintings, not only monks are shown practicing meditation on the foul, but also hermits or ascetics. The story of Phra Malai often includes a scene where the monk teaches the lay people what he has heard from the future Buddha, Metteyya, about the future of mankind: while violent humans would kill each other, those who follow the Dhamma – lay people and monks alike - would be hiding in caves meditating, and in some cases practicing meditation over corpses, until the fighting and murdering is over and Buddha Metteyya is coming.

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1 Editor’s note: This could also suggest that the setting for the episode is not a temple, but a forest, since these requisite-items are taken out when the ascetic is roaming. If he is residing in the temple, many items are left in his residence (kuti).
Further Reading


Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu: *Siamesische Illustrationen der Buddhalehre*. Tübingen/Basel: Horst Erdmann Verlag, 1969

http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/burns/wheel088.html#repul


Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (The Great Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness) with notes by Michael Potter on a 14 tape commentary by Bhikkhu Bodhi
http://silentmindopenheart.org/docs/SATIPAT.html#Cemetery

Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (Pali-English version) http://www.tipitaka.org/stp-pali-eng-parallel


Samut Khoi. Edited by Khrongkan suepsan moradok watthanatham thai. Bangkok, 2009


http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/soma/wayof.html

http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/story/bl015.html
Art as philosophy: The convergence of nature, aesthetics and spirituality in Chokchai Tukpoe

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The artist must train not only his eye but also his soul. Wassily Kandinsky

A few years ago, when I first saw the artworks of Chokchai Tukpoe, one of Thailand’s most original and leading contemporary artists, I was reminded of Thich Nhat Hanh’s metaphor of ‘clouds in each paper.’ The metaphor implies the fact of interdependence of our being and becoming; how individual existence is anchored upon the co-existence of endless factors and elements in nature that give both meaning and possibility to existence itself. While Chokchai Tukpoe’s art is neither embedded in a romantic gesture nor an idealistic didacticism, the message of spiritual reflection readily finds its way into the hearts of the viewers. Perhaps there is some underlying connection between the message of the artist and his upbringing, simple lifestyle, meditation practice and philosophy of life developed within the context of the idyllic social set-up of Northeast Thailand. Isan, the Northeast of Thailand has been the home of many great meditation masters whose strict adherence to monastic disciplinary codes and practice of vipassanā or insight meditation, bereft of ritualism, has helped preserve Buddhism in its original and pristine form. Today, Ubon Rachthani Province of NE Thailand, where Chokchai has lived and worked all his life, is internationally well-

1 This paper was selected for presentation at the 19th Annual Seminar of the Philosophy and Religion Society of Thailand (PARST), January 24-25, 2015. The article has been found online by the editor, and is given here: http://ir.mcu.ac.th/sites/default/files/036%20Art%20in%20593%20-%20%200604.pdf
2 The metaphor is extended quite elaborately, but here is just a section of it. “If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not there, the sheet of paper cannot be there either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper are inter-are.”
known for the great meditation master, Ajahn Chah and his many worthy disciples, whose austere practice in the \textit{thudanga}\footnote{The tradition of forest monks who voluntarily choose to follow a more austere way of life dates back to the Buddha. Besides Thailand, this tradition still exists in Laos and Myanmar.} tradition became an exemplary model rendering \textit{vipassanā} meditation a living experiential path of practice and realization, not only in Thailand, but also in many parts of the world. Taking a close look at the works of Chokchai Tukpoe, we see a reflection of this socio-cultural and spiritual richness of his native place.

In this paper, we briefly analyze how this richness gets expressed through his effort at pictorial representation of the inner self; a self that envisages art in every aspect of life, starting from the very life-sustaining breath to a tiny rice seed that embodies within itself nature’s nurturing power. Within the trajectory of the vital breath and the life-sustaining seed lies the entire spectrum of truth that the dhammic eye sees and realizes i.e. the dependent co-existence at the mundane day to day living and the dependent origination or the law of causality (\textit{paṭīccasamuppāda})\footnote{The twelve links of the principle of dependent origination are: ignorance (\textit{avijjā}) → mental formation (\textit{saṅkhāra}) → consciousness (\textit{viññāna}) → mind-and-body (\textit{nāma-rūpa}) → six sense-bases (\textit{salāyatana}) → contact (\textit{phassa}) → sensation (\textit{vedanā}) → craving (\textit{tanhā}) → clinging (\textit{upādāna}) → becoming (\textit{bhava}) → birth (\textit{jāti}) → decay-and-death (\textit{jarā-marana}).} at the level of \textit{bhavana} or spiritual awakening and reflective understanding. Going beyond the mere play of colors and contours, Chokchai’s canvases are replete with glimpses of dhammic truths – the four elements of nature, the five aggregates, the three universal characteristics of existence, the law of causality, and above all the workings of the mind that is constantly alert with perception being perpetually guided by a mindful awareness.

All his art works in the last few decades delineate one or the other aspect of the universal truths found in Buddhism. For instance, his semi-abstract landscapes partake of all the four elements of nature – fire, water, air and earth – in a vividly colorful admixture of one element merging into the folds of the other. Alongside experimentation with the materiality of media much effort is put into the rendition of near-real feeling of the four elements’ individual intrinsic qualities. Thus the quality of airiness, fluidity, heaviness, heat and warmth are simultaneously experienced in the paintings.
Some of his more political works from the early and mid-seventies, for instance, the work entitled “Where there is exploitation, there is resistance, ten deaths, arises a hundred thousand” (1976/BE 2519) too follow the dhammic pattern. Thus, although the individual title of the work and the content or more specifically the symbolic representation of resistance through metaphors like tightly clasped fists and bullet marks suggest his political stance and demand for social justice, yet the overall depiction of the theme in monochromatic tone of mild greenish and ultramarine defies the overtly political statement and suggests more of a mindful resistance that harbors no hatred for the exploiter or the power holder. This fact will be clear if Chokchai’s political works are juxtaposed alongside works by German expressionists like Max Beckmann and Rottluff where resistance gets forcefully expressed not only in bold black contours but the selection of hues of brown and black renders resistance the garb of both agony and vengeance.

While Chokchai’s expressionism aims for a clear political statement it does so with poise, elegance and objective reflection of the situation. This is the mark of a creative mind that is unique in its attempt at placing mindful awareness at the forefront of the creative process instead of mere artistic indulgence and aesthetic effusions, the hallmarks of most expressionist art in the West or at the global arena. It is this mindful
awareness that stimulates Chokchai to be reflectively conscious of the co-relation of all existence, and to depict this deeply felt understanding through art, not just in the finished art object/work, but through the process involved in begetting the work of art itself in both its entirety and sequential steps.

The perspicuity involved in reflective understanding of the law of causality – this exists, that exists – triggered the creative impulse in Chokchai to look simultaneously near and beyond, cause and effect, thought and its expression. This vibrant awareness is meditative and sees what an untrained mind doesn’t see, sees through and beyond the husk of the unhusked rice seeds, sees the very breath of life in each tiny individual rice seed and pictorially transforms it into an art object where nature, aesthetic dimensions and spirituality merge and remerge time and again. A tiny seed of rice captures in its form the truth of the law of causality and the artist’s depiction of it on a full-blown scale against the backdrop of somber tones reinvigorates the dhammic truth by making it more tangible and tactile, easy to grasp and reflect upon. Thus, the deliberate thematic choices that Chokchai has made, elevates his works to a higher level through the transformative value infused in them; his is not art for art’s sake, but art with a purpose.

The transformative power of art is poignantly expressed in a series of paintings and sketches influenced by Chokchai’s discovery of dhammic truths through firsthand experience of vipassanā meditation practice at Wat Nona Pah Pong. Like the pair of peasants’ shoes revealing many truths in the life of Van Gogh, the contemplative mood in Chokchai’s works stands for the inner calmness of the artist-mediator; art as a tangible extension of the inner, abstract self and varied intangible, serene moods of the artist. In these series, nature and mind are brought into a perfect union denoting the oneness of the absorbed state of mindfulness with its immediate surroundings. In its natural setting of huge tropical trees, abundant greenery and solitude, Wat Nona Pah Pong, founded by Ajahn Chah is a forest monastery unique in its emphasis on mindfulness cultivation through the practice of vipassanā meditation in an environmentally-friendly ambience. The physical and mental proximity to such an environment has inspired Chokchai to produce works infused with the mental state of a practitioner involved in meditation, its vibrant moods of serenity, contemplation, absorption, devotion, piety, non-attachment and equanimity. What is felt deep inside genuinely transforms the self and this inner transformation is manifested through a conscious effort at passing on the effect of the transformative power of vipassanā to the beholders. In this attempt lies the urge of the creative self to become fruitfully regenerative and vital.
At the pictorial level, the regenerative tendency gets manifested through depiction of the oval shaped face in multiple textures and tones. In his prime youth, when Chokchai was impressed and influenced by the form of the oval shaped sculptures of Constantin Brancusi (1876-1957), the bright tonal rendition in primary hues of red and blue clearly reflected his vibrant state of mind to explore and assert. Once under the influence of meditation, the same oval shaped face regenerated, but with a more subdued tone of brown and grey and made its presence felt not with any assertive claim but with non-attachment, calmness and serenity. The inner mindscape of the artist/meditation-practitioner undergoes tremendous changes, the subtleties of which are symbolically expressed through the gradual erasing of once nearly distinct features on the oval shaped face to blurriness and non-distinctive featurelessness redolent of the state of egolessness and equanimity. In the many repetitive works on the oval shaped face, the flux of inner and outer life gets vividly captured through the juxtaposition of the featureless oval face and the fluttering yang seed (Dipterocarpus alatus) that symbolically stands for – playfulness, restlessness, agitation, rapture – qualities of the same mind prior to reaching the state of calm absorption.

At times the tiny Buddha image in crimson occupies a strategic place in the meager space between the dominating oval shape and the yang seed in full motion. Perhaps the Buddha image represents the element of faith in the contemplator. Faith is that adhesive force which binds the faithful to his belief and keeps the co-relation between the two intact. In Buddhism there is no room for blind faith. That faith is not passive acceptance and needs to be actively transformed into practice is solemnly asserted by Chokchai in the works where he strategically inserts the sanguine Buddha image between the oval shaped face and the fluttering yang seed. While the serene look on the oval shape symbolizes the right effort to gain control of the mind and its endless diversions, the fluttering yang seed represents those very diversions in all its flux. True faith arises when the contemplator sees his or her own mind, its fluctuating nature and finally gains control over its distractions, defiled moods, unwholesome indulgences and brings it to a sublime state where peacefulness reigns supreme.
The visualization of the transformative power of meditation practice is thus delineated in the form of featureless and nameless portraiture. In the series “Egg Form in October” tangibility is superseded by a self-transformative mood where mental ecology gets highlighted as against distinct features of a human face resembling individual identity in all its immediateness. The nameless (non)identity parallels the mind of a meditation practitioner whose reflective understanding of the three characteristics of existence – impermanence, suffering and non-substanciality – dismantles individual Ego and the binary of me and the other. Perhaps the ultimate purpose of these featureless oval shaped faces demonstrate the veridicality of ‘voidness’ as an aspectual characteristic of all existents and conditioned states, both in phenomenal and noumenal sphere. The internalization of this voidness which leads to relinquishing of all attachment, including the fallacious clinging to views or any standpoint actually opens up the door to the highest nibbian state.

What is deconstructed in this series of work is the very concept of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’, and the human Ego itself in all its kammic dimensions – linguistic (the featureless face is beyond and outside the normal speech act or art of representation), psychological (it is beyond the normal pattern of dichotomous thought processes), social (beyond any particular social group including gender categorization), ethical (it is equanimity per se and hence non-assertive of neither good nor evil), cultural garbs and orientations (it is universal in its humanness and so cannot be constricted to any particular race or nationality). Chokchai has very successfully delineated in the series of featureless oval-shaped faces the mindscape in the state of calmness and gradual acquirement of absorption. During contemplation through the challenge to cut off the verbal/thinking mind the metaphysics-of-presence of the individual-self disintegrates and becomes redundant all together. It is as if Chokchai has brought to pictorial realization what monastics and recluses have been asserting through their renunciant lifestyle, practice and discourses on ‘letting go’.6

6 Compare the paintings with the provocative expression of non-logocentrism in the Dhamma Talk Study and Experiencing by Ajahn Chah – “When our innate wisdom, the one who knows, experiences the truth of the heart/mind, it will be clear that the mind is not our self. Not belonging to us, not I, not mine, all of it must be dropped. As to our learning the names of all the elements of mind and consciousness, the Buddha did not want us to become attached to the words. He just wanted us to see that all this as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and empty of self. He taught only to let go”.
At the personal level, this series reminds me of the truths embedded in the numerous dhamma talks of many great renunciant monks of the Thai-Isan Forest Tradition, especially of Ajahn Chah that clearly reflect the fact that the trained mind of a meditation practitioner transcends its own ego and at a higher contemplative level proceeds to deconstruct all dualistic notions starting from the very concepts of me and mine, I and the other. As is succinctly expressed in one of Ajahn Chah’s exhortations — “Give up clinging to love and hate, just rest with things as they are. That is all I do in my practice. Do not try to become anything. Do not make yourself into anything. Do not be a meditator. Do not become enlightened. When you sit, let it be. When you walk, let it be. Grasp at nothing. Resist nothing.”\(^7\) This inclination towards non-grasping and non-resisting gets powerful expression through the series of featureless oval shaped faces that Chokchai has meticulously worked upon.

Through the merging of nature, aesthetics and spirituality what gets clearly reflected in Chokchai’s art is its threefold uniqueness. Firstly, his art is ecological as far as it delineates the elemental forces of nature with its emphasis on the four elements of fire, water, air and earth as well as the inner mindscape representing the mental ecology, especially the representation of changes that take place in the thinking-process when mindfulness is cultivated. Secondly, the aspect of mental ecology in Chokchai’s art takes a deliberate spiritual turn both in content and rendition. A deep-felt spiritual inclination constantly guides and leads the choice of theme and experimentation with the media and pictorial surface; hence the meticulous choice of color, texture, surface all suggestive of a reflective consideration instead of random selection and aesthetic indulgence. While the reflective understanding of the principle of dependent origination perpetually guides the artist’s creative impulse, the subjective self with its inner calmness gets naturally and spontaneously transmitted onto the pictorial surface and eventually emerges from the enclosed frame of the canvas with a life of its own, ready and willing to transform the viewers’ mind. Taking a kaleidoscopic view of Chokchai’s art, we can certainly claim that the ecological and spiritual aspects have collaborated to give rise to the transformative element in his works. His art is not creativity just for the mere sake of it, but it is art with a purpose. Art for him is a search for truth, the veridicality of existence; a statement of truth where the transformative gesture reigns supreme.

The entire gamut of Chokchai’s artworks creates a feeling of contemplation and transcendence and is a hope for a world that is badly in need of transformation. His canvases are a positive assertion to such propositions like – the process of making art and viewing art can be both a spiritual as well as spiritually rejuvenating act. Just like the rice seeds and the law of causality or dependent origination have a cyclical order, the entire gamut of Chokchai’s artworks takes a similar form or pattern of a circular progression than a linear representation of reality. While the thematic content of his early works represents a more individualistic stance of political correctness and a distinct participatory role in society of the artist as an intellectual, his later works attempt to undo this preliminary intention and gradually brings forth a more mellowed down tone of self-reflexivity, non-resistance, non-individualistic and finally to a non-substantialistic (anattā) pictorial representation where the voice that was once distinct, bold and strident has now become a voice of an egoless ego, loud in its depth and profound silence.

\(^7\) From the Dhamma Talk The Simple Path.
References
The Art Of Living According To Spiritual Leaders

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Introduction:

Leaders, in any institution, may have many virtues and spirituality qualities. As spiritual leaders, one must live peaceful and harmonious live in accordance with our family, community, society, and homeland. They often have strong relationships with others and have strong inner values such as selflessness and harmony. Spiritual leaders also must have a lofty spirit and morals. Some of these moral values include compassion, diligence, determination, joy, gratitude, love, integrity, honesty, mindfulness, perseverance, responsibility, trustworthiness, understanding and wisdom. This paper, through examining our psychological experiences, as well as our personally lived experiences in our own lives, suggests the five arts of living. They are: 1) The First Art of Living is to Live as Bamboo Trees; 2) The Second Art of Living is to Live as a River; 3) The Third Art of Living is to Live as the Mai Tree; 4) The Fourth Art of Living is to Live as Earth; and 5) The Fifth Art of Living is to Live as the Clouds. These five core principles frame specific practices and directions for everyone, Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike - including spiritual leaders, laypersons, and the Sangha - who wish that individuals, families, and societies be more harmonious, more peaceful and more happy.

Leaders and spirituality

Boorom (2009) suggested that leadership has roots in religion, as there is a direct correlation between leadership and spirituality qualities. Marques (2010) suggests that “it is perfectly possible to be spiritual yet not religious. There are many spiritual people who are atheists, agnostics, or that embrace multiple religions at the same time” (p.13). For her, “a spiritual worker is a person who simply maintains good human values, such as respect, tolerance, goodwill, support, and an effort to establish more meaning in his or her workplace” (p. 13). DeVost (2010) emphasized that current research in organizations has found a relationship between the spirituality of the leaders and the spirituality in the workplace. In this study, DeVost (2010) found that the practice of ‘encouraging the heart’ – one of the five exemplified leadership values -- was significantly positive. According to Kouzes & Posner (1995), the five practices of good leadership are: “challenge the process, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, model the way, and encourage the heart” (p. 9).

Meanwhile, leaders often put into practice their spiritual life as well as their moral beliefs and ethical values. As Northouse (2004) has argued, ethics and leadership are “concerned with the kinds of values and morals an individual or society finds desirable or appropriate” (p. 342). Furthermore, he pointed out that an ethical model of leadership consists of five components: a) show respect, b) serve others, c) show justice, d) manifest honesty and e) build community. In another study, Zhu, May, & Avolio (2004) define ethical leadership as “doing what is right, just and good” (p. 16). Zhu et al. (2004) added that leaders exhibit ethical behaviors when they are doing what is morally right, just, and good, and when they help to elevate followers’ moral
awareness and moral self-actualization. Bass and Steidlmeier (1998) suggest that a truly transformational and effective leadership must be based upon: a) the moral character of the leader and his or her concern for oneself and others, b) the ethical values embedded in the leader’s vision, and c) the morality of the processes and social ethical choices and actions in which the leaders and followers engage.

The art of living life is about how we live peacefully with ourselves in accordance with our family, community, society, and homeland. As men and women laity (laypersons), we must live to obtain harmony, peace and happiness for ourselves. Reading from the classic Sutras (teachings of the Buddha) and through examining our psychological experiences, as well as our personally lived experiences in our own lives, we can see the virtues of the bamboo, the rivers, the apricot (mai) trees, the earth, and the clouds. From there, we can extract the art of living a Buddhist life.

**The First Art Of Living Is To Live As Bamboo Trees**

We can see and understand the humble beauty and flexibility of the bamboo trees - when a gust of wind blows through the bamboo, it, being flexible, will be swept with the direction of the wind. This phenomenon illustrates how life moves and bends under different conditions, and how we need to live responding accordingly to the elements for things to coexist. We ought to understand ourselves as well as others around us. We must nurture our true self - the core values within - therefore, when we make contact with difficult real life situations we are not broken, nor do we feel like we have lost a part of ourselves. Flexibility is a characteristic of the bamboo trees: they never fall apart within the storm. They move within the storm, yielding to that which will leave them standing, without breaking. As laypeople, when we are faced with problems in life, we need to be flexible like the bamboo. We need to build within ourselves the art of living with others in different situations and circumstances.

**The Second Art Of Living Is To Live As A River**

The spirit of Buddhism is both formlessness and Tùy Duyên (Sanskrit: Pratitysamutpad - dependent arising). The spirit of Buddhism is not a fixed character nor a phenomenon which is subjective and always a rigid status quo. The spirit of Buddhism depends on conditions. So the spirit of the Buddhist precepts (or spiritual discipline) is not rigid. It depends on conditions and circumstances; it is not fixed; therefore, in the path of propagating Dharma transmission in a new land, to a different ethnicity or culture, Buddhism always flows as is appropriate and its transmission is dissolved into the new ethnic culture.

For over 2600 years, the presence of Buddhism in this world has eased pain and suffering. There is no trace of blood or tears in the name of “Dharma Transmission” in Buddhism. That is because of the spirit of Tùy Duyên (dependent arising) in Buddhism. Therefore, we need to adopt the art of living as a river: water flows from upstream to downstream and out to sea. If a river lies on a high plateau, the water flows quickly downstream, but when the river is down below the plateau, the water flows gently, slowly, more poetically, and then the river merges and integrates into the sea without holding a fixed nature.

In life, too, living in our environment or facing certain circumstances, we have to apply the art of dissolving (in life with everyone, with other sentient beings, and with the social environment) without holding on to our self-centered egos. The reason that we have to suffer or face dissatisfaction is because of our egos. We refuse to let it go; we want to cling to our ego or we are simply not willing to dissolve it with the masses of people. We identify with our ego and superego as our beings; and when we pay attention to our ego, it gets bigger. Thus, we think that we are the most important
individual and that others must listen to us. We tend to forget that in this life, all sentient beings have Buddha Nature. We all have access to the knowledge and the practices, as well as the potential to be awakened. So, we have to respect each other. From an old man to a child, we must always remain in harmony, courteous, humble, and compassionate towards each other, according to the precepts. If our ego is too big, it will create a big wobble and topple our life. The ego will never put our life at ease or make it peaceful. As laypersons, we need to eliminate or let go of our dogmatic views and ego. Every day we need to work at reducing our egos; the more we let go, the more harmony we will have with others. In the language of the Sutras, the art of living as a river is the ability to dissolve into the ocean. River water cannot retain its personal, or ego-identified, identity of the river, but has to merge and integrate into the vast ocean. Both the river and the ocean are referred to as water. Water dissolves in water and so ought our own selves with others’.

The Third Art Of Living Is To Live As the Mai Tree
The mai is a unique tree in Vietnam. It is known as a great tree for its longevity. With its bulky and rough bark, at first sight, we understand at once it must be able to undergo many hardships: rain or shine, season to season. The roots of the mai tree are firmly grounded in the hillside supporting the tree to stand on its own and exist in this universe. All kinds of weather conditions have coated its stems and roots, yet the mai tree still reaches out and progresses with endurance through time - rain or shine - until a day in springtime, when mai flowers bloom with beauty and fragrance. The mai is the symbol for patience and optimism. It faces weather and obstacles and yet it will bloom and displays its beauty, although time may wreak havoc. People, too, are always changing and aging - we are born, grow up and pass away. From observing and understanding the mai tree, the layperson can cultivate Buddha-hood.

This does not happen within a short period of time, but through many rebirths, many lives crossing the rapid currents of suffering, life and death. Thus we have to train our mind with determination to attain Buddha-hood. We can practice the teachings of the Buddha and affirm our mind and heart in the Dharma Realm, similar to how the mai tree patiently endures the rain, the sun, or the storm. Thus, when we are facing challenges, difficulties or hardships in life, we must overcome them, careful to keep our mindfulness, and not flinch, nor break our will in order to achieve success on the path to enlightenment through our own practices.

The Fourth Art Of Living Is To Live As Earth
Being patient, enduring, robust and forgiving, the earth produces and raises all things in the world. Humans live well on this planet because of the earth. We live and pass on this land and so does everything else. Therefore, the earth symbolizes the virtue of fortitude and endurance. When we irrigate the earth with polluted waters, it does not reject or complain; likewise when we irrigate it with clean water, the earth does not rejoice or become excited. On the path of our own practice, we need to learn from the earth: that is an art of living. By doing so, we will have peace and equanimity in this chaos of life. If we become unbalanced in our lives, unlike the earth, we are dependent on the sound of praise and criticism, and thus we suffer dis-ease or experience dissatisfaction. If we are pleased with praise or displeased with criticism, then we are living by others’ desires and that means that we have not mastered ourselves. So we have to live patiently and endure as does the earth.
The Fifth Art Of Living Is To Live As The Clouds

Clouds are floating. The art of living here is to be free and not encumbered. The clouds do not stay still, they travel and dispatch in all directions. They are neither stuck in one place nor contaminated by other factors. Buddhists should keep their hearts and minds free, open and unattached to phenomena. If our heart and mind are attached and not open, this causes hindrances and obstacles to appear, which make it hard to reach enlightenment. When our minds are filled with greed, hatred, and ignorance or stuck by praise-criticism, love-hate, satisfaction-dissatisfaction - then our mind are not as free-floating as the clouds. So, we need to live like the clouds, which is the fifth art of living. Be free - selfless and at ease, floating freely without attachment.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the above is a quick summary of the five arts of living. As spiritual leaders, one must have strong relationships with others and have strong inner values such as selflessness and harmony. Spiritual leaders also must have a lofty spirit and morals. Some of these moral values include compassion, diligence, determination, joy, gratitude, love, integrity, honesty, mindfulness, perseverance, responsibility, trustworthiness, understanding and wisdom (Bach, 2014). We pray for and encourage all of us to know how to live an artful life: to be as flexible and humble as the bamboo trees, as integrating and dissolving as the river, as enduring and optimistic as the mai tree, as patient and forgiving as the earth, and as selfless and free as clouds. These five core principles frame specific practices and directions for everyone (including spiritual leaders, laypersons, and the Sangha) who wishes that individuals, families, and societies be more harmonious, more peaceful and more happy.
References:


“Little Vehicle to Great Vehicle”: Ancient Rajasthan into Buddhist Culture

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The present work attempts at a reconstruction of the development of Buddhism in Rajasthan with its geographical, chronological perspective and also with reference to the philosophical development of the Buddhist faith. It traces the gradual transition of the primitive Bhikkhu Sangha from a wandering sect to tantric Buddhism. Excavations at different places in Rajasthan yield different types of antiquities which have been associated with definite Buddhist faith in ancient Rajasthan. Mainly archaeological, epigraphical and scriptural sources are used to trace the transition from ‘early Buddhism’ (Theravada) to the ‘Great vehicle’ (Mahāyāna).

Looking at ‘Ancient Rajasthan into Buddhist Culture” there is a need to understand the doctrine of Theravada and Mahāyāna within the process of the historical development of Buddhism. From the parinirvāṇa of the Buddha, to the sack of Nalanda (approximately 1200 A.D.), Indian Buddhism passed through three great phases of development traditionally known as Theravada, the Mahāyāna and the Vajrayāna, each with its own characteristics and spiritual ideas that incorporated certain modification and extensions.

The Theravada, ‘way of the Elders’, is so called because it teaches the attainment of salvation for oneself alone (arhatship). Its spiritual ideal is embodied in the austere figure of the Arhat, a person in whom all craving is extinct, and who will no more be reborn. While mindfulness, self-control, equanimity, detachment and all the ascetic virtues are regarded as indispensable; and emancipation (moksa) is attained through insight into the transitory (anitya) and painful (duhkha) nature of conditioned things, as well as into the non-selfhood (nairātmyatā) of all the elements of existence (dharma), whether conditioned or unconditioned - the Theravada system insists upon the necessity of the monastic life. It tends to identify the spiritual life. The laity simply observe more elementary precepts, worship the relics of the Buddha and support monks, by which merit (punya) is accumulated and rebirth in heaven assured.

As for the difference between Buddha and Arhat, it is only a matter of relative priority and posteriority of attainment, and of relative extent of supernormal powers.

1 This paper has been presented in International Seminar, organized by Archaeological survey of India, New Delhi on Archaeology of Buddhism in Asia held at New Delhi (17-19 February, 2012), and was later edited by Dr. Dion Peoples, who removed the disparaging term of Hinayana and replaced every instance with Theravada, in line with the proclamation in 1950, by the World Fellowship of Buddhists' decision on the issue.

2 The objective of the paper is not to discuss or evaluate the philosophical aspects of Buddhism therefore this is a brief survey of both the sects of Buddhism with their cross-interaction. T.H. Hendly’s report Buddhist Remains Near Sāmbhar; Gen. Cunningham’s excavation reports on Bairāt, Kholvi, Dhamnar etc; Dayaram Sahni’s excavation Report on Bairat; Rajasthan contribution to Rajasthan and Rajasthan Ke Baudha Smarak by Satya Prakash; Heritage of Buddhism (With reference to Rajasthan by Dr. C.L. Sharma); an article: Some Buddhist antiquities and monuments of Rajasthan by Dr. R.C. Agrawal have brought sufficient light on this topic: One very important unpublished Ph.D. thesis “Buddhism in Rajasthan and North Eastern Part of Gujarat: An archaeological perspective” by Dr. Rajendra Yadav, submitted under the supervision of Dr. Lalit Pandey of Rajasthan Vidyapeeth, Udaipur, also covers archaeological findings. They also presented the archaeological survey of Buddhist findings in Ancient Rajasthan. Besides this, sculptural and epigraphical findings are also useful to trace the different doctrinal aspects of Buddhism in Ancient Rajasthan. I hereby am able to get the opportunity to present this paper because the reassessment of archaeological findings can be mapped to scriptural descriptions available. I hope reexamining archaeological findings from Ancient Rajasthan will contribute to drawing the transition of Buddhism, i.e., the Theravada, the Mahāyāna and the Vajrayāna and perhaps open further research.
The contents of the Pali-canon represent the culmination of Theravada thoughts and paved the way for transition/conversion to a later ‘yāna’. The Mahāyāna, ‘great vehicle’, is so called because it teaches salvation for all. Predominantly devotional and metaphysical in character, its advanced ideal is the Budhisattva, the heroic being who practices ten perfections (pāramitās) throughout thousands of lives and aspires to the attainment of Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings.

The Vajrayāna, the ‘diamond vehicle’, in so called because, like the irresistible vajra meaning both thunderbolt and diamond, it immediately annihilates all obstacles to the attainment of Buddhahood. It is pre-dominantly yogic-magical in nature and its ideal is the Siddha, a man who is in so much harmony with the cosmos that he is under no constraint whatsoever and as a free agent is able to manipulate the cosmic faces both inside and outside himself.3

Theravada and Mahāyāna may be regarded as representing two tendencies, one centripetal and other centrifugal, in the teaching of the Buddha. While the first prevents disintegration, the second preserves from petrifaction; but in the history of Buddhism we see the constant interplay of these two tendencies each of which exists in a subordinate manner within the sphere of influence of the other.4 An archaeological survey of the Buddhist culture in ancient Rajasthan will throw sufficient light on the maintenance of a balance between the literalizing and liberalizing influences which the Theravada and Mahāyāna respectively constitute the Dharma. In spite of the various sects of conservative Buddhism, the worship of stupas developed outside the Sangha, independent of the sects. Many stupas, temples, cave temples were established by believers of Theravada; also, popular symbols, beliefs, customs were also adopted by Buddhist over all periods and regions. Even the origin of the figural representation of the Buddha is investigated in art activities in Gandhāra where the Sarvāstivāda-sect was prominent; it is noteworthy that early Mahāyāna also concentrated on the recitation of their scriptures.

In the period of Buddha and after the parinirvāna of Buddha, Buddhism was a great religious order. In spite of the spread of Buddhism we do not have any [certain] archaeological evidence related to Buddhism from the sixth or fifth century B.C.; but we do have several literary pieces of evidence of Buddhist shrines or places in different parts of India before the Mauryan Period. Buddhist texts throw a flood of light on the missionary tours of Buddha, journeys of other wandering teachers with their dwelling places. We do have many references of making vihāra, chaitya in Buddhist literature but earliest architectural evidence in India are mainly related to Maurya emperor Aśoka who [after his conversion] was undoubtedly a staunch Buddhist who erected eighty four thousands viharas in eighty four thousand cities throughout India.5 Further he collected the relics of Buddha from the stupas where available and re-enshrined them in those viharas. During the period of Aśoka, many inscription, pillars, stupas, Viharas were built in Majhimesha (the middle-regions of what is now central-India), which includes Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and some parts of Rajasthan. Rajasthan was also in the sway of Aśoka’s mission to spread Buddhism.

Differences with regard to some minor points of discipline appeared in the Buddha’s lifetime as in evident from the Pali cannon6 and sectarian divisions in the

4 Sangharakshita, A Survey of Buddhism: Its Doctrines And Method Through The Ages; Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 2006, p. 81
5 From the Mahāvagga (ed. Jagdish Kashyap, Nalanda Devanagri Pali Series, Nalanda - 1956, p. 38). We learn that King Bimbisāra of Magadha (earlier than Aśoka) offered Veluvarārma to the Saṅgha; Huien Tsang uses the term Sanghārāma and Vihāra inter changeably (S. Beal, Buddhist records of the Western World II, p. 74); this was the first Vihāra presented to the Sangha for the dwelling of monks.
Buddhist sangha did not stop short after the initial schism which occurred early or late in the fourth century B.C. Ashoka’s intervention and subsequent purging of the Sangha is amply corroborated by certain edicts. These directives to Mahāmātra as contained in the Sānchi, Sārnātha and Kauśāmbi pillar inscription squashed all of the rifts in the Sangha; his recommendation in the Calcutta Bairat edict for the study of certain texts as special duty of monks, the declaration that the Sangha was made one, clearly show his concern and active interference in matters of the Buddhist Sangha. The process of bifurcation and transition of Buddhism into Theravada and Mahāyāna took place later - after this early “Buddhism”: the division of Sthavira and the Mahāsāṅghikas emerged into being different sub-sects and schools. Archaeological exploration is proved useful in the study of this process.

Archaeological excavations and explorations in different parts of the Jaipur area have brought to light sufficient Buddhist remains which testify to the introduction and expansion of Buddhism in Matsya Janapada. Bairat (Vairāt), the capital of Matsya Janapada is famous for Asoka’s edicts, pillars, Buddhist brick temples and remains of monasteries. Several bricks inscribed with one or two words (aksara) were found in the rectangular enclosure wall around the circular temple. Bairat is situated in circular valley which is famous for copper. It is 169-kilometers southwest from Delhi and 66-kilometers north from Jaipur. It is famous for the Ashoka edict known as the Bhabru edict, discovered by Captain Burt in 1840. The edict has since been transferred and is now in the possession of the Museum of the Asiatic Society of Bengal at Calcutta. This edict is of great interest because it was inscribed on a stone slab (śila-phalaka).

This edict is of special importance for as pointed out by Dr. Bimala Churn Law, it is the only known edict of Ashoka which is inscribed on a stone slab as distinguished from a stone pillar (śila-thamba). This edict bears testimony to Ashoka’s deep faith in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. He recommended that Buddhist bhiksu and layman should pay rapt attention to Buddhist ideology and to devote themselves to the study of particular passages (seven in number) from the Buddhist Scriptures. The declaration of faith in Buddha (Buddha-hood), Dhamma (Sacred Law) and the Sangha may be illustrated by the formula of the Three Refuges (or Three Jewels), as well as used in Sri Lanka, for the ordination of a monk, which is: “I put my trust in Buddha, I put my trust in the law, I put my trust in the priesthood…”

The Triratna, or Three Jewels, in fact constitute Buddhism. To accept Buddhism means, in traditional terminology, to go for refuge to the enlightened one, to go for refuge to his teachings and to go for refuge to his Order. The developments

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8 Ibid p. 161
9 Ibid p. 159
10 Rajbali Pandey, Historical and literary inscription, Varanasi, 1962, p. 23
11 D.R. Bhandarkar, Asoka, Delhi, 1960. p. 83
12 Matsya Janapada is described in Dīgha Nikāya with connection of Buddha’s stay in Nadika, Dīgha Nikāya Mahavagga (ed. Bhikkhu J. Kashyap, 1958, Pali Pub. Board, Bihar, 52, p. 151. Matsya is described as ‘Majjha’ and it is also important that in the: ‘…. majhasuresnesu’ Buddha gave emphasis on ‘Aryasangha’ and while his stay in Nadika Buddha preached Dhammaparyāya also. It might be possible that Ashoka had knowledge of these passages of Buddha to the follower of Buddhism in Matsya region.
14 Daya Ram Sahni, Ibid, p. 34, this stone is an irregularly shaped block of grey granite, of the kind so abundant at Bairat.
15 B.C. Law’s paper in the Age of Imperial Unity, History & Culture of Indian People, Vol. II, Bombay, 1951, p. 11-12
16 Warren, Buddhism in Translations, 1900, p. 396, described in Vincent A Smith’s Asoka, The Buddhist Emperor of India, reprint, Delhi, p. 156.
which took place in Mahāyāna may also be classified under these headings. In Theravada Buddhism, the Buddha is generally regarded as a human being who passed through the normal experiences of life had, by means of his own exertions, attained Enlightenment; but the Mahāyāna penetrated deeper into transcendental reality. The close identification of spiritual and social interests between the Sangha and the laity is expressed by Nāgsena when he enumerates the ten qualities of an ideal layman: ‘(He) suffers like pain and feels like joy as the Order does. He takes the doctrine (Dhamma) as his master. He delights in giving as far as he is able to give on seeing the religion (Dhamma) of the conqueror decay, he does his best to revive it. He holds right views. Having no passion for excitement, he runs not after any other teacher his life long. He keeps guard over himself in thought and deed. He delights in peace, is lover of peace. He feels no jealousy, and walks not in religion in a quarrelsome spirit. He takes his refuge in the Buddha, he takes his refuge in the Doctrine (Dhamma), he takes his refuge in the Order (Sangha). Means this was the declaration of faith for Baudha bhiksu and laity both from the period of Buddha to the later age.

The remark that “Whatsoever has been said, Revered Sirs, by the Lord Buddha, all that has of course been well said” is in substance a quotation from Anguttara Nikāya. Mahayāna declared that Buddha never spoke a word and never taught anything to anybody - ‘na kvacit kasyacit kaścid dhammo Buddhana desitah’; therefore, that phrase can be understood as ‘Buddha-vaćana’, which was the collection of Śikhāpada of Buddha, collected and handed down by his followers and constituted as Āgama. The line of text, reading: ‘Thus the Good Law will long endure’, occurs in both the Mahāvyutpatti and the Anguttara Nikāya of the Pali Canon. The main purpose of the edict is to enumerate the seven passages in the canon which Aśoka considered to be most important as a guide for conduct, and to recommend passages to those earnest with studying, for all assemblies in the Sangha: monastic or lay, male or female. The passages of the edict were:

(a) the excellent treatise on moral disciple - vinaya-samukasa, identified with sāmukksamikā-dhammadesaṇā, an expression applied to the four truths expounded by Buddha in his first Sermon at Sarnath. As also stated in many Buddhist scriptures, it applies not only to Bhiksu Baudha, but to householders and laity also.
(b) aliya vasaṇi - lineages or traditional ways of holiness, which applies again to bhiksu and laity.
(c) anāgatabhayāni - fears of the future for both the doctrine, Sangha and pure Soul.
(d) munigātha - specific qualities of a muni (in any of the various sects).
(e) mauneya sūte - discourse on quietism means calm, detachment, abstaining from violence, freedom from wishes.
(f) upatisa-pasine - Sāriputra’s question about the life of monk and the response from the Buddha that he should have no fears, and to cultivate benevolence, etc.

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17 Sangharakshita, op. cit, p. 297
19 R.K. Mookerji, Asoka, II edi, Calcutta, p. 116
20 Anguttara-nikāya, IV, p. 163, as cited by Possin, in The Way of Nirvāṇa, Cambridge, 1917, p. 106
23 Anguttara Nikāya II, p. 27,
24 Ibid III, p. 103
25 Sutta Nipāta, Atthakathā, Pathamo bhaga, Nalanda Mahavihar Granthmala, 1974., 12, p. 36
26 Nālaka Sutta of Sutta Nipāta ibid. iii, 11, p. 131
28 A.K. Warder, Indian Buddhism, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 1970, p. 257
(g) lahulevāde-muśāvadam - code of conduct, Buddha admonishes Rāhula abstinence from telling lies for monks, nuns and lay devotees.29

These are constituents of the Law of duty as conceived by Aśoka and basic teachings and messages of Buddhism, from Theravada to Mahāyāna. The text “dhammapaliyāyāni means the paths/mediums removing the veil (āvarana) of passion, ignorance, ego, etc., - while admitting that the Theravadans succeeded in removing the veil to attain nirvāṇa and the Mahāyānists succeeded to sambodhi or full enlightenment to become a perfect Buddha. It emphasizes that any devotee who accepts this dhammapaliyāyāni gets his ultimate goal of Enlightenment for himself and for the sake of all sentient beings. This edict, as is evident, throws great light upon the history of the Buddhist canonical literature as well, and for Aśoka as Buddhist with authority over the Sāṅgha, his injunctions were for all classes, lay or monastic, male or female.30 It was also interesting to trace the cross-currents of the Mahayana doctrine inside of the Theravada phase.31

One other Aśoka edict in situ at Bairat also proved Aśoka’s faith in Buddhism as a follower visitor of the Buddhist order (Saṅgha) as an ‘upasaké’ (lay-disciple).32 This edict also lays emphasis on industry and hard work besides religion. D.R. Sahni’s excavations at Bairat also brought to light the remains of a brick Buddhist temple, which must be contemporaneous with the Aśokan pillars, extant at Cunningham’s visit.33 Sahni found two trenches of the previous excavation, one of which followed a part of the circumambulary passage of the temple. The superstructure of the temple would appear to have been built in the same way as the existing lower portion, Daya Ram Sahni34, said: ‘this is the oldest structural temple and one of those which furnished models for the numerous rock cut cave-temples of western and eastern India. The interior of the temples at Bairāt had been cut away by the previous explorer.35 It is almost certain that if the Junnar temple represents an exact copy of the Bairat temple, then the object of worship in the latter must also have been a stupa - and as this temple was undoubtedly the work of Aśoka, the stupa may have contained a body relic of the Buddha.

The two fragments of brick work must have formed part of the Stupa. Fragments of umbrella, stone bowl was associated with stupa36. On the outside, the walls of the temple were inscribed with Buddhist texts in brāhmi characters of the Asokan period.37 Several bricks inscribed with one or two aksharas were found in the rectangular enclosure wall built around the temple. A few of them read pasam, visa, vi, kama etc. May we assume that these inscriptions reproduced, in bold letters, are extracts from the very texts, the Buddhist scripture, which, in the Bairat – Calcutta

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29 Sanghrakshita, Op. Cit. p. 166
33 D.R. Sahni, op.cit. p. 56, but in fact in the time of Cunningham the structure of temple was not there.
34 Ibid., p. 60
35 Cunningham also described the excavation work done by ‘Maharaja of Jaipur’, Cunningham’s Archaeological Survey of India, Reports, Made during the Years 1862-63-64-65, Vol. II, reprint, 1994, Delhi, p. 217. Cunningham did not get any temple structure but the two trenches of the previous excavation followed circumambulatory passage of the interior of temple. Dayaram Sahni mentioned the excavation led by Maharaja Ram Singh but C.L. Sharma (Heritage of Buddhism, p. 64) mentioned that the excavation work was done by untrained officers employed by Raja Madhosingh. But it is known that Gen. Cunningham was contemporary of Maharaja Ram Singh ji. The name of the Maharaja, responsible for excavation work, might be known to Daya Ram Sahni from the contemporary Maharaja Mansingh ji.
36 Ibid, p. 62
37 Ibid, p. 62
edict, Asoka had exhorted his subjects to listen and to study for the furtherance of the Buddhist religion. Pottery found around the temple closely resembles similar vessels depicted in the Bharhut stupa reliefs. Some articles were found which every Buddhist monk carried with him on his journeys. A fragment of Chunar sandstone found to be similar to the one that rested on the top of the Asoka pillar at Sarnath. A few sacred Buddhist symbols, e.g. the triratna upon the dharma chakra, the svastika with other patterns engraved on the potteries, found in Bairat, were assigned to the period of 250 B.C. to 50 A.D. Chronologically these potteries suggest the existence of Buddhist faith in this region. Later on referring to Huen-Tsang’s account of Vairat in the 7th Century A.D. General Cunningham remarks that according to the Chinese pilgrim, the place still possessed eight Buddhist monasteries, but they were ruined and the number of monks was small. As noted by Huen-Tsang, the population could not have been less than four times the present number, or about 30,000 of whom the followers of Buddha may have amounted to one fourth. I have deduced this number from the fact that the Buddhist monasteries would appear to have held about 100 monks each, and as those of Bairat are said to have been ruined, the number of monks in Huen-Tsang’s time could not have exceeded 50 per monastery or 400 altogether. As each Buddhist monk begged for his almsfood, the number of Buddhist families could not have been less than 1200, allowing 3 families for the support of each monk, or altogether about 6000 lay Buddhists in addition to the 400 monks. This reference furnishes again the existence of Buddhist faith up to period of 6th-7th Century A.D. The number of literary and epigraphical references may be the proof of the influence and prestige of Buddhist faith in the society of Gupta and post-Gupta period of Ancient India. The lives of sixty-one Chinese monks who came to India are known from the “Biography of Eminent Buddhist Pilgrims of the Great Tang.” King Harsh, being a devout Buddhist, adored Gunabhadra as his spiritual teacher and Huen-Tsang’s reference to monasteries in Vairat in the period of King Harsh has great importance for the information on Mahayana Buddhism in ancient Rajasthan. It is possible that Vairat was continuously the center of the Buddhist faith from 3rd Century B.C. to the 6th Century A.D. Buddhist monuments at Vairat might have been demolished by the Huna leader Mihirkula. The persecution of Buddhism by Mihirkula (Mihirgula), the King of Ephthalites, is reflected in the Lotus Face Sutra Rengemenkya. Daya Ram Sahni has pointed out that destruction took place around the 2nd century A.D. No antiquity of the period after the 2nd Century A.D. until the 14th Century has so far been discovered at Bairat. Ancient site of Bairat also yielded the well-known Northern Black Polished Ware. This highly polished bowl had been repaired with copper rivets and fillets and fine pins of copper are still extant in some specimen. This pottery has its root in ancient Magadha, from where Baudha monks took it to Bairāt. It was precious that when it

38 Ibid., p. 62
39 These remains testify Mauryan expansion in Rajasthan, but it is difficult to say that these parts of Rajasthan were in the direct control of the Mauryan Kingdom.
40 Ibid., p. 69
44 Hajime Nakamura, Indian Buddhism, A Survey with Bibliographical Notes, Delhi, reprint 2007, p. 147.
45 The Hunas and the Ephthalites should be distinguished from each other, Hajime Nakamura, op.cit. p. 146.
46 Daya Ram Sahai, Op. cit. p. 76
47 Its association with Mauryan Empire no doubt facilitated such movements and along with raw materials, the deluxe ware of North India, i.e., N.B.p. also reached here, Nayanjot Lahiri, The Archaeology of Indian Trade Route up to 200 B.C., op.cit. p. 277.
was broken, monks could not afford to throw it away and had it repaired by copper wire.48

Archaeological excavation in nearby places of Jaipur have also brought to light sufficient Buddhist remains in Aghapur49, Bhandarej50, Lalsot (near Dausa), Rairh (near Newai, Tonk) and Sambhar. Suchikā (cross-bar) fragments from Aghapur are depicted with flower design in round medallions on one side and mythological lion figure on the other. At present these specimens are displayed in Govt. Central Museum, Jaipur. Bhandarej (Dausa district) a well-connected town yields a relic of a Buddhist stupa Vedika (railing) in the courtyard of the Bhandan Mata temple. These were made of white-spotted red Mathura stone. The provenance of Vedika has placed Bhandarej as third Buddhist stupa sites in Jaipur region of eastern Rajasthan. These relics consists of a coping stone (uśnish) and a railing pillar. This kind of specimen belongs to 2nd Century A.D.

Lalsot possessed an ancient Buddhist stupa. Six red stone pillars, belonging to the railing of this monument, have in modern times been utilized in the construction of the cenotaphs (chatris) of Banjaras. These pillars are 5 feet high, square at the base and at the top and octagonal in the middle portion.51 Excavation at the ancient site of Rairh52 by Dr. K.N. Puri remarked that “Buddhism had no influence, whatsoever, although traces of contact with the Buddhist world have been established by the discovery of a fragments of chunar and stone bowl, and a few pieces of highly polished Buddhist pottery and steatite caskets similar to relic-caskets found on Buddhist sites for the enshrinement of the body relics.” At Rairh, perforated pottery is represented by a few examples and its rarity suggests that it was imported from some other site. A narrow necked vase, bearing highly polished slip can definitely be assigned as Buddhist pottery, having been found at Bairāt and Rajagriha in Bihar.53 Colonel T.H. Hendly carried out some trial excavation al Sambhar (40 miles from Jaipur) and concluded in his article “Buddhist remains near Sāmbhar” that this old mound was the site of an important Buddhist town.54 Daya Ram Sahni did not agree with the view of Colonel Hendly. A figure of nude Yaksha or gana on pottery found from Sambhar resembles early Buddhist railing at Mathura; cone shaped pottery with trident and wheel symbol which occurs on Buddhist monuments of early date; representation of the events of image of the Buddha on the slab recovered from the bed of the deoyāni tank; hair in curls of the deity unlike the curls in the image of Buddha and the protuberance of deity unlike the uśnisha of the Buddha’s head55 are some examples which no doubt represent the presence of Mahāyāna Buddhism in this area. Fragments of a drinking bottle (kundika) were found here, and has hitherto been found exclusively on Buddhist sites. Stealite caskets56 found here are also noteworthy because such caskets are generally found on Buddhist sites, used for the enshrinement of body relics of Mahatma Buddha or holy personages. Kushan period Buddha icons found from Bharatpur have been preserved in the Bharatpur Museum. Prominent idols of Bodhisattva, Maitreya

48 K.C. Jain, Ancient Cities and Towns of Rajasthan, Delhi, 1990, p. 91
51 Satya Prakash, Rajasthan and its Tradition, Jaipur, 1951, p. 25
52 K.N. Puri, Excavation at Rairh, reprint, Jaipur, 1998, p. 91
53 Ibid p. 20
54 Daya Ram Sahni, Archaeological Remains and excavation at Sambhar, Jaipur, reprint, 1999, Introduction p.1
55 For detail see, Daya Ram Sahni, Archaeological remains and excavations at Sambhar.
Buddha with shaved head, and Vasundhara (Mahāyāna) are also preserved in the Bharatpur Museum.

The discoveries in the region near Jaipur have confirmed that there were flourishing centers from the 3rd Century B.C. to the 2nd Century A.D.; but it is important to note that after the disruption of the Mauryan Empire, the suzerainty of Malava gana gave patronage to the Vedic religion. Chronologically after the advent of Mihirkula, we have meager examples of Buddhism in Jaipur or nearby places. A Baudha statue of Pratihar period from Neel Kantha57 (Near Alwar); a Buddha head from Chatsu58 (25 miles from Jaipur) are only a few examples of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Another important region of Rajasthan having traces of Buddhism is the Kota-Jhalawar district. Darra near Kota was a center of Buddhist shelter. An inscription in brahmi, engraved on the rock shelter, describes name of one ascetic ‘Shramana Sipisen’.59 In the nearby places the rock cut monasteries of Kholvi, Aghar, Vinnayaga, Gunaiqaon, Hathiyagod, Daga, Varda, Malapura, and Butalia Ganj in Jhalawar district in Southeast Rajasthan may be attributed to the post-Aśokan period when Buddhism enjoyed royal support in the region. It is also noteworthy that after the structural shelter of Mauryan times (Bairat), the Baudha bhiksu again preferred cave shelters for their avasa; and that all of the monasteries were on an approachable road.

Dr. Impey60 is said to have visited the Buddhist caves at Kholvi61 (Jhalawar district) first; later on General A. Cunningham visited the place and gave a detailed account.62 He assigns Kholvi and Dhamnar a date ranging from 700-900 A.D. The Buddhist caves at Kholvi thus played a great role in the realm of Buddhist iconography and architecture of Rajasthan during the Post-Gupta period. In this regard, a tweet long standing Baudha figure in the style of teaching is very important example.63 The first bell shaped structure at Kholvi is a temple well decorated with auspicious symbols in relief. Baudha idols in sitting and standing poses have been placed in the stupa shaped temples. The bell shaped stupas with Baudha idols in different poses engraved in relief are scattered all over the monastery. We may find the ruins of over sixty cave-living quarters for the monks conference and meditation halls but presently forty-five rock cut structures are safe after the ravage of time. There are even double storied living quarters carved in the hillock which are marvels of rock cut architecture. As compare with Ajanta and Baudhagaya they, especially of Kholvi, are believed to date earlier than Cunningham suggested.

There are three cave shelters in Kyasara, twelve to fifteen km. away from Kholvi in Daga district. There is a Shaiva temple behind the caves. Architecturally they are similar to Kholvi caves. Vinnayaga (eight miles from Kholvi) is another place possessing sixteen Buddhist cave architecture. Some Buddhist caves also exist at Hathiagod64 (Jhalawar region). Some Buddhist stupas can be seen in front of the caves at Vinnayagā. Malpura near Kholvi and Dag houses group of six caves.65 A stupa shaped shrine is carved in Cave No. 1. The rock cut stupa shaped shrine is similar shrine reported from Kholvi, Vinnayaga of Jhalawar dist. Rectangular sanctum of Malpura is

58 Dayaram Sahni, Excavation at Bairāt, p.
59 Varadā, Varsh 21, Part 4, p. 3-4.
60 Dr. Impey, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, V, p. 316
61 About 30 miles from Aghar and also 30 miles from Dhamnār caves near Madhya Pradesh border.
carved in the shape of a Hindu temple. Vallabhi style of roof (Shikhar) of the portico is very common in Brahmanical temples in northern India during 8-9th Century A.D.

Another place, eight kilometers to the southwest of Jhalrapatan, in Dhamnar, on the border of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, is known as a Buddhist monastic establishment - Chandagiri Mahavihār, from the early period as proved from the discovery of the inscribed clay seal. Bhima Bajar is the largest cave, as Dhamnar consists of a large rectangular court with Chaitya in the center. A few carvings or figure sculptures found in the cave are two rock cut images of seated Buddha. In the group of smaller caves known as Chota bajar, a number of rock cut images of Buddha have been badly mutilated. These caves probably belonged to the eight century A.D., as suggested by A. Cunningham as described earlier.

Very near to this region, Mandsore Inscription of the Malava Samvata 524, opens with the mangala charana expressing adoration to Sugata (Buddha) - Siddham. Ye (ne) dasamubhavanirdodha paramparāyā magnam jagadvidhadukhhanirantarāyām. Titrāśunā tripadironiradesi-dharmmastasmī namostu Sugatāya ga (tā) ya S’āntim i.e., “Obeisance to Sugata, wishing to save the world (which is) plunged in the uninterrupted series of births and deaths closely associated with misery in various forms, enjoined a religion consisting of three steps (stages) and who attained peace”. It refers to the construction of a “Stupa accompanied by a well (in commemoration) of the Buddha, who having overcome the evil influences of all elements (dhātu) reached the accomplishment of all actions, the stupa, the structure of which was white as the Kund flower and the moon and the pinnacle of which touched the clouds” ‘yo dhātumātre hatadhātudosah sarvvakrīyā Siddhim νvāca tasya Kunendus’ ubhrobhvaravighrasthayastiym krto dhātudharah sakupah.” This stupa was situated within the limits of the Lokottara Vihāro (verse 18) and this led M.B. Gadrē to suggest that the latter “was probably the proper name of some local Buddhist monastery, probably named after the Lokottarvāda sect of the Theravada form of Buddhism.”

In Shergarh (140 km. to the southwest of Kota), Buddhism was followed by the people in 8th Century A.D. The ruler named Devadatta (feudatory or Pratihār King Vatsaraj) was a Buddhist who built a temple and monastery (Vihār) to the east of mount Kosavardhan in 790 A.D. This is known by the Kosavardhan inscription of Shergarh. Writer of the inscription is Jajjako born in Shakya family. Inscription opens with ‘Om namo ratnatrayāy’ means Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha has been narrated in this manner. The word ‘Sugat’ is used for Buddha in the Inscription, ‘Jayanti Vādāh Sugatasya nirmalah Samastasandehanirāsabhāsurāh kutarkkra- Sampātanipāta hetvo yugāntavālā iva visheardantateh. \| Yo roopvānapi vibhatti Sadaiva rumpamekopyaneka iva bhāti e’ yo nikamam \| ārādgātpardhiyā pratimartya vedyo yo nirjītūri rajitasca jinah sa vo vyaṭ \| bhinattī yo nrnāmnoham tamā vesa manī dipwat \| so vyādah Saugato dharho bhaktamuktiphalapradah \| Aryasanghastāya vimalah Saracchasi Jitarsriyāh Jayanti jayinah pādāh Surāsursiročciritah.\|

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66 Indian Archaeology, 1960-61, p. 61
68 Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, p. 122
69 Ibid, p. 13;
70 Nalinaksha Dutta, Early Monastic Buddhism, p. 61, Calcutta, 1960, Uddiyan and Bamiyan in the north were well know centers of Lokottar Vādins
71 Indian Antiquary, Vol. XIV, p. 45
72 With reference to concept of AryaSangha, According to Theravada’s third refuges of the Aryasangha taken by all Buddhist, members of Monastic order but in the Mahāyāna Aryasāṅgha at was also for laity, Sangharakshitā, op. cit., p. 306
The *triratna*, mentioned in Calcutta Bairat edict and ‘ratnatrayay’ in Kosavarthdayan inscription, are the constituent doctrine of both the Theravada and *Mahayana* Buddhism.

With reference to cave shelters of Ancient India it can be divided into two periods, the first being from 3rd Century B.C. through the 2nd Century A.D. and the second phase from 6th Century to 13th Century A.D. The cave shelters near Kota-Jhalawar region belong to second phase. The idea of rock-cut caves seems to have been derived from natural caverns used by hermits for solitary meditation since pre-Buddhist times, but it is surprising that no *Asokan* rock cut cave is dedicated to the Buddhist bhiksu. It is possible that monks stayed in natural caves and *aramas* donated by the laity till 200 B.C. or structural *vihar* were made and presented by *Asoka*. The basic impetus behind the extensive use of caves lies in the fact that Indian religions have emphasized that within the personal self lies the true self (*atman*) which is God (*Brahma*). The true abode of Atman has been compared to a cave. The bhiksu, in this period, understood the spiritual dimension of cave-dwellings; but on the other side, there were important evidence of *vihār* construction in other parts of India also. Gahadwal King *Govindachand* and *Jayachand* were associated with revivalist efforts for Buddhism and construction of monasteries.

These two geographical regions (Jaipur and Kota, Jhalawar) are the definite center of Buddhism from early period to the 8th Century A.D. Besides these areas, we also have scattered evidence of the expansion of Buddhism in Rajasthan.

*Henry Cousen’s* refers to the existence of a scattered group of ten *Stupas* (carved in a stone) at about 400-500 yards to the north-west of *Kalika* Matas temple at Chittaur. According to *Cousen*: “They are all of one pattern. The upper portion is cylindrical, with a domed top... around the base of the cylindrical part is a string-course of sixteen little seated *Buddhas*, each in a little niche. The *stupa* is square with projecting niches, one of each face, in each of which is seated *Buddha*. There are three distinct positions, i.e.; the meditative, the witnessing and the teaching attitudes. The hair is apparently not curly but long and is done up into a considerable knot on the top of the head.” These pieces have now been preserved and exhibited on an open platform in front of *Sringara Chauri* at Chittaur itself.

In Chittaur (108 km to the northwest of Udaipur City) the palace of *Chitrangada Maurya* and votive *stupa* may also be assigned to later Gupta period. The temple of *Anapurnā* (built by *Hammarasinha* (1301-1364 A.D.) still possess late Gupta relief, e.g. a relief where the teaching *Buddha* attended by *Bodhisattva* and *Arhants* has been transformed into *Lakulisha* and surrounded by *Saiva* ascetics.

The discovery of a small votive *stupa* proves the expansion of Buddhism in Chittaur. This *stupa* might have built by *Mori* rulers who had faith in Buddhism. The *Bonai* grant referring to the Buddhist *Mayuravamsa*, which originally came from the *Chitrakuta* mountains also proves that the *Mori* rulers of this place were followers of Buddhism.

A fragmentary stone inscription, in *Brahmi* script of the 3rd or 2nd Century B.C., was excavated at Nagari (ancient *Madhyamika* near Chittaur, Udaipur) and is now preserved in the archaeological section of the Udaipur Museum. It refers to a feeling of

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74 *Svetasvatara Upanishad* III 20, *Katha Upanishad* 1, 2, 12, quoted in Rekha Daswani, Ibid., p. 28.
77 *R.C. Agrawal, op.cit.,* p. 174.
compassion for all beings to the following words: - “Sa (Vā) bhutānam dayātham... (kār) (i) ta.” It is possible that these words were drafted under the influence of Buddhism. The excavation at Nagari also revealed the existence of Stupas on the site. Describing the remains at Nagari, Dr. Bhandarkar writes that “it is a structure built in horizontal tiers and it must be a stupa as indicated by the heavy sausaga shaped garlands. Stupas are constructed of molded bricks and terracotta tiles of high artistic merit, rivalling there of the best kind in Gandhara. This stupa was converted into a Saiva temple in 5th or 6th Century A.D. Most probably it was done by the Huna Mihirkula, who was a followers of Saivism. It is also noteworthy that Nagari was an important stronghold of Vaishava faith. Henry Cousens also noticed an ancient lion [statue] of the Aśoka period lying near the image of Kankali Mātā at Nagari. Besides this, another sculptured stone from the same site was identified as an architecture of some Buddhist gateway, both by Carlleyle and Cousens.

There is another important example of Buddhist acharyas in an inscription of the date v.s. 1028 on a slab in Lakulisa mandir in the temple of Eklingji (14 miles from Udaipur). This refers, “Syādvādagrahanigrahāgada-vidhirvidhvastavaitandika - chadmā saugatagarvavaprayvata – bhidāvajrapratāpodhanah... ryabhanga - ksamah sri Vedānagarunbh prasiddhamahima yasya prasādam vyadhāta”, to the existence of unhappy relations between the adherents of the Buddhists and the Saiva pantheons. Vedangamuni, of this record, was a follower of the Lakulisa Pāsupata Sect and a great opponents of Jainas (believers in the Syādvāda philosophy) and the Buddhists (Saugata) alike. This inscription fails to throw any light on the causes of this sectarian conflict; but with specific reference to Buddhism in contemporary times, it is known that this was the period of the disappearance of the Buddhism in Northern India.

Pushkar (11 kms. to the west of Ajmer) is also associated with the remains of the Buddhist faith. Some inscriptions of the 2nd Century B.C. in the Buddhist stupa at Sanchi mention the charitable donation made by bhiksus Tuda, Samgharakhita, Budharakhita, Nagasakhita, Aya and Isidata, all being inhabitants of Pushkar or Pokhara. An inscription from about 125 A.D. in the Pandu Lena cave in the hills of Trirasmī near Nasik mentions that Ushavadata, son of Dinika of Saka dynasty and Son-in-law of the well-known king Nahappāna of the Kshharāta family, visited Pushkara and gave the charity of three thousand towns and villages to Buddhist monks. It is suggested that Pushkar was as sacred to the Hindus as well as Buddhists. Contacts between the Pushkar and Sanchi or Nasik is important for the religious/cultural/trade contact with reference to Buddhism - Mahāyāna travelled to Magadha through Rajasthan, again. It was the traders and the monks that brought this region a religion that has played such a considerable a role in the history of India.

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79 G.H. Ojha, History of Rajputana, Hindi, I, 1927, p. 353
82 As is evident from the well-known Ghosundi Inscription, consult memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, Vol. IV. Op. cit, p. 119-120.
83 Progress Report of Archaeological Survey, Western Circle, Poona, 1905, p. 59
84 Journal of Bengal & Bihar Royal Asiatic Society, 1905-1907, XXII p. 151
85 Epigraphia Indica, Vol. II, p 396-397;
86 Epigraphia India, Vol. III, p. 79
87 The donative inscription of stupa I at Sanchi mention the donors of Vidisa, Mahismati, Ujjaini, Pushkar. Most of these places were situated along the great Deccan route. Nayanjot Lahiri, op. cit. p. 385.
Western Rajasthan yields very meager traces of Buddhist faith. Huen Tsang refers to the declining condition of Buddhism at Pi-lo-mo-lo, identified with modern Bhinmla or ancient Srimala (Jalor dist. 120 miles from Jodhpur). According to his information, there was only one Sānghārama (monastery) at Bhinmala - inhabited by 100 Sarvāstivāda-sect monks (closely related to Theravāda).

Ranga Mahal (in Ganganagar District) also seems to be the center of Buddhism. Tissoty has ascertained Rangamahal to be a Buddhist Center. Three Stupas were traced at Bhadrakali, Pir Sultan and Munda in the neighborhood at Rang Mahal. These stupas are almost entirely destroyed.

Buddhist potteries has been discovered from another place Vaishakhi near Jaisalmer. Some Buddhist sculptures have been engraved on the wall of the Matha in Choti Khatu in Nagaur district. They are believed to be dated from the 8th Century A.D. A figure of Buddha is seated wearing a drapery covering both shoulders, the face is broken. He has an elegant body. Beside him are three devotees standing among whom one is kneeling, the other one is in the sambhanga pose, the third has raised hands in praise of the Buddha, all are covered with Uttariya in the same fashion.

In the temple of Osian (thirty-six miles southwest of Jodhpur) an image of Dhyani Buddha is carved in a separate niche in temple No. 1. It’s suggested that it belongs to the 8th Century A.D.

This is the survey of the geographical expansion of the Buddhism in Rajasthan. This is interesting - that a major portion of Jaipur and Kota, in which Buddhism flourished, was later occupied by the Mālava republic. Mālava were among the five independent tribes in southern Punjab. In the process of migration, after Panjab and Haryana they settled in the ancient town Nagar or Karkota-nagar, Tehsil Deoli, Dist. Tonk, sometimes between 150 to 100 B.C. Mālava’s occupation of eastern Rajasthan was also proven by excavation at Rairh, Bijayagarh, Mandsor, Jhalawar, Nagari, Chittorgarh, Kanaswa (Kota) were the great centers of Mālava-gana, this occupation has been proved by many inscriptions. After southwestern Rajasthan they have migrated to Avanti (Near Ujjain).

Nagari was also occupied by Sibi-gana. Mālava and Sibis were good neighbor friends in Punjab. At the time of Alexander’s invasion Sibi along with Mālavas left their original home and migrated to Nagari (Chittorgarh), where a large number of coins belonging to second century B.C. were found. They were both patrons of Hindu religion specially Vedic and Vaishnavism. Their political and cultural penetration in Rajasthan was the major cause for the decline of the Buddhist faith in early Rajasthan in around the 2nd Century A.D.

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89 Some scholars hesitate to identify this place.
91 Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report 1917-1918, p. 20, but Goetz and K.D. Baijai are of view that not a single object can be said to be Buddhist, Marg, Vol. XII, No. 2, p. 24.
93 Ibid.
94 S.B. Singh, Sculptural Art of Northern India (700-1200 A.D.), Delhi, 2006, p. 32.
95 Causes for the migration of Malava tribe has not been discussed in this paper. This is different issue.
96 G.P. Singh, Republics, Kingdoms, Towns and Cities in Ancient India, Reconstructing Indian History & Culture, No. 26, New Delhi, 2003, p. 49.
It is also interesting that geologically these were the areas with metallurgical richness. This was also on the archaeological feeder routes from Taxila to Malava through Rajasthan. This route brought Buddhism into Avanti – evidence is supported by the Buddhist cave shelters of Damnar (on the Rajasthan - Madhya Pradesh border), Chandwasa, most of the places were on the main route of ancient times. This route was also open at the time of the Mauryan kings. During the historical expansion of Buddhism, those were the centers of Buddhist faith where we trace the continuity of Buddhism - more or less from 3rd Century B.C. to the 8th-9th Century A.D. The presence of NBP potteries, non-local raw materials, and Aśokan edicts support the existence of the important route from Magadha to Bairat. Chunar sandstone came to Rairh from Mirzapur. The ceramic types of Indo-Gangatic divide and Gangetic plains are also present here. Buddhist literature also notes a number of merchants going from Pataliputra and Kausambi to Pratishthan on the Godavari. The story of Bāvari, a teacher of Kosala in the Parayana-vagga of Suttanipata suggests the link between Assaka and Sravasti (nearly from Maharashtra to Uttar Pradesh, mainly near to Lucknow). The Culla Setthi Jātaka also suggests a route for Bharakaccha from Varanasi. These routes probably passed through Rajasthan. The migration or expansion of Buddhist faith may be traced in following manner from Magadha to Banaras, Kausambi, Merrut, Hastinapura to Mtsya (broadly Jaipur) and then from Mtsya (Bairat) to Rairh, Nishad (Vidarbha), Seka (near Padmavati and Mathura), Mathura to Avanti (Ujjaini). Mathura was the center of Mahāyāna faith. In the 1st-2nd Century A.D. Buddhism (Mahasāṃghikā faith) travelled to Andhradesh through Avanti. It was possible that in the process of migration one notices a transition from Mahāyāna into the Theravada sect. Andhra was the center of Theravada. Again in the process of reverse migration, Theravada again travelled from Andhradesh to Magadha through Ujjaini, Shergarh, Jhalawar. Kota, Mathura to Gangetic plains to Magadha. Aśoka’s proclamation to “Magadhe Sanghe” in Calcutta Bairat edict also supports the association of Magadha and Bairat and the presence of bhikshus from Magadha in Bairat also.

Sometimes representation of Buddha image explains the tolerance between the different sects. An image of Buddha has also been excavated along with Narsimha, Visnu and other Brahmanicals from a 10th century temple in Paranagar, Alwar district. Assimilation of Buddha in the incarnation of Vishnu have been depicted on Dasāvatār slab which hails from a temple at Amvam (Kota). The discovery of Lakulisa figure, sculpturally similar to Buddha and Jina image explains the religious synthesis. It might also be reason for carving the image of Lakulisa, and this has been found where Buddhism and Jainism were popular and strong. The image of Gajalaksmi was also worshiped by Buddhist and Jains as goddess of prosperity. Numerous images of Gajalaksmi seated in the lotus-position and being annointed by elephants are carved on the gateway architecture of Sanchi, Baudhagaya and Bharhut. Similarly Gajalaksmi were carved in the temple of Paranagar (Alwar, loosely found in the compound of Neelkantha temple, Osian (Jodhpur, preserved in Sardar Museum, Jodhpur), Abaneri (preserved in Amber Museum), Jhalarakapatana (in situ in Sun temple). It testifies to the

99 Nayanjot Lahiri, op.cit., p. 388
102 This route was also mentioned, in Sahāparva, 31, Mahābhārata, Gorakhapuir, 1955-56, with reference to South Campaign of Sahadeva.
103 But another migration to North Western part of India through Malawa axis also known by many evidences.
104 Vashishta Neelima, op.cit., p. 81
105 Jayakar, p., Temples at Amvam, Marg XII, March 1959, p. 58.
transformation within the Buddhist faith. Puranas have also included Buddha and Risabha in the galaxy as incarnations of Vishnu.  

Buddhism approximately disappeared after 8th Century A.D. in Rajasthan. The militant policies of Rajputs, expansion and popularity of Jainism, revivalism of Vedicism and Vaishnavism are the factors which can be assigned for the disappearance of Buddhism in Rajasthan. Buddhism was also attacked by Hindu sects of Pasupata and Saiva. At Nagari, a stupa was converted into a Saiva temple. We have the important example of Saiva temple on the back of the Kyasara cave shelters. Bhinmal was also the center of Saivism as well as Buddhism and Jainism. Representation of Lakulisa, superiority of Saiva acharya on Buddhist and Jainas have also supported this view. This sectarian conflict is visible in another part of India also. Sasanka of Karnasuvarna also uprooted Bodhi-tree at Bodha Gaya and tried to replace Buddha image by that of Siva. There is evidence to show that Saiva Nayanar throughout the Tamil country carried on a terrible crusade against Buddhist and Jains.

Buddhism also had the elements of Tantricism as well as in other Indian religions. As far as Rajasthan is concerned this new form had also some amount of influence. Sculpture of Tara (Goddess of Tantrāyana) of 8th Century A.D. has been discovered from Chittaur. In the 16th Century Buddhagupta, the Tantric Guru of Taranath, the Buddhist historian of Tibet, went on pilgrimage and he found the temple of Hevajra, founded by Padmavajra in Marudesh. Taranath also speaks of Buddhism as surviving in Gujrat, Rajputana and Deccan after the Muslim conquest.

In the illustrated Gita Govinda manuscript from Rajasthan chiefly in the one from Mewar, dated 1714, we find many pictures of Buddha. Human figures of Buddha, in various mudras painted in Cave No. 2 in Ajanta, are also found replicated in Jaina figures in Adinathji Temple in Bundi. Again in the modern times Buddhism started to attract people in Rajasthan. Mahabodhi Asoka Vihar has been established in Ajmer in 1956 by some Buddhist organization from Bangkok and many ‘Vipassayanā’ centers has been established and developed in Rajasthan. Mahabodhi Asoka Mission is actively working in Ajmer.

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Important Buddhist Sites in Rajasthan
Migration of Buddhism through ancient Rajasthan

Reverse-Migration of Buddhism through ancient Rajasthan
Important Archaeological findings in Ancient Rajasthan related to Buddhism

(a) Cells on east side of monastery on upper platform.

(b) Ditto, from east showing positions and remains of doorways and small bits of stupa within.

Courtesy: Daya Ram Sahni’s Excavations at Bairat
(d) Fragments of cells on north side of monastery on upper platform.

(Roman ceiling decoration — Caesarea.)

(Ruins of a circular temple, general view from top of staircase to upper platform.)

Courtesy: Daya Ram Sahni’s Excavations at Bairat
Courtesy: Cunningham’s Archaeological Survey of India, Vol. II.
Stone image found at Sambhar Courtesy: Daya Ram Sahni’s Archaological Remains and Excavations at Sambhar

Magadhan Pottery found at Rairh Courtesy: K.N. Puri’s Excavation at Rairh

Maitrey Images, Noh Bharatpur Museum
The dawn of the medieval age (12-17 Century CE) was considered as a period of disdain, doom, and oblivion for Buddhism around the Indian sub-Continent. It was hypothesized that the revival of Hinduism as ‘Puranic Brahmanism’ and the advent of Islam simultaneously assaulted Buddhism which led to its extinction in India. What was once considered the period of demise, Buddhism did survive in some pockets of India either independently or in subdued co-existence with Hinduism. The literary and archaeological sources indicate that some of the major sacred complexes in the Ganga valley like Sārnāth, Vikramaśilā, Odantapurī etc., were destroyed or tottering to its downfall owing to a lack of patronage and frequent Turuška invasions but some places like Bodhgayā struggled to maintain its identity and continuity.

**Ripples at Sārnāth:** The defeat of the Chahmanas in the second battle of Tarain (CE 1192) ushered in foundation of Sultanate rule in the Ganga valley. The Turks were still not properly settled at Delhi and their hunt for treasure to replenish their army and administration made the Ganga valley more prone to their attacks and plunders. The Gahadavala grants of Chandradeva, Madanapāla, Govindrachandra and Vijaychandra suggest that they were able to restrict their inroads in the Ganga valley and imposed a tax Turuškadanda on them. Kumārdevī, queen of the Gahadavala king Govindrachandra patronized Sārnāth and was keen to revive its lost glory. She constructed a large rectangular monastery Śri Dharmachakra Jin Vihāra in the immense sacred complex of Sārnāth. After death of Jaichandra in the battle of Chandawar, his successor could not sustain the fury of Turuška invasions. Sārnāth and Vārānasī were plundered during such frequent raids. It could not be denied that successive waves of such plunders led to destruction and decline of vihāras and exodus of the monks but it is matter of pure speculation that it completely ruined Sārnāth. The Mughal records and archaeological findings indicate some settlements in Sārnāth. When Humayun was defeated in the battle of Chausa in CE 1538 and was hastily pursued by Shershah, he took shelter at Chukhandī stūpa of Sārnāth where the Buddha first met pañccavaggiya.

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2. *Indian Antiquary*, XIV, p. 113 (Habibullah’s argument that Turuškadanda was tax collected to pay off Turks or to meet the increased cost of fighting is not acceptable at all. The Sārnāth prasasti of Kumārdevī, wife of Govindachandra directly mention it as a tax taken from Turuškas. Epigraphia Indica, Vol. IX, 1907-1908, pp.234-237, Pushpa Niyogi also says that Turuškadanda was a tax levied on defeated Turks as a penal measure. Pushpa. Niyogi, *Contributions to Economic History of Northern India*, Calcutta: progressive Publishers, 1962, pp. 214-218)
3. Epigraphia Indica, Vol. IX.1907-1908, p. 320 (Dharmachakra Jin Vihāra was one of the largest monastery of the Sārnāth built partly on the ruins of old monasteries and partly encroaching upon the existing monasteries. Kumardavī apprehended about the Turuška invasion and praised Vasudhārā and Jambhala for safety of her vihāra. *Epigraphia Indica, op. cit.* p. 320)
5. Ibid. pp. 48, 264-265
bhikkhus after nibbāna. When he regained his fortune, a canopy was erected to commemorate the place of his shelter.⁶ Akbar, after ascendency, reconstructed the octagonal structure at Chaukhandi stūpa and also engraved an inscription referring that tower was built by Gobardhan, an officer of Akbar, to memorize the event that Humayun came and resided here for a day.⁷ The architectural activities during Humayun and Akbar’s reign were not quite possible without support of local habitation and it could be monks who were settled though few in numbers. Thomas and Kittoe’s excavation at Sārnāth reveals some new dimensions. Thomas says:

‘The pieces of wheat and other grains spread out in one of the cells. These discoveries show that the conflagration was so sudden and rapid that forced the monks to abandon their very food. The chamber of the eastern side of the square was found filled with a storage medley of uncooked food, hastily abandoned on their floors. The pattern of everyday life, nodes of the brass produced apparently by the melting down of the cooking vessels is common. Above these again the remnants of the charred timbers of the roofs with iron nails still remaining in them, above which again appeared broken bricks mixed with earth and rubbish to the height of the existing walls, some six feet from original flooring. Every inch has a bare evidence of complete conflagration and so intense seems to have been the heat that in portion of the wall still standing the burnt clay could be seen. In short all existing indications lead to a necessary inference that destruction of the building by whomsoever came to be effected by fire applied by the hands of exterminating adversary rather than any accidental conflagration.’⁸

The evidence of use of saltpeter indicates that the catastrophe was done by Aurangzeb because Babur was first who used saltpeter in North India his successors Humayun and Akbar led some construction here. There is no record of destruction found in age of Jahangir and Shahjahan. Aurangzeb destroyed temples of Vārāṇasī that might include Sārnāth⁹. Their pain and grievances were not recorded in the history because they might be killed or identified as Brahmaṇa priests. The upper strata of excavation number of statues of Hindu gods and goddesses are found showing growing influence of Hinduism in the latest phase of Sārnāth.¹⁰ Abul Fazl did not mention Sārnāth though he was well aware of Buddhism, as he says:

‘for long time past scarce any trace of them has been existed in Hindustan but they are found in Pegu, Tenasserim and Tibet. The third time that the writer accompanied his majesty to the delightful valley of Kashmir he met with a few

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⁷ Biyat, Bayazid, *Tazakira-i-Humayun Wa Akbar*, 1941, pp. 303-304
⁸ *Journal of Bengal Asiatic Society*, 1854, p. 472 (Kittoe discovered burnt fragments of umbrella six feet in diameter and another piece of chaṭṭra. Which were nearly defaced by the action of saltpeter. Cunningham, Alexander. Report for the year 1871-72, 2000:128, He further informs that the pillar of Aśoka at Sārnāth has been intentionally damaged and battered. It was violently thrown against the wall and two of its lion heads of the capital which apparently struck the building were broken. The shaft was mutilated and pieces of it are scattered in the complex. ASIAR, 1904-1905, p. 68)
¹⁰ *ASIAR*, 1906-1907, pp.92-93
old men of this persuasion, but saw none among the learned, nor observed anything like what is described by Hafiz Abrū and Banakati.\textsuperscript{11}

Though Sārnāth received unnatural annihilation but cultural tradition set out over thousands of years still giving its fragrance. Cunningham says:

‘…a great number of miniature votive stūpas of various sizes came to light. Large number of burnt clay ‘spiral’ were also exhumed. I take these ‘spirals’ to be humblest type of votive stūpa. It may not be uninteresting to give here the modern form in which the custom of presenting stūpas at shrine is still preserved. Some of the ‘spirals’ are not unlike stūpas in shape especially one in which dome is surrounded by an umbrella, under which are seated the two little figures, probably intended for husband and wife. They strongly remind one of the inverted alms-bowl which the Buddha showed to the two Burmese merchants as a pattern for their stūpas. I have no doubt that these Karvas or Kalsas as they are called are the survival of the ancient stūpa.\textsuperscript{12}

The Cultural glory of Sārnāth was revived in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century when some British archaeologist identified the mound and excavated. The whole Sārnāth complex has been excavated and restored by Archaeological Survey of India and a Museum has been established adjacent to it showing rich Buddhist heritage.

\textbf{Sacred Geography of Nālandā and Adjoining Region:}

The frequent references of late survival of certain Buddhist strands in Nālandā region have been reported in Tibetan literature and archaeological sources. The Pālas patronized Nālandā and founded the great monasteries of Vikramaśilā and Odantapurī which inculcated Vajryāna tradition. Nālandā was still a Mahāyāna seat which diminished its dominance in the region because the Pālas mainly imbibed Vajryāna. Even for sometimes Vikramaśilā controlled the affairs of Nālandā and these monasteries started coordinating among themselves in administrative and religious affairs. Tāranātha says that Vikramaśilā controlled the affairs of Nālandā monastery.\textsuperscript{13}

Sukumar Dutt says:

‘An interesting feature of these establishments under the Pālas is the existence of a system of co-ordination among them. Evidently all of them were under State supervision. Each seems to have been recognized as a separate corporation with a standardized official seal of its own. The seals, which belong paleographically to the same age, have been obtained from two sites Nālandā and Somapura - terracotta seals with the same device, a Dharmachakra flanked by a deer on each side in the upper register, and the name of the corporation in the lower viz. Sri Nālandā Mahāvihāriya Ārya Bhiksusaṁghasya at Nālandā and Sri Dharmapāladeva -Ārya-bhiksusaṁghasya at Sompura.’\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Ain-i-Akbari, III}, p. 224
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{ASIAR}, 1904-1905, pp.71-72 (Alexander Cunningham traced these traditions in Vārānasī where different designs of earthen ware were placed on sati tombs, containing the relics of the devoted wives who were resolved to die on the funeral pyres of their husband, \textit{(ASIAR}, 1904-1905, p. 72) \textit{Karva chaat} is a very special and popular festival celebrated just twelve days before \textit{Diwali} festival in Indian \textit{Kartika} month. The wife worship her husband with \textit{Karva} (vessel) for her well-being and long life.)
\textsuperscript{13} Tāranātha, p. 218
\textsuperscript{14} Sukumar Dutt, \textit{Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India}. Delhi: MLBD, 2000, pp.352-353
Tibetan literature mentions that the heads and monks of Vajrasana, Nalanda, Vikramashila, and Odantapuri roamed in different monasteries for attainment of knowledge and debate. Dipankara Sri-Jhana (Atisa) received ordination and education at Nalanda, then moved to Odantapuri for further studies. Later on he became the Chancellor of Vikramashila, from where he went to Tibet. Odantapuri was a great center of Vajryana founded by Gopala. A Tibetan legend says that the monastery was built upon a lake which miraculously dried up. Under patronage of the Pallas it became the great center of learning but simultaneously its jurisdiction was also encroached upon by the Puranic Brahmanism. Tananatha says that during the reign of four Senas the number of tirthikas went on increasing in Magadha and many followers of the melchhas view were also residing in the area. To save the monasteries of Odantapuri and Vikramashila from them, the Sena kings partially converted them into a fortress. The monastery of Odantapuri was destroyed by Bakhtiyar Khalji and it was converted into fort which became the seat of administration for Bakhtiyar and his successors.

Dharmapala founded Vikramashila Vihara. This monastery was also destroyed by the Turuksas and its identification is still in debate. The sacred complexes of Odantapuri and Vikramashila maintained cultural intercourse with Nepal and Tibet that led to development of Buddhism in these regions. The Tibetan canonical literature mentions a fairly large number of works, either in Tibet or Tibetan translation from Sanskrit, majority ascribed to the Buddhist scholars of Odantapuri or Vikramashila but usually composed in Tibet or Nepal. Some of the prominent monks of Vikramashila, Buddhajnanapada, Vairocana, Jetari, Prajnakaramati, Vajisvarakirti, Ratnavajra, Jhanasrimitra, Ratnakarasant, Viryasimha, Dipankara Sri-Jhana, Abhayakara Gupta, Tathagatarama and Dharmakirti visited Nepal and Tibet. Dipankara Sri-Jhana or Atisa is worshipped as incarnation of Manjushri in Tibet. He, with the help of the Tibetan royalty, established Buddhism as a state religion which was further consolidated by Padamsambhava by introducing Lamaism. The Book V of the Blue Annals composed between CE 1476 and 1478 in Tibet is devoted to Jobargi (Atisa). Dhammasvami informs that Nepal had number of monasteries in the thirteenth century. He resided in Svayambhu Caitya and spent eight years in Nepal. He became disciple of Ratnakrsta to learn Guhyasamaja and Vajravali. After Turuoka's

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid. p.362
\item Ibid. p. 354
\item Bu-ston. II, p. 157
\item Tananatha, pp. 318-319
\item Elliot, H.M. and J. Dowson, History of India as Told by its Own Historians. II, p. 306 (Dutt says that “The whole doomed area is the East-ancient Magadha and Northern Bengal, where the great Pala monasteries still whispered the last Tantric accents of Buddhist learning echoing to the tramp of marauding soldiers and the fleeing feet of men and women in blind panic. It was not possible for the Afghan soldiers to distinguish a Buddhist monastery with its enclosing wall and its tall towers rising high above from circumvallated fort, nor to tell Buddhist monks from Brahmana priests. Sukumar Dutt, op. cit. p. 357)
\item Tananatha, p. 275 (Sumpa says that it was situated somewhere East of Magadha on the lower course of Ganga, Pagh-sam-jon-zang, p.113. Vikramashila was existing when elder Dhammasvami (CE 1153-1216) and Sakya Sri-bhadra (CE 1145-1225) visited Magadha but Dhammasvami informs that it was razed to ground and its foundation stones were thrown into Ganga by the Turuksas. (George. Roerich, Biography of Dhammasvami, Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Institute, 1959, p. 64) Colgong has identified Patharghata as Vikramashila, (Sukumar Dutt, op. cit. 2000, p.359) N.L. Dey also identifies Pathargcata (Silasamgama) as Vikramashila, Monastery, (JASB, New Series, Vol. V, pp.783) S.C. Vidyabhusana also claims Patharghata as Vikramashila, (S. C. Vidyabhusana, History of Medieval School of Indian Logic: Ancient, Medieval and Modern Schools, Delhi: MLBD, 1976, p. 150), Cunningham’s identification of Baragaon has not been accepted because the Tibetan records do not corroborate it. Baragaon has been identified as one of the satellite settlement of Nalanda, Report of ASI, Vol. I, 1862-1865, p. 83)
\item N. Bose, Indian Teachers in Buddhist Universities, Madras: Theosophical Publication House, 1923, pp.33, 49-81
\item Sukumar Dutt, op. cit. p.363
\item George Roerich, op. cit. p. 54 (Before leaving for Nepal and India in CE 1226 Dhammasvami spent twenty two years in Tibet for his education. He learnt the Vartula or the Vaivarta script of India and became expert in drawing mandalas. He also cultivated the knowledge of Chikitsavidya, Silpasatra. During his visit in India in CE 1234-1236
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invasion in Magadha and Bengal, Nepal became one of the most favorite place for the Buddhist monks. Dhammadhātu Vihāra of Nepal was also mentioned by Dhammasvāmi. Ratnarakṣita and Ravindrdeva were two famous teachers of Nepal, first was expert in Vajrāṇa and taught his disciples Mandala-Sādhana and Guhyasamāja including Vajravāli. Ravindra was opposed to Tantric tradition and emphasized upon the futility of imprecations and magic. The Bu-kham (gt sug-lag-khan) Vihāra had the miraculous child image of Avalokiteśvara, popularly known as Ārya-Bu-kham and festival was celebrated on the eight day the middle of the Autumn in his devotion. The image which painted with red vermillion, was taken out of the vihāra and procession was followed with offerings and festivities. The king, wealthy people and commoners used to invite the image to their houses and presented offerings which consisted of five sacrificial substances, curd, milk, gur (raw sugar), sugar and honey. After celebration of over a month, the seventh day of the next month, a young Tantrika, Han-du again invited the image back to the temple amidst great fanfare. On the eight day they again paint image with red vermillion. This tradition reminds the chariot procession mentioned by Xuanzang, which may be parochialized as a Ārya-Bukham in Nepal and Jagannatha yātra in Orissa. That or Upper Vihāra in Nepal was built by Atisa near its main stūpa where a divine light appeared every evening. In front of the stūpa there was a golden image of Śakyamuni popularly known as Abhayadāna. What Odantapuri-Vikramaśilā developed in a particular space-time has been eternalized by the rich tradition of Tibet and Nepal – and were able to preserve the nearly forgotten religion of India. What they have translated, documented and preserved led to revitalize Buddhism across the globe. It was unfortunate that repeated ravages by the Turuṣkas led to exodus of the monks and panditas to Tibet and Nepal but it also laid the foundation of Buddhism in these regions either in mute or dominant form. David Templeman says:

‘Buddhism’s late survival should be seen as more than a historical anachronism. It is entirely possible that it allowed for the recrudescence and the revitalization of certain teachings in Tibet which by then were almost moribund in India. Their introduction in the land of snow thereby opened up the possibility for a new climate of debate in Tibet as material was from time to time re-contextualized and incorporated into lines of instruction which already existing there. The powerful and ongoing influence on Tibetan praxis was wrought by a series of visiting Siddhas and panditas who came from India to various parts of Tibet. The names... are well known but the full extent of these numbers and precisely what they transmitted is less well known, a least until the widest possible range of Tibetan biographies perused with this specific information in mind. Nevertheless, the persistence of vital and intact Siddha lineages, into at least the 17th century is now a legitimate topic for discussion and may now be regarded as more than a mere footnote in Buddhist history.’

The Buddhist monuments at Rājagraha and Vaiśali were almost deserted though scattered evidences could be traced. Cunningham traced the remains of Jarāsandha ki

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24 Ibid. p. V
25 Ibid. pp. 54-55
26 Ibid. p. 56
Baithak, Indrasila Guha, Gijjhakuta Parvata and Son Bhandar cave. Dhammasvāmi says that Buddhist community were still at Gijjhakuta but non-Buddhist were numerous. There were a sizable number of Śrāvakas but the followers of Mahāyāna were very few. When these bhikkhus went for alms-begging, the non-Buddhist considered their duty to give them alms and paid respect to them with prostration and kind words Rahulavandanam. When people found the pieces of robes of the monks on the road, they picked it because they considered it pious. Dhammasvāmi informs that on summit of the Gijjhakūta there was a stūpa made of bricks with terraced steps and in front of it was a blind spot where the Buddha preached which is now occupied by a Siddha. He did not mention his faith either, a Buddhist or a Hindu Saṁnyasi who mostly encroached upon all the sacred places of Rājagṛha and Vaiśali. Dhammasvāmi mentions the lush green Veluvana and hot springs of Rājagṛha. Here he learnt many doctrines with mahāpaṇḍita Yaśomitra. Cunningham says that the hot springs of Rājagṛha were existing on both banks of rivulet Sarsuti, half of them at the eastern foot of mount Baibhar, and other half at the western foot of mount Vipula. The former are named as follows: 1. Ganga-Yamuna, 2. Ananta Risi, 3. Sapta-Risi, 4. Brahma Kund, 5. Kasyapa Risi, 6. Beas Kund and 7. Markand Kund. The hot springs of mount Vipula are known as 1. Sita Kund, 2. Suraj Kund, 3. Ganesh Kund, 4. Chandrama Kund, 5. Ram Kund and 6. Sṛṅgī Risi Kund. The last kund was appropriated by the Muslims who called it Makhdum Kund after a celebrated saint Chilla Shah, whose tomb was close to this spring. Chilla was originally known as Chilwa a local Ahir by castes who embraced Islam and became a saint. Cunningham says that the Buddhist remains of Rājagṛha were occupied by the Muslims as well as the Hindus and the stūpas and vihāras were pulled down to furnish materials for tombs, mosques and temples. All the major structure once must have been the object of Buddhist worship are now covered with Muslim-graves, and all the Brahmanical temples around the hot springs have been built of large bricks of Buddhist stūpas and vihāras. The Buddhist remains could still be identified in these regions where the buddhapadas are still worshipped as vaisnavapadas and in the temples of Viṣṇu it is difficult to identify that he is Viṣṇu or Maitreya.

Dhammasvāmi visited Vaiśali and found it deserted. The famous stūpa of Kesariya does not find place in his biography. He says about a miraculous image of Tārā, known as Ārya-Tārā with her body and head turned towards left, foot placed flat, and the right foot turned towards sideways, with right hand in varadamudrā and the left hand holding the symbol of three jewels in front of her heart. The image is said to be endowed with great blessings and had power to release the devotees from stress. Cunningham found remains of a great vihāra and a stūpa at Vaiśali (Besarh). The top of the stūpa was leveled for reception of some Muslim graves, one belonged to Mir Abdul. An annual fair is held in his honor in which thousands of people assembled here. This fair is organized on solar calendar, so Cunningham concludes the fair was organized long before arrival of Muslims in honor of the Buddha or one of his disciples. He also informs about Bakhira Lion pillar of Aśoka which was encroached by a local Hindu saṁnyasi residing in the middle of courtyard with small rooms on three sides.

29 George Roerich, op. cit. p. 88
30 Ibid. p. 89
31 Alexander Cunningham, op. cit. p. 27
32 Ibid. p. 34
33 George Roerich, op. cit. pp 61-62
34 Alexander Cunningham, op. cit. pp.56-58
35 Ibid. p. 59
Nālandā, about six miles off from Odantapurī was plundered many times by the Turuṣkas but not fully destroyed like Vikramaśilā and Odantapurī. The frequent raids compelled the teachers and students to desert. Dhammasvāmi says that it was doomed not dead. The donation of Vipula Srīmitra (CE 1137) could be considered as one of the last known references about patronage of Nālandā. After the raid of Bakhtiyar Khalji the ghost of past magnificence loomed dark over the desolation. Nālandā still had seven pinnacles in its center, two of which have been erected by Raja (Buddhasena?), and two by two revered teachers and each on outside the complex towards North there stood fourteen lofty pinnacles. Outside it there were eighty small vihāras, known as a-ri-kha. The chief abbot of Nālandā mahāpandita Rahul Śribhadra was residing with his seventy disciples. When threats of impending raid from Odantapurī Turkish military headquarter became inevitable, Jayadeva a rich Brahamana disciple of Rahula Śribhadra informed him, all seventy disciples deserted him. Only the venerable with his Tibetan disciple Dhammasvāmi were left in Nālandā and took shelter in temple of Jñānanātha. Rahula Śribhadra was patronized by Jayadeva, a native of Odantapurī and Buddhhasena, the king of Magadha. The pāg-sām-jon-zāng says the vihāras of Nālandā were repaired by a monk Muditabhadra and later on by Kukutasiddha, a minister of King of Magadha. Tāranātha informs that that king Cingalaraja (S-ed tsa-ga-la) brought under control all the Hindus and Turuṣkas up to Delhi. He was originally a devotee of Brahamanas but under influence of his queen, he embraced Buddhism and made lavish offerings at the temple of Nālandā but built no big centers for the doctrine. In the thirteenth century two vihāras Dha-na-ba (Dhanya) and Ghu-na-ba (Guna) were functional in Nālandā and four holy images: Khāsarpana, Manjuśri with turned neck, the miraculous image Jñānanātha and the image of Tārā without ornaments were still worshipped. These are the last glimpses of activities of Nālandā that continued after two centuries of its vandalism by Bakhtiyar Khalji before its oblivion into utter darkness and gloom.

36 Sukumar. Dutta, op. cit, p. 347
37 Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XXI, pp. 97-101
38 George Roerich, op. cit. p. 91 (Dhammasvāmi informs that Turuṣka King Moon (Zla-ba) invaded Ganga Valley, ruined Odantapurī Vihare and converted it as a fort. Harbans Mukhia says that it is difficult to locate the owner of the name ‘moon’ with certainty because no known name among the Turks is referred in this context. On basis of inference it may be Shihab-ud-din Muhammad Ghori. Mishraj-us-Siraj included ‘Adwand Bihar’ among the conquests of Shihab-ud-din. (Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, Vol. I, p. 442) considering that the word ‘Shitab’ means a bright star (Steingass, Persian-English Dictionary), it is possible that the reference of the moon might have intended for him. Mukhia, Harbans. (The Turuṣka king Moon, in Tāranātha, 442). S.C. Sarkar suggests that it might have meant for either Shihab ud-din or Qutub-ud-din Aibak as the word ‘Qutub’ signifies the Pole star. (S.C. Sarkar, Some Tibetan references to Muslim advances into Bihar and Bengal and to the state of Buddhism Thereafter’, Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission Vol. XVIII, 1942, pp.138-153, no.10.) The interpretation based on Turkish language suggests that the person was Qutubuddin Aibak. ‘Ai’ in Turkish language means ‘moon’ and ‘beck’ signifies the lord. This Turkish tribe was known for charming features of its men and women, though Qutubuddin himself was devoid of comeliness. (Mishraj, Vol. 1, 137) He mentions the name of persons belonging to this tribe (tabaqta or chapter on the Shami Maliks in which the biographies of twenty five Turk Khans and Maliks have been given. (Mishraj, Vol. 229-324). However Ibn Hajar Asqalani gives different interpretation and says ‘Aibak’ means broken finger. (Hajur, Asqalani Ibn. Al Durar al Kamilah.) His point is not valid because all the representatives of a particular tribe could not be persons of broken finger. So the word ‘moon’ is most appropriate for Aibak. There is no doubt that Bakhtiyar was directly responsible for the destruction of Odantapurī and Vikramaśilā but the dubious merit of destruction was passed on to his master Qutubuddin.)
39 George Roerich, op. cit. p. 93
40 Ibid. p. 93 (When the Turuṣkas planned for second invasion at Nālandā, Jayadeva was arrested and from prison he sent message of warning to his master advising him to leave the place. Then Rahul Śribhadra with Dhammasvāmi took shelter in temple of Jñānanātha. At that time 300 Turuṣka soldiers raided Nālandā and returned. Then both came out from their hiding. Dhammasvāmi stayed here with Rahul Śribhadra and learnt Buddhist doctrines from him.)
41 S.C. Vidyabhusana, History of the Medieval School of Indian Logic, pp. 147-148
42 Tāranātha, pp. 320-321
Continuity of Tradition at Vajrasana (Bodhgayā):

Since the foundation of the religion by the Buddha, Bodhgayā became the nodal point of pilgrimage for the Buddhist monks and the lay followers. In the medieval period when all the Buddhist centers were either on verge of decline or in process of assimilation with the ‘Puranic Brahananism’, Bodhgayā was able to maintain its independent status. With the rise of the Pālas in Bihar and Bengal, the royal patronage for Buddhism revived. They not only founded great monasteries of Odantapurī and Vikramaśilā but also patronized Nālandā and Bodhgayā by their generous grants and architectural activities. After the Vardhans, the Sino-Indian relations were resumed in the tenth century. There was frequent intercourse between India and China during reign of Han and Sung dynasties these missionaries and pilgrims did certain act of merits and engraved it on stone slabs in form of inscriptions. The Sino-Indian relations during these centuries were groomed upon Buddhism which became a common ground of spiritual and intellectual instinct between India and China. The relation developed out of this was totally cultural in nature and mostly carried on by the Buddhist monks. One Chinese inscription has been found in the northern side of the samādhi of a mahanth of the temple describing the hymns of praise engraved by monk Yun-shu in CE 1021. The sculpture of the stone slab represents the Buddha at central position with figures of Vajravarahi at left and right. Yun-shu, who belonged to the Western River (Yellow River) of the great Sung Empire caused a stone stūpa to be built in the honor of the ten thousand Buddhas, some thirty paces from the Bodhimandala. He further says that on three occasions he came here with Chiang Hsia-pias to spend the season of fast and paid great respect to the Buddha. His inscription with eulogistic utterance says:

‘O great master merciful to the people, sympathizing with all creatures
Although thou dost not manifest thyself, still thou art a most efficacious God.
The herd of evil ones gaze up towards thee and recognize the universal love
Increasing with changing moons of the past two thousand years.’

Yun-shu also prayed to Vajrasana for his King, the sovereign of great Sung Empire and recorded it on a stone slab.

‘For his majesty is humbly desirous that the destiny of the Doctrine may resemble that of the Sacred pool, from which nothing may be taken, and of which nothing may be added, the waves of which are liable neither to increase nor decrease; its blessedness that of the Celestial Hill, enduring in majestic loftiness. Still more does my Prince desire that in future of this kingdom shrine may be added to shrine, and that in other hands and other ages name upon name may be enrolled among the legions of the faithful.’

The post script of the above inscription says that Yun-shu was accompanied to India with two other priests I-Ching and I-Lin from the monastery of Established Doctrine in the High Street of the Eastern Capital and both the monks carried with themselves the golden kaśeya to devote it in the temple of the Mahābodhi. Both the monks engraved their memorial tablet separately dated in the 6th year of the region of the Great Sunga dynasty (CE 1029) which records that the two monks presented a gold embroidered kaśeya to spread over the Diamond throne of the Buddha. They erected

45 Ibid. p. 71
stone stūpa as well. These Chinese inscriptions are found in situ on two slabs forming the lower part of the basement of two small stūpas built of sand stone. Another Chinese priest Yu-pin from the monastery of the Commencement of Holiness, in the Eastern Capital of the great Sung empire offered gold embroidered robe to Vajrasana and engraved an inscription on the day of the fourth moon of the sixth year of Divine favors i.e. the date same as of earlier inscriptions. He also built a stūpa in humble devotion of four mercies and the three states of existence. There is another inscription of a Chinese priest recorded as the 19th day of the 1st moon of the 2nd year of Ming Tao (CE 1033). It records that by command of his Imperial Majesty, the Empress and Emperor of Great Sung dynasty, he proceeded to Magadha to erect a stūpa at Bodhimandala on behalf of departed king T’ai Tsung. The inscription was discovered by Alexander Cunningham and translated by H.A. Giles. It says:

“This stūpa was erected by the Emperor and Empress of the Great Sung dynasty, in memory of His Imperial Majesty T’ai Tsung. By command of His Imperial Majesty, our divinity enlightened, most glorious, most virtuous, most filial. Sovereign of this the Great Sung dynasty, and of Her Imperial Majesty, our most gracious, most virtuous, and most compassionate Empress, I the Buddhist priest, Hui-wen, have been humbly commissioned to proceed to the country of Magadha, and to erect, on behalf of His departed Imperial majesty T’ai Tsung –the humane, the orthodox, the deserving, the divinely virtuous, the wise, the supremely filial –a pagoda beside the Bodhimandala, the Diamond Throne. For his Imperial Majesty, T’ai Tsung, was humbly desirous of passing aloft to the Devaloka the Mansion of the Bests, there to receive the words from Buddha himself, to witness the ranks of immortal Saints, and be enrolled forever among the ranks of the faithful; hoping thus to secure to the house of the Sung divine protection through all generations.”

Numerous such Chinese inscriptions are discovered and translated showing their meritorious works at Vajrasana. These intercourse were developed by the Chinese in the medieval period who faced great hardship and peril during their pilgrimage; but after reaching Vajrasana, they were relieved and overwhelmed by the welcome received from the remaining Buddhist population of the intervening states.

Dhammasvāmi visited Bodhgayā and informs that the Vajrasana was almost deserted after frequent Turuṣka raids. When he reached Vajrasana, only four monks were residing and the rest were hiding. The Śrāvakas of the Mahābodhi blocked the entrance door of the temple with bricks and placed another image to substitute the main image. Then they plastered the outside door of the temple and put up the image of Maheśvara to disguise the tīrthikas. He speaks about the Turuṣka invasion in Bodhagayā while he was staying there. All the monks and even King Buddhasena fled to the forest. After seventeen days, Dhammasvāmi returned to Vajrasana, worshipped and circumambulated the Mahābodhi. King Buddhasena also came out of the forest and greeted Dhammasvāmi and his four companions. He was astonished to see the
blowing of conch by Nagarāja at the east of Vajrasana. He says that Viśvavajra was half a yojana in size and the Vajrasana was situated here with the Bodhi tree. The gandhola or gandhakuti of Aśoka had an image of the Buddha about two cubits or 36" in height and the gandhola itself is 35 cubits in height. Its white colored pinnacle glittered like a flame and sparkled like a shield placed in the sunshine. Dhammasvāmi writes that the courtyard of the Mahābodhi with its three covered passages, the gandhola, and the Bodhi tree were surrounded by a circular stone railing, seems to have been built by Nāgarjuna. Inside the courtyard there were twenty ornamented pillars and the empty throne of Śakyamuni. It also had two foot prints and a golden casket with the tooth relics of the Buddha. On certain occasions, the tooth relic casket was brought out to the courtyard and put on a large lotus shaped flat stone.

Tāranātha and Dhammasvāmi both inform that the Mahābodhi was managed by Sindhu-Śrāvakass, monks of Śri Lanka. They were opposed to Mahāyāna as well as Vajrayāna and even sometimes defied the authorities of the king. In the reign of Dharmapāla, Sindhu-Śrāvakas created trouble at Vajrāsana, destroyed the bronze image of Heruka and burnt the Vajrayāna treatise. Dharmapāla was enraged by their behavior and was going to punish them but condoned their sin after intervention by the abbot of Vikramaśila, Buddhajñānapāda. These Śrāvakas also advised Dhammasvāmi not to follow Vajrayāna because the Buddha did not preach it, since it was rather enumerated by Nagarjuna. The Śrāvakas of Śri Lanka were three hundred in number and exclusively managed the temple affairs and conducting ceremonies. Despite the hegemony of Theravāda beliefs, Vajrāsana was under the influence of Vajrayāna. The complex had only three gates: the Eastern, Western and Southern showing influence of tantrica belief. The dPun-bzan-gis shus-pai recommends gates facing East, West and South. In the monasteries of Tibet, this tradition is still followed. The temples of Vajrayāna deities were found in Mahābodhi complex. The temples of Tārā and Khāsarpana were mentioned by Dhammasvāmi who says that in Vajrāsana a temple was devoted to miraculous stone image of Tārā with face looking outside the temple. One the sacristan of the temple thought that looking outside the temple while offering was not proper, the goddess tuned her face towards the temple. After that she was known as ‘Tārā with turned face’. In another instance: once a Śrāvakas was carried away by a river current, and he remembered Tārā of Mahāyāna who saved people from drowning. She appeared in the middle of the river and saved the Śrāvaka. Later on Śrāvakas propitiated her as Ārya Tārā. There is another statue of Tārā covering her face with right hand. She represents her manifestation laughing defiantly at Māra when he attempted to harm the Buddha at the time of nibbāna. One Tārā was known as ‘Ha-ha-ha-ha Tārā’ because she roared with great laugh to save a devotee from a demon. Buddhhasena’s patronage protected the Vajrāsena from total desolation, though political convulsions arose due to the Turuṣka’s invasions making their survival difficult. Tāranātha says that the great tradition of the Mahābodhi was revived in this age by King Cingalraja (S-ed Tsa-ga-la, died CE 1448) who was originally a devotee of Brahamanism, but under the influence of his queen, he made huge endowments at Vajrasana. He constructed the upper four stories of the nine storied gandhakuti of the Mahābodhi which was later destroyed by the Turuṣkaśas. Further decadence was checked by Aṣokavalla, the king of

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50 Ibid. pp. 66-70
51 Ibid. pp. 71-72
52 Tāranātha, p. 279
53 George Roerich, op. cit. pp. 73-74
54 Ibid. p. 75 (The Vajrāyāna literature Āryasubahuparipricchanamatantra or Phages-pa dpun-bzan-gin hus-pa shes-bya-bai-rgyud mentions this tradition)
55 Ibid. pp. 74-76
56 Tāranātha, pp. 220-321
Sapadalaksha. He, with the help of a local feudatory, Purushottam Sinha, reconstructed the _gandhakuti_ of Vajrāsana in the year 1816 of the _mahāparinibbāna_ of the Buddha. Altogether three inscriptions of Aśokavalla have been discovered by Hathorne, Beglar and Alexander Cunningham. Cunningham says inscription number two and three were dated in Lakshmana era i.e. CE 1170. B.M. Barua says that both the inscriptions were issued in the expired era of Lakshmanasena. The first inscription consists of 13 lines of Bengali character and was translated by Bhagwan Lal Indraji. It is dated in 51 of the expired reign of King Lakshmanasena, the 8th day of the dark half of _Bhadrapada_, the 29th solar day, Aśokavalla is represented as:

“a follower of Mahāyāna, a great upāsaka, pious at heart. May whatever be its merit, be for growth in spiritual knowledge first of my father and mother, and after them, all beings. Moved thereto by the Kashmir pandita, the honored Chathopadhi, by the king’s pandita Mushala, the worthy Sankardeva and the worthy Trailokyabrahma, the illustrious King built a monastery for Bhatu Damodara, Bhatu Paima, Sisu Raghava and Mahipukha, and furnished it with an image of the Buddha. Moreover, for the offering to the Buddha, the daily ration with pots, incense and lamps shall be given as long as the Sun and Moon shall endure, to be maintained by the Simhalas in the Mahābodhi. He engaged the cook Mamaka, good keeper and disposer Harichandra to serve.”

The second inscription is found in the Surya temple and translated by Bhagwan Lal, dated in the Buddha era 1813, on Wednesday, _Kartika badi_, 1. It is a _prāsasti_ written:

‘In a great hurry by Indranandi, a writer of high fame, and beautifully incised on a stone tablet by the engraver Rama. The inscription is composed in praise of King Purushottam Sinha of Kama and Aśokavalla of Sapadalaksha, both had put their joint effort to revive the life of holy Buddhist land which fell into

57 Alexander Cunningham, _op. cit._ p. 78
58 Ibid. pp. 78-79
59 B.M. Barua, _Gayā and Bodh Gayā_. Calcutta: Cotton Press, 1931, p. 201 (Barua says that one of the inscriptions of Aśokavalla was issued in _Buddha-Varṣa_ (Buddha-era) and remaining two in the expired age of Lakshmanasena as evident from _Śrimal Lakshmanasasya atita-rajye_, (Indian Antiquary, Vol. X. p. 343). Barua informs that Kiellhorn and R. D. Banerjee accept that the dates of two Bodhgayā inscriptions are engraved in the era of Lakshmanasena which commence in CE 118-1119. So these three inscription would be issued in CE 1170 (1119+51), second in CE 1188 and third in CE 1193 (1119+74). Barua infers that all three dates show that these inscriptions were issued before the raids of Bakhtiyar Khalji on Vajrasana. But its possibility are remote because: 1. It does not explain significance of words _atita-rajye_ of inscription. 2. It also does not satisfactorily explain what is the occasion of sudden decay (_bhrashthe muneh Sasane_). Barua’s argument is true that these were issued after the Khalji’s raids. The shrine of the Mahābodhi was controlled by the Śrāvakas of Śri Lanka and so long as they were in charge of it, no Mahāyāna priest could conduct worship there. In these three inscriptions Aśokavalla was mentioned as follower of Mahāyāna (Mahāyāna-yayi). The second inscription mentions that that construction work was not done by Simhala monks but by Dharmarakṣita, a monk of Kama (Kumayun). Barua says that it happened because of ‘terrible effect of the iconoclastic fury of Bakhtiyar khalji which sounded death knell to ever growing shrines and _vihāras_ of Bodhgaya. The Vajrasana was destroyed, the images were mutilated, the _sāṁgharamas_ were razed to ground, and all the Śrāvakas who were living at the Mahābodhi must have fled, if they were spared for their life. So the inscriptions _Lakshmanasasya atita-rajye sam_. 74 infers that it was written in the year 74 counted from the date of termination of the rule of Lakshmanasena i.e. CE 1170. Adding 51, 69 and 74 to CE 1170 the dates of these inscription will be CE 1221, CE 1239 and CE 1244. (B.M. Barua, _op. cit._ pp. 202-204). Though date given by Barua seems to be more specific but total massacre or flight of Śrāvakas monks are not true. Both Dhammasvāmi and Tāranātha inform that even after Bakhtiyar’s plunder, Śrāvakass still hold the affair of the shrine but their numbers are decreasing. Dhammasvāmi reported 300 such monks fled during one of such raids but returned when the calamity was over. At such grim conditions, their survival became so difficult that they lost hold over temple and left, all together after some time.

60 Alexander Cunningham, _op.cit._ p. 79, B.M. Barua, _op. cit._ p. 204
decay. King Purushottamsinha, who was feudatory with Asokavalla, is introduced as the son of King Kamdevasimha and grandson of Jayatungasimha, a prosperous country which is said to have situated towards the eastern part. Asokavalla is praised as an Indra-like Chhinda king (Chhinda family exercised sovereignty over Sindh). The inscription mentions the construction of a gandhakuti of the Buddha at Bodhgayā, graceful and like a hall of emancipation and bliss, for the spiritual benefit of Manikyasimha, the deceased son of Ratnasīri, the daughter of King Purushottama. The whole work of construction of this beautiful temple was supervised by a benign monk Dharmarakṣita.61

The third inscription was found by Hathorne near the main shrine and was translated by Bhagwan Lal. It is a record of a meritorious gift of Śri Sahanasana, son of Mahataka Śri Mrisibrahma. The donor is described as:

‘A follower the excellent Mahāyāna school, a great worshipper, a lamp of the assemblies of kshattris. He is mentioned as a treasurer and dependent of King Dasaratha, the younger brother of King Aśokavalla, king of kings, lord of the khasa kings of the Sapadalaksha Mountains who tolls like a bee on the pollen of the lotus foot of Jinendra, a destroyer of the power of kings, a mounted Narayana of the kings, a lion to the intoxicated elephant-like hostile kings, a father of all kings, adorned with these titles of his. Let whatever merit may be in this, before the attainment of the fruit of supreme knowledge by the whole multitude of all sentient beings giving precedence to the Ācaryas, Upadhyaya, mother and father’.62

Another inscription of age of Aśokavalla, has been engraved on pedestal of a life size image of the Buddha who was attended by Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya. The text suggest that its author Viryendra was a follower of Mahāyāna, a pilgrim from great Somapura Vihāra and was an inhabitant of Samatata.63 During the 14th century, some new structures were added in Bodhgayā and the decaying Mahābodhi was rejuvenated for a time being, before its final extinction in 16th century.64 The records of two Burmese missions are discovered by Colonel Burney in CE 1829. The larger Burmese inscription was engraved on a black stone slab found in one of the walls of mahantha’s residence. In CE 1862 Cunningham with the permission of mahanth took out the inscription from wall which was translated by three scholars: Ratanapāla, Colonel

61 Ibid. pp. 79-80, B.M Barua, op. cit. pp. 204-205
62 Ibid. pp. 80-81, B.M. Barua, op. cit. pp. 205-206 (Cunningham says that the country of Sapadalaksha or one Lakh and a quarter of hills was known as Sawalak with Hansi as a capital. It included Mandore and Sakambhari. Alexander Cunningham, Mahābodhi, p. 80)
63 ASIAR, 1908-1909, p.158 (The inscription says that it is a gift of the senior monk Viryendra, an expert of Vinaya and an inmate of great Somapura Vihāra.)
64 B.M. Barua, op. cit. p. 206
65 JASB, Vol. III, p.214 (Ratnapāla says that ‘this is one of the 84000 shrines erected by Śri Dharma Aśoka , the ruler of the world (Jambudvipa), at the end of the 218th year of Buddha annihilation(BC 326) upon the holy spot in which Bhagwan (Buddha) tasted milk and honey (Madhupayasa). In the lapse of time, having fallen into disrepair, it was rebuilt by a priest named Naik Mahanta. Again being ruined, it was restored by Raja Sado-Mang. After a long interval it was once more demolished, when Raja Sempyu-sakhen-Tārā-mengi appointed his guru, Śri Dharma Raja Guna, to superintend the building. He proceeded to the spot with his disciple, Śri Kasyapa, but they were unable to complete it, although aided in every manner by the Raja. Afterwards Varadasi-naik thera petitioned the Raja to undertake it, to which he readily assented, commissioning Prince Pyutasing to the work, who again deputed the younger Pyusakheng, and his minister, Ratha to cross over and repaired the sacred building. It was thus constructed the fourth time, and finished on Friday the 10th day of Pyadola, in the Sakkaraja year 667 (CE 1305). On Sunday the 8th of Tachhaanmungla, 668 (CE 1306) it was consecrated with splendid ceremonies and offerings of food, perfumes, banners, and lamps, and puja of the famous ornamented tree called Kalpavriksha, and the poor people (two) were treated with charity, as Raja’s own children. Thus was completed this meritorious act, which will provide reward
Burney\textsuperscript{66} and Hla Oung\textsuperscript{67}. The inscriptions says that the king of Upper Burma, who is honored as Theinpyu Thakin Tārā-Mingyi (lord of 100000 pyus) and the lord of the white elephant deputed a royal mission under Śri Dharmarājgūra to repair the great temple and provided him sufficient money to accomplish the work. Śri Dharmarājgūra who was accompanied by his disciple Kassapa Thera failed in his mission. Then at request of the monk Varadasi, his majesty entrusted his younger prince Pyutasing-Pyu-Sakheng and minister Ratha to repair the Mahabodhi - and both of them visited India. The work started in the year 667 sakkaraja and completed on Sunday the 8\textsuperscript{th} day of the waxing moon of the Tazoungmon month in the year 668 of the same Burmese era. The repair work was duly consecrated with great show and pomp.\textsuperscript{68} Cunningham says that though dates of the inscriptions have been engraved as the sakkaraja years 667 and 668 but the second mission of Pyu-Sakheng was followed shortly after Śri Dharmarājgūra’s mission. So the dates of these two inscriptions should be in same century and it will be 441 and 448.\textsuperscript{69} Barua opposed his views and says that:

“We cannot but differ from Cunningham when he arbitrarily proposes to correct these two dates in the inscription to 441 and 448 respectively, making the former totally with AD 1079 and the latter with AD 1086. It will be simply doing violence to the historical truth to adopt such a wrong procedure as this, especially having regard to the fact that document is intended to be precise even in the minute details of chronology. We detect however, that of an inscription of Śri Dharmarājgūra, which he wrongly took to be somewhat earlier Burmese record.”\textsuperscript{70}

The shorter Burmese inscription inscribed on a large copper-gilt umbrella, which was discovered by Beglar. It was buried eight-feet under the Burmese ground level, immediately to the west of the temple. The umbrella has two short inscriptions, one in Mon or Taliang and other in Indian character (Proto-Bengali). The Taliang inscription has one short line, rest is fragmented. The proto Bengali inscription has two lines, of which the upper line is not readable on the right hand. Cunningham reads it as:

Sam 397 Sri Dharma raja Guru Mahabala dana ganita… Sri Rana Saha dena… \textsuperscript{71}

Barua says that Cunningham has committed twofold mistakes: 1. Interpreting the recorded date Samvat 397 in terms of the Burmese era, and 2. In considering Śri Dharmarājgūra of this inscription to be same as Śri Dharmarājgūna of larger Burmese inscription. The commonness of the official designation Śri Dharmarājgūra or Śri Dharmarājgūna does not mean that person is same and the donor of the copper guilt umbrella was a different person. Regarding the dates of inscription, it is difficult to interpret Samvat in terms of Burmese convention of sakkaraja. The date Samvat 397 may be a clerical mistake for Samvat 1397 or showing the expired reign of King Lakshmansena. So the copper guilt-umbrella record is later than the larger Burmese record and may represent CE 1340 (with Vikrama Samvat) or to CE 1567 and virtuous fruits. May the founders endure in fame, enjoy the tranquility of nibbāna and arhanta on the advent of Ārya Maitri (the future Buddha).’

\textsuperscript{66} Asiatic Researches, Vol. XX, p.164
\textsuperscript{67} Alexander Cunningham, op.cit. p. 76
\textsuperscript{68} B.M. Barua op. cit. pp.208-209
\textsuperscript{69} Alexander Cunningham, op. cit. p. 77
\textsuperscript{70} B.M. Barua, op. cit. pp. 208-209
\textsuperscript{71} Alexander Cunningham, op. cit. p. 75
The old Stone railing has few granite pillars presenting certain lotus-medallions in the middle row with the male and female figures are quite Burmese in their headdresses and appearances with certain representations of Burmese Pagodas. The basalt throne of the Buddha inside the great temple also seems to be an addition by the Burmese. On a brick, names of the two masons Gopapāla and Dharamasimha are engraved in Bengali characters. These bricks are relics of the last Burmese repair of the great temple under auspices of Ming-don-min.\textsuperscript{73}

A large number of inscriptions on stone slabs from the 14\textsuperscript{th} century, two of which are dated in Samvat 1359, and third in Sam. 1365, a fourth in Sam. 1385 and a fifth in Sam. 1388 or from CE 1302-1331 have been discovered by the Archaeological Survey of India.\textsuperscript{74} In the first two inscriptions dated Sam. 1359, the pilgrim offers his adoration to Vajrasana for wellbeing towards his parents.\textsuperscript{75} In the third inscription dated Samvat 1365, the pilgrim offers his devotion to the Mahābodhi. The pavement stone slabs with the dates of Samvat 1385 and Samvat 1388, on the first there are five representations, all kneeling in Burmese fashion and holding out offerings of flowers to a stūpa. Three of them are male and two women. The most visible person is known as Karasaka Thakura Sri... (Thakura of Karasa) and his wife kneeling behind him named Thakurani Jajora Devi. The second slab has four figures, three male and one female, all kneeling and offering flowers. On a third slab there are two figures of male and female mentioned as Rachra and Singara Dabu respectively. On a fourth there are three figures, a man, a woman Nagala Devi, and the animal Bhutamana. On a fifth stone slab no figure is engraved but an inscription of 10 lines issued by Pandita Sri Jina-Dasaka from the hills shows respect to the shrine of the Mahābodhi, for the benefit of his father and mother.\textsuperscript{76} After the fourteenth century no direct evidence of grants and repair works of the Mahābodhi are known except by a pilgrim from Sri Lanka, Edmund Goonaratna, who in Buddha-vasse 2427 or CE 1884, engraved his journey to Mahabodhi on a slab of white marble.\textsuperscript{77} At this time due to lack of patronage and financial assistance, the Buddhist priests deserted the area. Brahamana priests took over the function, Barua says:

‘A time came when, when there being no Buddhists to look after their own shrines and worship at Bodhgayā, the Brahmanas of Gaya had to do their (Buddhists) work, even by going out of their jurisdiction. The sin of greed brought down curses on these Brahmanas. Gaya ceased to be a land of plenty and prosperity, and its inevitable consequence was that its Brahama became dependent on their livelihood, entirely on an income from the pilgrims. Thus to save their souls, a propagandist manual, the later legendry form of the Eulogium of Gaya, became a desideratum. This Eulogium in the Puranas embodies the very latest phase of development of the iconic life of Brahma-Gaya under the strong and unquestioned sway of Vishnu, the mace-bearer.’  \textsuperscript{78}

\footnotesize

\begin{itemize}
  \item [73] Alexander Cunningham, \textit{op. cit.} p. 75
  \item [74] Ibid. p. 82 (These later day Buddhist pilgrims hailed from Karasa, a locality in Punjab or Sindh).
  \item [75] Ibid. p. 82
  \item [76] B.M. Barua, \textit{op. cit.} p. 211
  \item [77] Alexander Cunningham, \textit{op. cit.} p. 83 (Jinadasa was hailed from a country known as parvata, near Mulasthana or Multan, B.M. Barua. \textit{op. cit.} p. 212)
  \item [78] Ibid. pp.83-84
  \item [79] B. M. Barua, \textit{op. cit.} pp. 156-157
\end{itemize}
During the Mughals, the Mahābodhi was known as a seat of Saivism and one sanad granted to it in 16th or 17th century recognized it as a Śaiva temple. In CE 1590, one Gosain Ghamandi Gir, a Śaiva and probably a follower of Nātha came to settle here. He converted the Mahābodhi into Śaiva matha but allowed Buddhists to worship. One of the dominant sections of the Nāthas were Vajrayanists who seeded themselves from Buddhism. Tāranātha informs that the most of the Yogi followers of Gorakṣa were fools and lived by money and honor offered by the tirthika kings. Even some of them were not opposed to the Turuskas, but still a few of them belonged to the Natesvari-varga, remained insiders. Under mahanthaship of Mahādevagiri, the Mahābodhi matha became a popular shelter for other gosain of the order and received patronage from the Mughal authorities. In the age of Bahadur Shah, a further grant was issued that a chaknama of 18th zikad fasti 1118/CE 1711 issued by the order of the Emperor says that the chak Mastipur in mauza Mahabodh, pargana Maher was granted to the righteous Gosain Lal Gir as madad-i-m'ash by the former rulers and it was further continued as khairat in the name of god to Gosain Lal Gir. The Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiyar in his fourth year of reign granted two villages Antaria, Tappanagbansi and the waste jungles therein from pargana Chainpur, sarkar Rohtas for the maintenance of Gosain Keshave Gir of the math. The Emperor Muhammad Shah in his 9th regnal year also granted villages Bagula and Dhahraha in Pargana Sherghat and again by another firman villages Mastipur and Tārādih in pargana Maher to Lal Gir for maintenance of the math. The confirmatory documents for the above grants were obtained from Mirza Muhammad Akbar Shah Bahadur, son of Emperor Shah Alam in CE 1791. Since 15th century onwards the Mahābodhi was passed out of the hands of Buddhists and it was sank into oblivion till its cause was vigorously espoused in the 20th century by the Mahābodhi Society of Śri Lanka especially Anagarika

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79 Ibid. pp. 157-158. (with the re-emergence of Hinduism as a ‘Puranic Brahamanism’ in the Gupta period, process of assimilation of Buddhist deities with Hindu Gods and Goddesses also started in Bodhgaya. Visnu has been accepted as an incarnation of the Buddha who found his existence as the Buddha in Bodhgayā and as a Jagannātha in Puri. The most vigorous attempt was made by Śiva whose presence in Mahābodhi could directly be sought since period of Śaṅkara. In the reign of the Pālas, a great harmony was established between Śiva and the Buddha. One inscription issued in the 26th year of the reign of Dharmapāla, the enjoyer of the earth, on the fifth day of the dark fortnight of Bhadrapada, on a Saturday, in Bodhgayā says ‘Chaumukh-Mahādev has been placed in the pious abode of the Buddha, the lord of righteousness by Keśava, son of Ujjvala, the stone cutter, for the benefit of the descendants of snatakas residing at Mahābodhi. A tank of exceeding depth and holy like Vishnupadi has been excavated for these good people at the cost of three thousand drachamas. (ASIAR, 1908-1909, p. 150). Since then the Saivites began to covet right of acting as custodians of the Mahābodhi. With it Puranas also propounded that at Dharmapraṣṭha it is mandatory for every Hindu pilgrim who is desired of releasing the departed spirits of their ancestors must visit Vajrasana and Asvatha. A special formula for Asvatha worship was evolved. ‘I bend my head in obeisance to thee. O Asvattha, lord of trees, standing as a living form of the Holy Triad of our pantheon with thy high fame as Bodhi-druma, the renowned Bo, for the release of the dead forefathers, the makers of the line of descent. Those in my lineage and those connected with the mother’s line, the kith and kin who have gone into the state of woe, may they, from thy holy place and touch, pass into an eternal state of heavenly life. The triple debts I paid, O King of trees, by coming on pilgrimage to Gaya. By thy benign grace am I rescued from the awful ocean of existence and liberated from deadly sins.’ (B.M. Barua, op. cit. pp.235-236) Once a time came when the worship of the Mahābodhi and Bodhissara was left entirely in the hands of the Hindu priests who utilized it for their sordid business for releasing the disembodied spirits from a state of woe or obtaining an easy passport to heavenly worlds. The place where the Buddha attained nibbāna and defeated Māra and his daughters, the Brahamana priests were performing superstitious rituals with instrumental music, Bhavans, Chetis and Kāma for attaining liberation.)
81 Tāranātha, p. 320
82 George Grierson, A, Notes on the District of Gaya, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1893, p. 17
84 Ibid. pp. 4-5
85 Ibid. p. 4
86 Bengal Regulation XXXVII of 1793 dated 1st May 1793.
Dharmapāla. The fierce legal battle was contested between Hindu mahantas and Buddhists and Vajrasana was restored for Buddhist by the Supreme Court of India.

**Struggle for Survival in Bengal:**

Bengal has been considered as the last cradle of Buddhism. The monasteries like Somapura, Jagadalla, Uddiyana etc., struggled hard to sustain the losing reverberation. They put Buddhism alive in different parts of Bengal and Orissa and paved for its expansion in Nepal and Tibet. Mainamati Buddhist complex at Mainamati-Lalmai Hill in Comilla District of Bangladesh shows rich monumental and sculptural heritage. The Mainamati inscription of CE 1220 mentions existence of Buddhist Sahajiya cult in the reign of Ranavanakamalla at Pattikera in Tipperah. The recent discoveries as Moghalmari in West Midnapore District of West Bengal exposes same type of cultural continuity up into the 13th century.

Somapura Vihāra was situated in Pundravardhana, now covering the modern district of Bogra, Dinajpur and Rajshahi in Bangladesh. Xuanzang mentions some Buddhist vihāras in CE 639, but the area was dominated by Jains. The archeological exploration of Paharpur suggests that this monastery was built by Devapāla. Some inscriptions and clay seals describe it as Dharmapāla Mahavihāra, showing a tribute to Dharmapāla by his son Devapāla. The Dharmapāla Mahavihāra of Somapura was largest single vihāra that was built in India for the stay of the monks and the Mahavihāra remained functional for four centuries from the early 8th century to 13th century. Dipangar Śrijñāna went to Tibet to translate a work done by Bhaivya with Virasimha and Na-Tsho. This inscription is found in Tibet with a title Madhimakaratna-praotipa. Another treatise composed in Somapura Vihāra is Dharmakayadipanidhi translated into Tibetan by Prajñānakīrti. In the middle of the eleventh century a local king of East Bengal, Jatvarma who was inimical to Buddhism, set fire the vihāra and the abbot Karnaśrimitra was burnt alive. The Mahavihāra suffered grievously from conflagration but not ruined and soon renovated by some lay followers. Nālandā inscription of Vipulśrimitra informs that the monastery was functional in the 12th century. The inscription says that Karunaśrimitra died when fire camouflaged the monastery. His disciple was Maitriśrimitra who was a disciple of Aśokāśrimitra. Vipulaśrimitra was disciple of Aśokaśrimitra who built a temple of Tārā and reconstructed cells for the monks. He gifted a gold ornament for the embellishment of the Buddha image. The inscription found on the life size image of the Buddha in the standing posture was donated by the lay follower Viryendra, says that Somapura existed in the 13th century. The Buddha is attended by Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya. The inscription says that donor of the gift was a pilgrim from great monastery of Somapura and an inhabitant of Samatata. Somapura was centering around and dominated by a temple, supposedly is a rare occurrence in the Buddhist architectural history of India, This temple architecture differs from all normal temple architecture Brahmanical or Buddhist in India. The main gate a huge structure faces North, entering

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87 Henry Morse Stephan, The Budh-Gaya Temple, H. Dharmapala vs. Jaipal Giri and Others. 1895
89 Indian Historical Quarterly, 1933, p.289.
92 Samuel Beal, The Travel of Fah-hian and Sung-yun from China to India, Delhi: LPP, 2005, II, p. 195
93 Sukumar Dutt ,op.cit, p. 371
94 Cordier III,166
95 Sukumar Dutt., op. cit. p. 376
96 Epigraphia Indica, Vol.XXI,1931-1932, p. 97
97 ASIAR, 1908-1909, p. 158
by this gate main temple exists and, going around it, into vast quadrangle about a mile square. It was surrounded by an encompassing wall and along the wall, separated by a running portico were the monk cells, totalling seventeen in number. They are usually rectangular in shape with no stone beds in them, but several have altars and pedestals built inside rendering the living accommodation. There used to be channel of flowing water, perhaps an inlet of the river Padma, running along the foundation of the wall on the eastern side where for convenience of flushing, where the privies were arranged. The ruined temple with its towering ruins is most outstanding. It has a pyramidal shape of a Burmese Pagoda, built terraced and topped by a shrine with a hollow underneath going right down to the temple foundation. It has none of characteristics of Indian temple architecture; but is strongly reminiscent of the Buddhist temples from Myanmar, Java, and Cambodia reproducing their cruciform basement, terraced structure with intersected chambers and gradually dwindling pyramidal form. The ruins of Somapura does not show any large-scale destruction, so the monastery was either abandoned because of immediate population displacement in the midst of the widespread unrest and violence.

Jagadalla, another famous site for Buddhism, was situated in northern Bengal or Varendra. This mahavihāra was founded by Ramapāla (CE1077-1120). Sandhyakar Nandi, the court poet of Ramapāla says in his Ramacaritam that the King founded Ramavati on the bank of Ganga and Karotoa in Varendra. Jagadalla Vihāra was situated here. Jagadalla has been a site for the Vajryāna tradition and in regular contact with the scholars of Tibet. A major portion of Tanjur and Kangyur texts are said to have written or copied in the monastery of Jagadalla. The pāg-jām-zen-zāng says that in the 13th Century, Sakyaśribhadra, a learned Kashmiri monk, visited the Buddhist monasteries of Magadha but found both Vikramāśilā and Odantapurī destroyed. Then he proceeded to Jagadalla which was still intact. He stayed there for three years. Śakya Śrībhadra became disciple of Subhākargupta. Śribhadra had two great disciples Vibhuticandra and Dānaśīla. The Tibetan tradition says that Vibhuticandra was a prince, converted into the monkhood. He wrote a commentary on Śāntideva’s Bodhicaryavatāra and also translated some of the works of Abhyakāragupta in Tibetan. Danaśīla translated about sixty Vajrayāna texts. Mokṣakaragupta was another renowned scholar of Jagadalla; a follower of Mahāyāna and author of a treatise on Tarkabhāsa logic. The referenced Sakyasribhadra, Vibhuticandra and Dānaśīla went to Nepal and Tibet within in three years of Śribhadra’s arrival at Jagadalla because Bengal became unsafe for them. The monastery of Jagadalla was either destroyed or deserted. The Ain-i-Akbari mentions Rāmautī but does not inform about Jagadalla Vihāra. Uddiyana, Zahore, and Ratnamrittika were other sites in Bengal where Buddhism survived till the medieval age. In these monasteries Vajrayāna chārya songs and various traditions of Vajrayāna were developed. Saraha introduced the Buddha Kapāla tantra, Luipa originated the

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98 Sukumar Dutt, *op.cit.* pp. 372-373
99 Ibid. p. 377
100 Ibid. p. 378
101 Ibid. pp. 376-377
102 S C Das, ‘A Note on Buddhist Vihāras’ (Sumpa Mkham-po says that it was situated in Orissa and a place of refuge for a large number of Buddhist and Tantrika Siddhas when the monasteries of Bihar and Bengal were sacked and destroyed. Pāg sām jon zāng, xcvi)
103 Cordier Catalogue II, p. 293
104 Ibid. III, p. 310
105 p...N. Bose, *op. cit.* pp. 151-154
106 Sukumar Dutt, *op. cit.* p. 378
107 Ibid. p. 379
108 *Ain-i-Akbari*, II, 131
Samputa Tilaka, Kambala, and Padmavajra, the expounders of Hevajra Tantra, Lalita Vajra that of three divisions of Krsnayamari Tantra, Gambhirvajra that of Vajramrta, Kukkuri that of Mahamaya and Pita of Kalchakra have been associated with Uddiyana. The *Pāg sām jon-zāng* says that Vajrayāna first developed in Uddiyana which was most important among the four pīthas. In the late 15th and 16th century when Buddhism was a forgotten faith across the whole of India, Bengal-Orissa still held the nerve. The *Śunyasamhita* of Achyutananda mentions that Buddhism existed in four creeds *Nagantī, Yogantī, Vedantī* and *Siddhantī*. Rāmacandra Kavi-bharti, a Buddhist living in 13th century Bengal shifted into Sri Lanka in CE 1245, where he was honored by the king with the title *Baudh-agama-cakravartin*, for his scholarship.

A ruler of Bengal, Madhusena (Saka era 1289) had the title *Parama Saugata*, showing his affiliation to Buddhism. A Buddhist scholar Sadbaudha-Karana-kayastha Thakura Amitabha copied the Bodhicaryavatara in CE 1436 in Venugrama, Bengal. He was patronized by a local Buddhist Zamindar family. The great poet Vanaratna (CE 1384-1468) was native to Sannagara, Bengal, which possessed a great monastery. The Pāṇdu Vihāra mentioned by Śridhara in his *Nyayakandli* existed up until the 14th century. Buddhaguptanātha, teacher of Tāranātha informs us that in the 16th century, Buddhism still existed in Kalinga, Ḫarkhanda, land of Jagannātha, Pundravadhana, and Devikota (Tripura). He visited Khasarapanā temple in Buntavarta (Pundavardhana) and then to Tipperah (probably Mainamati monastery) to visit Kasaranga. He then went to Devikota where he resided for seven days in a temple built by Krisṇacārya. Buddhism up to 16th century was completely non-existent in Upper and Middle Ganga valley, it was surviving in the lower Ganga valley and its adjoining regions. However it was very prone to Jagannātha cult and Nāthism, which ultimately were successful to absorb Buddhism in their fold; but it was never completely wiped out of the region.

The census report of 1931, mentions their total population as 330,563 - confined to the northern districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts. They still hold substantial influence in the area despite the partition of India and their isolation from rest of the country especially, the Buddhists who live in Chittagong Hills.

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109 *Sadhanamāla*, II, XLIII
111 N.K Sahu, *op. cit.* p. 176
114 R. C. Mitra, *op. cit.* p.84
115 Ibid. pp.84-85
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http://www.archive.org/details/buddhgayatemplecaoodhasrich
Introduction:

The Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies is one of the significant departments of the Faculty of Arts at Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi, in Uttar Pradesh, India. BHU was established in 1916, and is one of the oldest and most prestigious central universities in all of India, and is considered as one of the largest residential universities in Asia. The university has two campuses. The main campus, where Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies is located, is spread out over 1300 acres. Although the founder Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya attached “Hindu” word with the title of the university, his vision of “Hindu” had the sense of Indianness and encouraged all the disciplines of universal knowledge to be initiated in the university. Therefore, BHU has the facilities of the entire global knowledge in one campus including learning of most of the Indian and foreign languages.

Pali, the language of the oldest Buddhist canon Tipitaka, has been taught at Banaras Hindu University since 1940, introduced as a subject in the Sanskrit Department, because of the effort of Bhikshu Jagadish Kashyap, a Theravada Buddhist monk who played a significant role in the propagation of Pali-studies in India during the post-colonial period. Bhikshu Jagadish Kashyap was introduced to Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the founder of this university and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the second Vice-chancellor by Yugal Kishore Birla, a noted industrialist in India. Bhikshu Kashyap successfully persuading them to begin the study of Pali at the university. Bhikshu Jagadish Kashyap would teach Pali for free in BHU and other financial responsibilities were borne by Birla.

The Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies got independent status on 31 July 1982, finally separated from the Department of Sanskrit in the Faculty of Arts; and Dr. N.H. Samtani was appointed as the first Head of the Department. The department has also been granted University Grants Commission’s Centre for Buddhist Studies (under the scheme of Epoch Making Social Thinkers of India) for the period of five years twice, once during the year 2000-2005 and now, for the period of 2013-2017.

The importance of the Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies is twofold for students and especially, for Buddhists: firstly, it is established in the proximity of Sarnath, the one of most sacred Buddhist pilgrimage site, where the Buddha delivered his first famous “Turning the wheel of Law” sermon; and secondly, the department offers the fusion of Pali language/literature and other various dimensions of Buddhist Studies in its curriculum.
The courses we offer:

The Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies conducts courses, in the following way: a Ph.D in Pali and Buddhist Studies – possesses two semesters of six months each in a year, namely, the Odd Semester (September-February) and the Even Semester (March-August); the M.A. in Pali – for a period of two years (four semesters); and the B.A. (Hons.) in Pali – over a period of three years (six semesters); and an additional Two Years Diploma in Pali - conducted at Level I (two semesters) and Level II (two semesters). The admission into the Diploma program is also open for non-students of BHU.

The department has the credit system provision for evaluations and admissions in these courses every year, for which online forms are provided on the BHU’s online admissions web portal www.bhuonline.in. Foreigners are supposed to contact the International Centre of the university. The International Centre keeps notices posted on its web links:

- http://www.bhu.ac.in/admission/international/
- http://www.bhu.ac.in/Centre/index1.htm

For general purposes, Banaras Hindu University (B.H.U.) has a website www.bhu.ac.in which contains all the information and web links for its different units.

The session in the university begins in July every year for undergraduates, post-graduates and diplomas; but for Ph.D. candidates, registrations are held twice a year, in March and September, for which one has to apply in advance through proper channels, following the guidelines of the university’s International Centre.

Events held in the Department:

To enrich and enhance the depth of student knowledge, the Department, apart from offering the regular routine teaching and research, organizes special seminars and lectures from time to time by prominent scholars from India and abroad. The department organized an All India Seminar on “Early Buddhism and Mahayana”, under the sponsorship of Indian University Grants Commission from 10-13 November 1983. The seminar was inaugurated by his Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso. After that event, several other events were held: National Seminar in Commemoration of he Birth Centenary of Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan in 1995, National Seminar on “Buddhism and Social Ideals” in 2001, National Seminar on “Dimensions of Mind in Buddhist Thought” in 2003, National Seminar on “Concept of Anattavada (No Soul Theory) in Buddhism” in 2005, International Conference in Commemoration of Birth Centenary of Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap on “The State Of Buddhism, Buddhists And
Buddhist Studies In India And Abroad” in 2009 and a National Conference on “Feminist Discourse in Indian Traditional and Modern Context” in 2014.

The department has organized formal lectures since its inception to inculcate knowledge into students despite having very limited financial resources. Among those who have been selected for speaking, are the following: Prof. Marek Mejor (Oriental Institute, Warsaw, Poland); Gregory Kramer (President, Clarity, Portland, USA); Prof. Sanghhsen Singh (Ex- Professor and Head, Dept. of Buddhist Studies, Delhi University, Delhi); Prof. V.C. Srivastava (Ex-Director, Indian Institute of Advance Study, Shimla); Prof. Dr. Maja Milchinski (Professor of Asian Philosophies and Religions of Ljubljana University, Slovenia); Dr. James Duerlinger (Professor of Philosophy, Iowa University, USA); Prof. Charles Willemen (Vice-Rector, International Buddhist College, Thailand); Prof. Lauren Crane (Wittenberg University, USA); Prof. Dr. Maja Milchinski (Professor of Asian Philosophies and Religions of Ljubljana University, Slovenia); Dr. James Duerlinger (Professor of Philosophy, Iowa University, USA); Prof. Charles Willemen (Vice-Rector, International Buddhist College, Thailand); Prof. Lauren Crane (Wittenberg University, USA); and Ven. Sumanasiri from Malaysia. Other programs of note have been the Celebration of Buddha Jayanti (Vesak Day) and a screening of the film “Panchama Veda”, directed by the noted journalist/film-maker Gautam Chatterjee, featuring an address to the audience.

Awards and Recognitions to Faculty Members and Alumni:

The department has produced several illustrious figures in the past and still is a great center for study and discourse on Buddhism. The founder of the Pali and Buddhist Studies Department, Dr. N.H. Samtani has since retired, and became the recipient of Certificate of Honor (President Award) by the President of India in 1999, and won the Bhasha Sammana (Sahitya Academy Award) in 2005 for his outstanding contribution to classical Indian Language and literature through his works in Pali and Buddhist studies. Another alumnus include: Prof. Bhagchandra Jain (retired, former head of the Department of Pali-Prakrit, University of Nagpur), who was awarded the Commonwealth Scholarship in 1963 to carry out his Ph.D. in Sri Lanka. He received the Certificate of Honor by the President of India in 2004 for his devotion to the classical Indian Languages of Pali and Prakrit. Other alumni include: Prof. Prem Suman Jain, Director, National Institute of Prakrit Studies and Research, Shravanabelagola, Karnataka; and Prof. Dharmchandra Jain, former Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Pali-Prakrit, Kuruksetra University, Kuruksetra, also a recipient of the Certificate of Honor by the President of India in 2006 for outstanding contributions to the classical Indian Languages Pali and Prakrit in the years 2006 and 2009 respectively. Among the current faculty members, Prof. Lalji has been awarded the Sino-Indian Cultural Exchange Fellowship in 1988 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India for two years to study Buddhist texts and Chinese Language at Beijjing, China. Another young alumnus Dr. Vishwajit Kumar, presently the Associate Professor at Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, Deemed University, Ministry of Culture, has been the recipient of the prestigious Vadrayana Vyās President Award in 2004. Prof. Siddharth Singh (the author of this article), has been awarded the Japan Foundation Fellowship, Japan, in 2003-04 and the Fulbright Senior Research Fellowship, USA 2011-12. He also has been honored by prestigious VadrāyanaVyās President Award in 2005 as a Young Scholar of Pali and Buddhist Studies in a ceremony held at President’s House by the then President of India Mr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam. Additionally, Prof. Singh was the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) Visiting Professor of Indian Studies in Uppsala University, Sweden for the period from Oct. 2014 until March, 2015, Visiting Professor at the Central University of Hyderabad (UoH), Hyderabad from Dec. 2012-Jan.2013; Visiting Professor in Karlstad University, Sweden in 2006 and 2008 and an Associate at the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla during 2009 and 2010.
Faculty Members at Present:
Currently, there are five teaching faculty members in the department of Pali and Buddhist Studies.: Professor Pradyumna Dubey is the Head of the Department; and the other professors are Prof. Lalji, Prof. Bimalendra Kumar, Prof. Siddharth Singh and Prof. Priti Kumari Dubey. There is one vacancy for an Assistant Professor (reserved for scheduled caste, a constitutional term to denote the suppressed caste of the past) and two vacancies (general for all) of Associate Professors are advertised on the Universities website, which still haven’t been filled.

Conclusion:
In a controversial decision, the Government of India removed Pāli (the famous ancient classical language of India and early Buddhism) as a subject from the main Civil Services Examination, commonly known as the Indian Administrative Services (IAS) of India in 2013; conducted by UPSC (Union Public service Commission) of India. UPSC is India’s central agency authorized to conduct the Civil Services Examination, Engineering Services Examination, Combined Defense Services Examination, National Defense Academy Examination, Naval Academy Examination and Combined Medical Services Examination. Out of these, the Civil Services Examination (IAS) is the highest civil services examination through which the top bureaucrats are selected to administer the different departments of the central government of India.

The Government of India and several states recently, over the last 10 years, have realized that Buddhism may be a great saleable commodity to enhance the revenue by fetching the Buddhist tourists in their states. Some states ruled by Hindu ideology oriented politically parties, such as the B.J.P., the think that Buddhism, having a close philosophical and religious proximity with Hinduism, may be a natural partner with Hinduism to combat the Islamic or Christian fanatic-forces. India’s recent political strategy inclined towards “Look East Policy” is also playing a role in the organization of such events. In the contest of cashing in on the name of the Buddha in order to collect huge revenue from tourism, states are making alliances with various political parties. On the other hand, Pāli and Buddhist studies are desperately struggling to survive as a discipline of study in the country; alternatively, the government is spending huge amounts of money to attract tourists from Buddhist countries. The name of the Buddha is being misused for a nuclear bomb test with the slogan of “Smiling Buddha” - and for the political nexus, also by Hindu fundamentalist groups as a tool. If you participate in the Buddha Mahotsava (Buddha Festival), an event being organized by the various state governments of India nowadays on the days of the Buddha’s birth, enlightenment
and Mahāparinibbāna, you will find that the Buddha himself is absent from the whole occasion. The whole occasion appears more like a ruling political party program where there is neither any concern with the Buddha’s teachings nor there is any scope of proper participation by true scholars.

The main road to BHU

There has been widespread discussion since 2010, over the revival of the ancient Nalanda tradition in India through national and international media because of the establishment of Nālandā International University, at Rajgir (site of ancient Rājagaha) in Bihar State. This is truly enthusiastic news for any scholar of Buddhism or Indology. But unlike ancient Nālandā University based on Buddhism and its allied subjects, four out of seven schools are the schools of Business Management, Information Sciences and Technology, International Relation and Environmental Studies. The proposed school of Buddhist Studies is merged with Philosophy and Comparative Religion in the same school and another school entitled “Languages and Literatures” doesn’t have any declaration of the languages proposed to be studied within its fold and it is doubtful whether this list includes the languages contributory to Buddhist Studies like Pāli, Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese etc. or would that too be decided according to market demands? Interestingly, the schools to be opened in the Phase I does neither include Buddhist Studies nor Languages and Literature but the two schools of Historical Studies and Ecology & Environmental Studies. The Government of India desires to show its inclination towards Buddha, not for the true purpose of serving and propagating his ideas, but for the fact that this name is marketable and may fetch the tourists and funding from other Buddhists or Buddhist-oriented nations.

India needs serious and scholarly studies of Buddhism too, apart from government’s revenue-generating marketing-campaign of the Buddha and Buddhism. The future study of Pāli and Buddhist Studies depends on if it leads towards any job perspective or not – leading to an interdependent relationship for the rest of India. Otherwise, there is no point for youngsters to study this entirely new (yet ancient) subject that hardly has any scope of jobs outside of the classroom or tourist places in any sphere of normal life within India. Therefore, the presence of Pāli on the IAS exam was one of the major reasons to attract many Indian youngsters to opt to study Pāli and Buddhist Studies, and at least this was playing a major role to inhibit the declining but rich discipline still surviving within its homeland. The questionable removal of Pāli from this examination means a death-knell towards Pāli and Buddhist Studies in India for Indian people. Fortunately, the Nagpur High Court has recently accepted a petition against the government’s decision for removing Pali, and the future is still indeterminable, the consequences have yet to be seen. Meanwhile, the Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, at BHU, still strives to propagate the Buddhavacana.
BHU’s Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies endeavors to propagate the Buddhavacana at its utmost capacity but considering the Indian government’s partial attitude towards the Buddhist Studies, it may not been as successful it should be. The department heartily welcomes everyone to its address:

Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies  
Banaras Hindu University (BHU)  
Varanasi 221005, Uttar Pradesh, India  
Phone No.: 0091-542-6703129 (Head/Chairperson of the Department)  
Phone No.: 0091-542-6703138 (Secretary of the Office)

Since admission procedures for foreigners are by default, dealt with by the International Centre of the University, admission seekers should directly contact to the International Centre, at their address:

International Centre, C/3/3, Tagore House,  
Banaras Hindu University,  
Varanasi - 221005, INDIA,  
Phone: 91-542-2307639, 2368130,  
E-mail: intcent@bhu.ac.in, internationalcentrebh@gmail.com