

## EXPANSION OF BUDDHISM INTO SOUTHEAST ASIA

(mainly before c. A.D. 1000)

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In contrast to the wealth of studies on the expansion of Islam and Christianity it appears that the expansion of Buddhism, third of the world religions as far as numbers are concerned, has hitherto aroused little interest. It is true that most general works on Buddhism devote a chapter or a section to its expansion outside South Asia but, although such sections often contain interesting and important observations, they do not deal with the many problems to the depth required for such studies. The present paper may call attention to some of these problems.

The first question that springs to mind is a basic one: *why* did Buddhism expand at all. The two other world religions which I just mentioned both contain strong admonitions to the faithful in order that they should do everything in their power to spread the faith to all corners of the earth. The manner in which this was achieved is well known. The Muslims, for instance, had and have a special tax (the *jizyah*) imposed on all non-Muslims and had not rarely recourse to more violent methods to force the infidels to convert to Islam, while the Christians have their missionary organizations and also knew of different forms of pressure and persuasion to make others adopt their faith. But no similar forms of pressure exist in Buddhism. There is of course, a basic difference between Islam and Christianity on one side and Buddhism on the other, in that Buddhism is not or is not in the first place, a matter of faith. Buddhist texts always emphasize or imply that Buddhism is above all a matter of understanding the nature of things, which have no existence of their own (*asvabhava*), since their apparent existence depends on a number of factors. The idea which is sometimes expressed but more often implied is that one is bound to become a Buddhist if one understands the relations between causes and effects, in particular the origin of evil and of suffering.

Yet, the first conversions are surrounded by an aura of mystery, although they are described in one of the most basic Buddhist texts: the *Mahavagga* of the *Vinayaputaka*. They concern Lord Buddha's first disciples and closest companions: Sariputta (Sariputra) and Moggallana (Maudgalyayana). It is told that one the original five human auditors of the First

Sermon at Sarnath, the Venerable (*ayasma*) Assaji, had an encounter with the wandering ascetic (*paribbajaka*) Sariputta, who posed him a question about the essence of the doctrine revealed by Lord Buddha. Assaji then proceeded to pronounce what is called the 'terse expression' of the Law propounded by the Buddha (*dhammapariyaya*), viz. the famous verse, inscribed thousands of times in Buddhist countries in Pali, Prakrit and Sanskrit, and with minor variations:

Ye dhamma hetuppabhava hetun tesam Tathagato avocat /  
tesam ca yo nirodha – evamvadi mahasamanah //

On hearing this verse, thus the *Mahavagga*, 'there arose to Sariputta a *dhamma-vision*, dustless, stainless'..., etc. It was, in other words, a revelation which immediately changed Sariputta's life, who now understood the origin of suffering and its cessation.

A little later Sariputta met another wandering ascetic, viz. Moggallana, and recited the verse that he had heard from Assaji. The effect was the same, for Moggallana, too, was converted to Buddhism. The same again happened to a certain Sanjaya, who subsequently revealed the truth to his 250 followers '.

The story as given here is what appears to be its oldest version interesting for several reasons. In the first place it follows that this most famous Buddhist verse was not revealed in this form by Lord Buddha Himself; it is actually considered the essence of the doctrine preached by the Lord at Sarnath as summarized and interpreted by Assaji. In the second place, however, it should be noted that this so-called Buddhist Creed is actually a very difficult text. Much has been written on the meaning and implications of the use of *dhamma* here and also the meaning of the stanza as a whole is by no means clear. Actually, it gives no explanation of the causes (*hetu*); but only states that these have been revealed by Lord Buddha. How then could the 'wondering ascetic' Sariputta, who did not attend the First Sermon, understand it? It is therefore clear that the whole story of the 'conversion' of the two first disciples is placed on a superhuman level, as though Sariputta received a clear intuition of the Truth. This is, at least, what the text of the *Mahamgga* would have us believe. What actually happened will remain a secret in the absence of any near-contemporary account. In the third place, and this is the most significant point, it is clear that these first conversions take place on an intellectual level. The first disciples become Buddhists because they *understand* the Truth: in particular

the origin of suffering and the manner in which this suffering can be brought to an end. This intellectual approach with its emphasis on correct understanding has always remained characteristic of Buddhism. It is no less evident in two other 'conversions'.

The story of the encounter between King Devanmpiya Tissa and thera Mahinda is rightly famous and does not need to be summarized here. Once again its essence is intellectual: a learned dialogue between the king and the monk, who had mysteriously appeared before him. The other 'conversion' is that described in the *Milindapanho*: again a non-Indian king (Milinda, i.e. the Indo-Greek ruler Menander) engaged in a philosophical dialogue with an Indian Buddhist monk: Nagasena. As a result of this dialogue the king not only honoured Nagasena, but even 'handed over the kingdom to his son, and after going forth from home into homelessness and increasing his insight, he attained arahantship'.(1)

The last example is particularly interesting because of the absence of any superhuman elements: the king was clearly convinced of the correctness of Nagasena's arguments and realized that Buddhism was the right way leading to complete liberation. Yet, the question arises whether the text presents a true account of a conversion to Buddhism by a foreign king. Although the story itself seems plausible we should be careful before accepting it as evidence. It has been argued that there are no reliable data proving that Menander did become a Buddhist. It is true that Menander' coinage reflects no influence of Buddhism.(2) But is this clear evidence to refute the story as given in the Pali text? It seems more likely that Menander would have continued the type of coinage to which his subjects had been accustomed irrespective of his religious persuasion. But it is often forgotten that the Buddhist relic casket with the Kharosthi inscription of the time of King Menander (Minadra) (3) is at least a clear indication that the king showed some kind of devotion to Lord Buddha. As to the negative evidence of his coinage it should not be forgotten that the *Milindapanho* clearly stipulates that Menander abdicated in favour of his son; so he would not have issued any coinage after his conversion.

It therefore seems likely that Menander was indeed converted to Buddhism, but this does not imply that the story of his conversion should be accepted as given in the text. For the *Milindapanho*, it is above all a doctrinal text in which a number of current problems within the Buddhist community are discussed and answered. This is achieved in the form of a dialogue in accordance with ancient Buddhist tradition. Most of the texts of the *Tipitaka* are in

the form of dialogues in which Lord Buddha gives discourses on particular points of discipline or of doctrine in reply to questions put to Him by people of all classes. The usual term 'dialogue' is perhaps misleading in so far as there is no real discussion (in contrast with e.g. Plato's dialogues). It is rather a method by which, instead of giving an overall systematic view of doctrine and discipline, each discourse deals with one among hundreds or thousands of separate issues, just as e.g. parsons do in their Sunday sermons. In the *Milindapanho* we read of questions such as: 'What is in the world that is not Born of Cause,(4) The somewhat surprising reply is that the only two things not born of a cause are Space (*akasa*) and Nibbana. Normally *akasa* is considered one of the six elements (*mahadhatu*) subject to the laws of cause and effect just as the other elements (earth, water, etc.). In the brief discussion that follows, however, the king accepts *akasa* as uncaused but *Nibbana* as caused: just the opposite of what one would have expected! Whatever one may think of this argument there is here, and at a few other places in the text, at least a real discussion.

Unfortunately such elaborate descriptions of conversions are rare.(5) What strikes us most, however, is the completely intellectual character of the discussions preceding the conversions. This aspect may to some extent reflect the didactic nature of our texts and does not necessarily describe the manner in which large numbers of people came to embrace Buddhism.

As to the conversion of King Asoka, · who from a cruel fratricide (*Candasoka*) was transformed into one of the foremost patrons of Buddhism, the account in the *Mahavamsa* (most of Chapter: V) inspires little confidence. The account not only mentions philosophical dialogues of the type found in the *Milindapanho*, but the most decisive episode, which removes all the king's doubts is the miracle wrought by the thera Tissa Moggaliputta who 'caused the earth to tremble' (V-262). The idea that Asoka was converted to Buddhism after the massacres of the Kalinga campaign is a modern view.(6)

Although such examples tend to emphasize the intellectual approach in the process of conversion to Buddhism, it does not follow that this was the general rule. It must, however, have been an important aspect. The monks who went from door to door begging their daily food (at least, before this practice was institutionalized) were expected to spread the good word in exchange, delivering a little sermon or, rather, replying to some of the questions posed by the householders. In their replies the monks would talk about the calamities of

disease, old age, death and re-birth possibly in an undesirable state, as well as about the Path which may ultimately lead to the suppression (*nirodha*) of such forms of suffering. In this manner a subtle link between the Sangha and the population in general could be established, which in some cases must have led members of the population to 'seek refuge' in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. It is, however, clear that such forms of conversion could only apply to areas where monasteries had already been established. In addition, they could only have success in regions such as South Asia where, centuries before the rise of Buddhism, there had been a long tradition sanctifying the practice of begging.

For Southeast Asia, where such conditions did not prevail, Buddhism is not likely to have spread in this manner, at least not in its initial stages. Probably, the examples of king Milinda and Devanampiya Tissa would be more appropriate. This remains, however, conjectural as long as little is known about the earliest Buddhist developments. A few early traditions may be discussed in some detail.

The story of the two merchants Tapassu (Taphussa) and Bhalluka (Bhallika), the first disciples of Lord Buddha, is well known from the *Tipitaka* itself. Thus, *the Anguttara* (I, 24) mentions these two as the first who took refuge, and other texts, enumerated in Malalasekara's *Dictionary of Proper Names*, tell us that the two merchants, 'urged by a deity, who had been their relation, ... offered the Buddha rice-cakes and honey provided by the Four Regent Gods. They became the first lay disciples of the Buddha...'. Here there is therefore a clear superhuman element in the story, but no indication is given as to *why* they became disciples of the Buddha. This conversion would not offer great interest were it not for the fact that it had important implications outside India.

The Sanskrit inscription of Tiriya, palaeographically datable to the end of seventh or the first half of the eighth century, deals with the foundation of the Girikanda cetiya, dedicated to Avalokitesvara, by the *Trapussakair = Vallikakair = vanig-ganaih*, 'the companies of merchants who were followers of Trapussa and Bhallika', according to Parnavitana, or by the guilds of merchants who 'in their devotional ardour ... compared themselves to the two merchants, Trapussa and Bhallika' (Chhabra).(7) Although Chhabra's version may be preferable on account of the use of the suffix -ka and the plural, the idea that there was a tradition tracing the *cetiya* back to the two first disciples of the Buddha is quite

plausible. Whichever may be the correct interpretation, the inscription gives clear evidence for the early expansion outside India of Buddhism.

But the story of Tapussa and Bhallika has another implication for Southeast Asia since these names have been associated with the foundation of one of the earliest Buddhist *stupas* in (present) Mramma (Burma), viz. the great Shwe Dagon Pagoda at Pagan. The inscription of king Dhammaceti (B.E. 847 = AD. 1485) (8) relates a long story of Tapussa and Bhalluka, who are there said to originate from Asitanjuna town and, after having travelled to the Bodhi Tree, received eight hairs of Lord Buddha which they subsequently enshrined in a stupa on top of Mount Tamagutta in their home country (southern Mramma). Yet, thus the inscription although there were precious relics in the country, there was none who knew the *ceti* of the hair-relics and none to worship and revere it, thus the Mon part of the inscription (B-14 to 15). This only changed in the year 236 after the Nibbana (c. 250 B.C.), where the two *theras* Sona and Uttara came and established the Sasana in the city of Suvannabhumi.(9)

So far the tradition as laid down in the Shwe Dagon Pagoda inscription concerning the beginnings of Buddhism in (central) Burma. This is, of course, a mythical account in which an attempt is made to trace the beginnings of Buddhism back to the time of Lord Buddha or rather of that of King Asoka. There is, however, no evidence to support such traditions as the earliest evidence for the *presence* of Buddhism in southern Burma date back to about six centuries later, viz. the end of the fourth century A.D this does not necessarily mean that there were no Buddhists in the country before that time, but if there were they left no trace of their presence.

From about the end of the fourth century (a date established on the basis of the palaeography of some inscriptions, not on actual dates) there is evidence for the presence of Buddhism in the ancient Pyu kingdom of Sriksetra with its centre at Hmaw-za, not far from present Prome. The capital city must have been large, as appears from the city walls, which still surround much of the ancient site. As far as the expansion of Buddhism is concerned, the most valuable data are a considerable number of inscriptions written in a script that resembles that of the Pallavas of South India, but also shows some particular features.(10) One of the most interesting inscriptions is that inscribed on twenty gold plates, recovered from what is described as Khin Ba's Mound Relic- Chamber. Each plate is inscribed with three lines of c. 25 *aksaras* each (except for No. 19 with four and No. 20 with two lines).

As already stated, the type of script can be defined as Pallava, but of a type not found in this very form in India, where the earliest Pallava inscriptions found in present Andhra Pradesh are written in a cursive type of script, but in Sri Lanka the Ruvanvalisaya Pillar Inscription of king Budadasa (Buddhadasa), son of Jetatissa (Jetthatissa)(11), who reigned between c. 341 and 370, seems to provide the closest parallel, but there are differences. Thus the three vertical strokes of the *ha*, the third of which is very short in the Sri Lankan inscription, are of equal height in the Hmaw-za script, and a similar feature is apparent in the form of the *sa*, these and some other features may suggest a slightly late date for the Hmaw-za gold plates, which would therefore probably belong to about the beginning of the fifth century.

The texts inscribed on the gold plates all belong to the Pali *Tipitaka*. It is again striking that *Abhidhamma* and other 'learned' texts are well represented, whereas more popular stories, such as *Jatakas*, *Avadanas*, episodes of the life of Lord Buddha are absent. This clearly suggests the presence in Sriksetra of Buddhist scholars from the early fifth century A.D., if not earlier. Such scholars could not have existed in a vacuum but must have been supported by a significant Buddhist community, probably including the royal court. This would imply that this elite would have embraced Buddhism at a time well before these texts were written down, i.e. by the end of the fourth century A.D. at the latest, and well before the time of Buddhaghosa. This again raises the problem as to how Buddhism expanded into southern Burma.

Apart from the tradition of Sana and Uttara, mentioned above, which would place the introduction of Buddhism half a millennium before the earliest inscriptions, there are, unfortunately, no written data about this important development. This is not surprising since the same applies to the 'expansion of Indo-Aryan culture', to use Chhabra's terms, in general. The expansion of Buddhism is part of this early expansion, but with a major difference. The use of Pali in the texts of Sriksetra clearly shows that this Buddhist 'current' must have come from Sri Lanka, where the *Tipitaka* and many commentaries had been written or translated into 'Magadhi'. The same may apply to the script used in Sriksetra in this early period. Several scholars, such as Duroiselle, (12) have emphasized the likeness of this script with that of the Kadambas of Vanavasi and the Pallavas of Kanci but, as explained earlier, the closest similarity is with some of the Sri Lankan inscriptions. The script shows, however, a few

special features not found elsewhere. In this connection I may mention the form of the initial *i* that of the *ca* and the *ba*. The *jha*, not as rare in Pali as it is in Sanskrit, is expressed by a ligature of *ja* and *ha*, a method which I have not met elsewhere. This shows an independent development already at this early stage! It is therefore likely that a script of South Indian origin (further precision does not appear possible at the present stage) had been introduced into Srikssetra some time, probably several generations before its earliest known appearance in inscriptions.

Since most of such Buddhist idealists must have joined merchant ships to cross the oceans, there was a close link between Buddhism and trade. This is hardly surprising since we know that Lord Buddha Himself received much aid and encouragement from rich traders. The best known case is that of Anathapindika, the wealthy merchant at Sravasti (Savatthi), who donated to the Sangha the famous Jetavana, site of most of Lord Buddha's discourses. One (𑀘) may (𑀉) therefore expect that the efforts of missionaries were particularly important during the periods of lively trade between South and Southeast Asia. The fifth century A.D. must have been such a period, the time of the 'Expansion of Indo-Aryan Culture during Pallava Rule' (Chhabra)(13) , when a number of Indian-style kingdoms emerged in several parts of Southeast Asia. A typical example of the links between Buddhism and trade is the case of *Mahanvika* Buddhagupta, inhabitant of Raktamrttika. The latter has been taken either as the name of a monastery in Eastern Bengal (present Bangladesh) or as that of the area in present Kedah, where he had settled down. This Buddhagupta has left two inscribed stone slabs. The first of these, found at Gunung Meriah near the estuary of the Merbok river, Kedah, Malaysia, carries an interesting engraving of a stupa and several inscriptions, one of which mentions Buddhagupta's name and function.(14). The term *mahanavika* probably indicates the captain of a merchant ship. (15) The script is a kind of Pallava script, not unlike that found in several Sanskrit inscriptions of Sri Lanka such as that of Kucchaveli (16) and of Western Java (the stone inscriptions of king Purnavarman), which can be dated back to the fifth century A.D.

If Buddhagupta was not only a pious Buddhist but also endeavoured to spread the Good Doctrine he may have been successful, as we find several Buddhist inscriptions in the area which all seem to belong to the same period. Yet, Buddhism did not make a lasting impact in that part of the Malaysian Peninsula, for the later antiquities are all Saiva, as far as



their religious basis can be determined.(17) At least, no clearly Buddhist statues or other symbols are found there.

The same, incidentally, is true for maritime Southeast Asia as a whole. Unlike mainland Southeast Asia, where Pali can be traced back to the fourth century A.D., not a single Pali text or inscription has been discovered in its maritime part. On the other hand, all known written evidence for Buddhism is in Sanskrit and belongs to Mahayana. This is a remarkable dichotomy, which is not limited to the early period. From the end of the thirteenth century Islam spread over the major part of maritime Southeast Asia, but made little impact on the mainland – except for Campa, which occupies a special place also in other respects. (18) It should be added that those parts of maritime Southeast Asia which were not Islamized by the sixteenth century were mostly converted to Christianity, such as southern Maliku and most of the Philippines except southern Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago. On the other hand, neither Islam nor Christianity made any real impact on mainland Southeast Asia. The possible causes of this dichotomy are no doubt quite complicated and cannot be studied here. The only obvious point that can be noted is the fact that maritime Southeast Asia, i.e. the present states of Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia (Soekarno's *Maphilindo*) also constitute a linguistic community in that (almost) all of the languages used in the region belong to the great Austronesian linguistic division.(19)

After this brief diversion it is proper that we should return to the period under discussion, viz. the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. It is in approximately this period that we have to date the so-called 'Amaravati' Buddha statues found in different parts of the region. These statues form a small group of about eight bronzes found in Sumatra, Thailand, Vietnam, Celebes, and Java. They are always represented standing and are further recognizable by the many-folded *samghati*, which, except for one example, leaves the right shoulder uncovered. Such representations of Lord Buddha are especially known from Amaravati and other sites in Andhara Pradesh, from where they also spread to Sri Lanka.

P. Dupont, in a short article that has rightly become famous, (20) has demonstrated that these statues, though closely related, can again be divided into several groups. The most interesting point is that six of these 'Amaravati-style' images show features which relate them to Sri Lankan Buddha images. Although the ultimate source of this style has to be sought in or around Amaravati, there seems to be little doubt that the direct prototypes were some Buddha

images in Sri Lanka of the Anuradhapura period. This conclusion carries important implications for the chronology. It is generally thought that the direct influence of Amaravati did not extend far beyond the fourth century A.D. If the Southeast Asian Buddha images originated from Amaravati they would probably belong to the first few centuries of the Christian era. If, on the other hand, they were made in, or were directly influenced by Sri Lanka, they could well be datable several centuries later. Actually, Dupont distinguishes several groups among these so-called Amaravati-Buddhas, some of which not older than the fifth or sixth century

Dupont also emphasized that these Buddha statues were found either at isolated spots or in areas with no contemporary vestiges (as at Dong-duong, where there is a ninth-century Cham temple). This clearly suggests that these (bronze) Buddhas were once placed in wooden temples. In addition, Dupont rightly concluded that some stylistic features leave no doubt that these Buddhas belong to Hinayana, which seems to have prevailed in the whole of Southeast Asia before the end of the seventh century, when the early Sriwijaya inscriptions testify to the presence of Mahayana Buddhism, which henceforward would remain the only form of Buddhism attested in maritime Southeast Asia.

In this context it is proper to mention the basic religious dichotomy in Southeast Asia with Theravada triumphant in mainland Southeast Asia, whereas the Mahayana of maritime Southeast Asia gave finally way to Islam in Malaysia, Indonesia and the southern Philippines (the Sulu archipelago and Mindanao). The background of this dichotomy would raise problems outside the scope of this contribution.

These scattered Buddha statues, whatever their importance, can give us little insight into the nature and penetration of Buddhist ideas in Southeast Asia. For some areas, as we have seen for Sriksetra, we dispose of many more data. This is particularly true for the Mon kingdom of Dvaravati, which flourished from at least the middle of the seventh century till the thirteenth century and laid the foundations of Buddhism in present Thailand. (21)

Apart from a small number of inscriptions in Mon there is also evidence for the use of Pali, especially at Nakhon Pathom. After the publication of Dupont's work an important inscription was discovered at Vat Sa Morakot at Prachinburi, dated AD. 761.<sup>22</sup> Although the inscription itself is in ancient Khmer, it contains three verses in Pali. It is the great merit of Mendis Rohanadeera that he was able to identify the Pali verses as belonging to the *Telakatahagatha*. From this inscription the learned author concluded that 'it can now be established that the Sri Lankan Theravada literature found its way to Southeast Asia, even

before then 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. through Dvaravati, and not in the eleventh century through Ramannadesa as has been generally believed.' Although we can fully agree with the general tenor of this statement, there is one difficulty. As has been argued by Dupont, Coedes and others, Dvaravati was a typically Mon kingdom, but the Prachinburi inscription is in Khmer (apart from the Pali quotation). It either belongs to Dvaravati, but was drafted in Khmer because this was the language of the local population in the area or, more probably, it has to be attributed to one of the early Khmer kingdoms which dominated this part of eastern Thailand in the confused period preceding the campaigns of Jayavannan II.(23) In either case, however, this important document marks the easternmost expansion of Theravada Buddhism before the twelfth century, when the unification of the Sangha during the reign of Parakramabahu I gave a fresh impulse to the expansion of Theravada. (24)

Apart from the few inscriptions the numerous ruins of monuments as well as the rich iconography of Dvaravati, with its characteristic style of the Buddha image, testify to its great importance for the expansion of Buddhism. As often happens in such cases the new faith, once it has been fully established, became a new focus for further expansion. It not only became the principal faith of the Thai who founded a new kingdom at Sukhot'ai (Sukhodaya) in the thirteenth century, but also expanded into Cambodia. The importance of Dvaravati in this development can hardly be underrated.

Already at an early time (c. 7<sup>th</sup> century) we find inscriptions in Mon, no doubt inspired by Dvaravati in Lopburi and from the eleventh century also farther north in Haripunjaya (Lamp'un). These are votive inscriptions attesting to the expansion of Theravada into northern Thailand. This area also became a great centre of Pali studies, where important texts, such as the *Jinakalamali* and the *Camadevivamsa* were composed. This area is of particular interest for the dated Buddha images.(26)

The unification of the Sangha in the time of Parakramabahu I, even if it did not completely stop its fissiparous tendencies, appears to have had great influence also in Southeast Asia. Whatever the real condition of the Sangha may have been in Sri Lanka, it did present an image of unity to the outside world. In addition to the increased political strength of the Island in the second half of the twelfth century it increased its prestige as the centre of the (Thervada) Buddhist world. This again stimulated increasing and more intensive relations with important parts of mainland Southeast Asia. It is therefore likely that this intensification contributed to the lasting predominance of Buddhism in this region, where it victoriously

survived Muslim and Christian pressures, as well as the evil of colonialism. This stands in sharp contrast to the developments in maritime Southeast Asia, where such pressures entailed the nearly complete disappearance of Buddhism.

In this connection a few words should be added on the expansion of Buddhism in the latter region.

As we have seen, in contrast to mainland Southeast Asia with its pronounced division into a number of linguistic and cultural units, partly reflected in the different nations, maritime Southeast Asia presents a certain degree of cultural unity between the countries constituting Soekarno's *Maphilindo*. Apart from a few small and historically uninteresting tribal pockets, all the languages spoken in the region belong to the great Austronesian family. There is also some degree of cultural affinity apparent from such fields as customary law. Despite the close relations between many parts of maritime Southeast Asia and South Asia, including Sri Lanka, Theravada does not appear to have exerted any real influence there. On the other hand, (some forms of) Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism predominated there in the pre-Islamic period. As to the factors leading to this difference between these two regions of Southeast Asia only a few points may be briefly mentioned here.

Apart from the purely religious differences between Hinayana and Mahayana, which do not need to be discussed here, there are also some socio-economic differences that had political implications. Thus, one of the most characteristic aspects of Theravada is its strong monastic organization with the Sangha as a powerful factor in the state. It is true that the Sangha depended largely on the piety of the king and the ruling class, but the king depended no less on the support of the Sangha. No king could hope to reign for any length of time without such support, which was already necessary for his consecration. Moreover, as the monks were in constant contact with the population of even the remote villages – the daily alms rounds gave plenty of opportunities – their influence on the loyalty of the subjects carried important implications for the stability of royal authority. The ancient Buddhist ideal of the king being a servant of the people, to which he was bound by an unwritten social contract, had not completely disappeared.

On the other hand, the most characteristic aspect of Mahayana is the Bodhisattva doctrine which urged both the king and his subjects to achieve progress on the Way towards the perfection of Buddha-hood by performing good deeds (*punya*) and increasing knowledge

(*jnana*). Already in the intermediate state of a bodhisattva the aspirants acquired superior powers raising them beyond the state of ordinary people (*prthagjana*). On the other hand, to acquire such a high position there was no need to enter monastic life and discipline: the characteristic *bodhisattva* is a man of the world.

For kings, this principle created excellent opportunities: by having identified themselves as a *bodhisattva*, thus enjoying a special position for their achievements in charity and wisdom. Such ideals entailed duties towards their subjects, but also raised their prestige among the population under their authority.

Although the doctrines of Mahayana go back to the first or second century A.D., its influence is not clear before about the seventh century in Eastern India where especially the great *vihara* at *Nalanda* developed into one of its greatest centres. Already at this early stage we find evidence for the spread of Mahayana doctrines even as far as the island of Sumatra, where the Talang Tuwa inscription of A.D. 684 shows us a remarkable example of a king aspiring to Buddha-hood.(27)

On the other hand, there now are strong indications that southern Sumatra was not so poor in religious monuments as had once been thought. Recent research, as foreshadowed in the SP AF A report of 1983 has given the clear impression that both the region of present Palembang and especially that of Jambi were both rich in brick monuments. Those Maura Jambi, east (i.e. downstreams) of the present city of Jambi, datable in the period from the eleventh to the thirteenth century A.D., are particularly numerous and interesting, but often also problematic.(28) Maura Takus, situated near the confluence of two branches of the river Kampar (Kampar Kanan and Kampar Kiri), has some fairly well preserved monuments including one large and several smaller *stupas*. Finally, there are interesting group of Buddhist monuments in eastern Sumatra at Kota Cina near present Medan (29) and at Padang Lawas near Padan Sidempuan.(30) They all attest the popularity of Tantric forms of Buddhism, often with strong Sivaite influence.

The same holds true for western Sumatra, in particular the Batanghari district of Jambi (province of Riau) and West Sumatra in its narrow meaning (the province of Sumatra Barat). Numerous inscriptions of especially the kings Akarendrawarman and Adityawarman in Old Malay, Sanskrit and Tamil have been discovered there but hardly any remains of buildings

and only few statues. Among those that have been found there two deserve special mention. First, there is a large composite statue representing Amoghapasa, a Tantric form of the Jina Amoghasiddhi, surrounded by thirteen other deities, including a small Bahirava. As the inscription indicates, these are actually copies of free-standing statues of Candi Jago in East Java, sent to Sumatra by king Kertanagara (1268-92). The second is a huge Bhairava, actually the largest statue ever found in Indonesia (but not as high as the Avukana Buddha (31), 'decorated', if that is the right term, with garlands of skulls, but otherwise nude. At the same time, however, the Bahirava carries a small figure of Arnitabha in three crown, usually associated with Avalokitesvara. Whatever the precise identification of the statue may be, it is thought that it represents king Adityawarman himself in a divine but demonic shape, apparently as a magical guardian to one of the roads giving access to the plains of West Sumatra.

As these statues fall outside the chronological limit fixed for this paper, I may be quite brief in trying to determine their significance for maritime communications between South and Southeast Asia.

What strikes us most when surveying the different kinds of Buddhist remains in Malaysia and Sumatra is the changing pattern of influences from South Asia. Whereas influences from Andhra Pradesh and Sri Lanka prevail in the earliest period (from the third or fourth century A.D.), Mahayanic influences from northeastern India (Bihar and Bengal) are particularly strong from the seventh to the tenth century. This is also true for Burma, where influences from Bengal are especially strong in Pagan, whereas those from this island appear to persist in the southern areas at Hmaw-za, Pegu and Thaton. From the eleventh century, however southern influences, especially from the powerful Chola Empire, are again apparent. Thus the well-known Buddha statue from Kota Cina is quite South Indian in style, and South Indian influence is even reflected in the use of Tamil in some inscriptions (two from Bantam and one from Batu Berpghat near Suruaso). It is, however, difficult to decide whether such influences came straight from South India or via this island. The Tamilnadu was not exactly famous for Buddhism, although there were important centres of Buddhism at Kanci and Negapatam. An indication of possible relations between West Sumatra and Sri Lanka is the name Nandanavana which Adityawarman gave to a park near Suruaso, probably following the example of Anuradhapura.

To return to the pre-1000 period, with which this paper is mainly concerned, some attention should now be given to central Java, where Buddhism in its Mahayana form saw a spectacular development during the time of the Sailendra dynasty. The grandeur and beauty of the monuments built in this time would make us forget that this sudden blossoming of Buddhist creative activity is mainly confined to less than a century (c. A.D. 775-860). The great Borobudur and the enormous temple groups of Candi Sewu and Candi Plaosan, as well as numerous other monuments (such as the candis (32) Kalasan, Sari, Sojiwan, Banyunibo) and a rich iconography attest to the wealth of Buddhist culture in this period.

A particular feature of the Sailendra period is the international orientation of the rulers. This may already appear from the earliest Sailendra inscription of Java, the stone of Kalasan, dated A.D. 778, and inscribed with a Sanskrit inscription in early Nagari script.<sup>33</sup> From its first verse it follows that the temple was dedicated to the goddess *Tara*, 'who helps the creatures cross (*ya tarayati*) the ocean of suffering without fear'. It is quite possible, even likely, that this formulation is an allusion to actual maritime voyages by merchants and pilgrims. *Tara* actually means 'Star', and stars were the principal guidance for sailors crossing the ocean.

Another inscription, dated a few years later (782), informs us that a statue of the *bodhisattva* Manjusri was inaugurated in the presence of a *guru* from Bengal or Bangladesh (Gaudidvipa)(<sup>34</sup>), Kumaraghosa by name, who must have crossed the ocean to perform this consecration ceremony in Java.

Again ten years later, in 792, a Sanskrit inscription from the Ratuboko plateau in Central Java on the southern border of the plain of Prambanan, tells us of a monastery (*vihara*) of the Sinhalese monks and named Abhayagirivihara.<sup>(35)</sup> This famous name takes us at once to this island where the great Abhayavihara with its high *dagaba* is one of the three great *stupas* of Anuradhapura, which is being restored by the archaeological Survey of Sri Lanka as part of the Archaeological Triangle Project.

This monastery was, however, also known for the influence of 'dissident' monks who followed doctrines other than those of Theravada, partly, it seems, belonging to Mahayana. Such ideas brought them into conflict with the predominant doctrine centred in the Mahavihara and, on several occasions, monks were expelled from the Abhayagiri and sought refuge in South India and elsewhere. It is possible that the monks appearing in Java were

among those forced to leave this island, but why should they have travelled so far away? It is therefore more likely that the Sinhalese monks were in Java because they had been invited on the Sailendra king, just as had happened to Kumaraghosa ten years earlier. In any case, this example proves the existence of close relations between at least one of the great Buddhist establishments in Sri Lanka and Java.

To make matters even more complicated, there is another Sailendra Inscription (the Pre-Nagari stone inscription of Candi Plaosan)(36) which mentions *gurus* from Gurjaradesa as visitors to the Sailendra court, possibly again to take part in the inauguration ceremony of the principal statue or of one of the buildings of this great complex, most of which was built in the middle of the ninth century. This seems to appear from the large, but badly weathered, fragment in the National Museum at Jakarta. A few years ago a much later part of the same inscribed stone was discovered, but has not yet been read.(37) As to Gurjaradesa, the reading of which is beyond doubt, one may wonder whether it indicates present Gujerat or the great empire of the Furjara-Pratiharas, reigning from the city of Kanauj (Kanyakubja). Gujerat with its ports on and near the gulf of Broach has played an important part in commercial relations with Southeast Asia but, as far as we know, especially in and after the fifteenth century, when Gujerat played an important part in the early expansion of Islam. There is, however, no evidence to show that the country had close relations with Southeast Asia before the fifteenth century. In addition, it was not one of the areas where Buddhism particularly flourished, although the great *stupa* of Devnimori and a few other sites show that Buddhism, no less than Vaisnavism and Jainism, had its place in Gujerat.

Although the identification with Gujerat seems most likely to me one cannot exclude the possibility that the inscription refers to relations with the kingdom of the Gurjara-Pratiharas, which was quite powerful in the ninth century during the reigns of Bhoja and Mahendrapala. The latter seems to have controlled Bihar with its great centres of Buddhism.(38) Whichever interpretation is chosen, the Plaosan inscription indicates the existence of relations between Buddhist centres in northern India (not only Bengal) and Central Java.

In conclusion it appears that the Javanese Buddhists of the Sailendra period stood in close relations with other parts of the then Buddhist world in South Asia. It seems beyond doubt that Sri Lanka played an important part in these relations. Not only were there direct



relations between the Abhayagirivihara and the Ratuboko plateau, but it is likely that the relations with the Indian subcontinent, except perhaps for those with Nalanda and Bengal, usually passed through Sri Lanka. It was convenient for the sailors to stop at this fertile island before starting the big leap in crossing the Gulf of Bengal en route for the Straits of Malacca. They would use the Southwest monsoon during part of the year and avoid the coast of Tenasserim, where especially the Mergui archipelago offered an ideal refuge for pirates.

Before leaving Indonesia I may briefly mention two important data belonging to the end of the period under survey. The first is a short inscription on a rock at Pohsarang, west of the town of Kediri, East Java. It tells us about the planting of a Bodhi Tree at the occasion of the repair of a road in Saka 924 (A.D. 1002/3).<sup>(39)</sup> The term used for 'Bodhi Tree' is actually *boddhi warinin*. The curious point is the fact that Hav. *warinin* is actually the banyan tree, called *nyagrodha* in Sanskrit, which is related with, but different from the Bodhi Tree, Kern, who edited this inscription, rightly pointed out that the true Bodhi Tree (*ficus religiosa*) does not grow in Java, so that the *warinin* was used as a substitute. This may seem natural, but it is contrary to Buddhist practice, according to which Bodhi Trees were invariably grown from branches of the original Mahabodhi at Bodhgaya. I may add that this is the only example known of a Bodhi tree planted in Java.

The other important point is known from Cola inscriptions at the turn of the millennium (the so-called Leiden plates of king Rajendra Cola), which mention the foundation by a Sailendra king of a Buddhist temple at Nagipattana (Negapatnam) in c. 1004.<sup>40</sup> This Buddhist temple was in the shape of a high tower, which was used by sailors as a landmark until it was demolished in the middle of the nineteenth century. Fortunately we still have an ancient drawing of the building, which shows a superficial likeness with the Satmahal Prasada at Polonnaruva. <sup>(41)</sup>

Actually the foundation of this temple has no direct bearing on the expansion of Buddhism, but it clearly shows that Buddhism was so strongly rooted in ancient Sriwijaya that its kings even ventured to spread Buddhism to the country of its origin. It should, however, be added that this was a part of the country in which Buddhism had, on the whole, little influence.

Although there is no indication in the 'Leiden Plates' that the Buddhist foundation had any bearing upon trade, we should not forget that Sriwijaya was above all a trading kingdom whose propriety depended to a large extent on the ability of its rulers to control shipping through the Straits of Malacca. Sriwijaya no doubt had its own products, carried to the capital from other parts of Sumatra, but the Chinese notices leave no doubt that most of the trade was on transit to Sriwijaya from other parts of the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malay Peninsula.

This far-flung empire can therefore be considered a characteristic example of the close relations between Buddhism and trade. We may suppose that Buddhist as Islam a few centuries later, spread mainly along the trade routes. More than other human activities trade connects one country with another and so creates possibilities for the expansion of religion. It is likely that Buddhist monks, as we know in the case of Fabien, travelled on merchant ships. Even if these monks were no missionaries in the narrow sense of the term, they would often have given expression to their ideas, perhaps as a means of 'paying their fares', to put it crudely. Just as modern scholars sometimes function as guides to travel companies, learned monks could join commercial ventures giving some spiritual guidance to the traders. Perhaps - but this is quite speculative - some ancient traders may have thought that the presence of holy men on board would have wholesome effects on the conduct of the sailors or even on that of the weather-gods. In addition, we should not forget that Buddhism enjoyed the favour of traders from its very beginning (Anathapindika of Savatthi, donor of the Jetavana, is the example which first springs to mind), but also in the subsequent centuries, when many of the generous sponsors of the *cetiyas* of Barhut, Sanchi, Bodhgaya and Bhattiprolu were traders or trading guilds.

Despite the importance of trade for the expansion of Buddhism to large parts of Southeast Asia we should be careful not to over-emphasize this factor. There is a tendency among scholars in the trading nations of Western Europe, such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, to point to trade as the *only* or the principal channel through which religions like Buddhism and Islam spread, but this is no less dangerous than ignoring the role of trade in this process. As pointed out at the beginning of this paper, Buddhism is based on what is regarded as the correct understanding of the different processes of life and on accepting the consequences of this insight. It is not a commodity offered for sale by traders. Trade is, however, (or was before the age of mass tourism) the most familiar way in which people of

different countries or even continents came into contact with one another and thus opened the way to closer relations between different peoples. Among those with whom pious Buddhists among such traders came into contact there may often have developed a strong desire to know more about a doctrine which aimed at liberating man from suffering in its different forms. It is, however, likely that such a strong desire would have arisen especially in the minds of those who had already achieved a certain level of knowledge and understanding. It is therefore not surprising that learned kings, such as Devanampiya Tissa and Menander, were among the first non-Indians to grasp the meaning of the teachings of Lord Buddha. For Southeast Asia we have no clear examples of the same development, except for the Kashmiri prince Gunavarman who would have converted the queen of Cho-po (Java?) to Buddhism. Although there are no other examples available it seems likely that this was a fairly regular pattern, suggesting that Buddhism generally spread from the king or the ruling classes to other sections of the population.

As this seminar is especially concerned with trade, in particular that related with the Silk Road, it may be important to conclude that trade, though by no means the principal factor in the expansion of Buddhism to parts of Southeast Asia, probably provided or facilitated the efforts which subsequently led to the adoption of Buddhism by large sections of the population of Southeast Asia.

## NOTES

1. *Mahavagga*, ed. Oldenberg, P.T.S. 1929: 40 (1.235): *imam dhammapariyayam sutva virajam vitamalam dhammacakkhum udapadi*.
2. The *Milindapanho*, ed. Trenckner, P.T.S. 1962: 420. Translation by Rhys Davids, 1894, Part 0:373 f.; translation by Homer, 1964; 11-304. The question whether this passage belongs to the original version of the text (see Horner's introduction, p.xxx) is not strictly relevant in this context; another passage of the same work (p. 88; translation pp. 122 f.) shows that the king, though aware of the truth of Nagasena's arguments, did not 'go forth from home into homelessness' on account of his numerous enemies. This, of course, means that Menander did not become a monk.
3. Osmund Bopearachch 'Milinda's conversion to Buddhism; fact or fiction?', *Ancient Ceylon* 7, 1990: 1-16. We should distinguish sharply between becoming a Buddhist (layman) i.e. taking the Three Refuges, and becoming a monk. I fully agree with A. K. Narain. *The Indo-Greeks*, 1957: 97-99, who gives some strong arguments to the effect that the tradition of Menander (Milinda) being converted to Buddhism is reliable.
4. N.G.Majumdar, *Ep. Ind.* XXIV, 1937: 1-10; D. C. Sircar, *Ep. Ind.* XXVI, 1941-2: 318-21; *Sel. loser.*, I, 2nd ed., 1965, No. 14, pp. 102-6.
5. *Milindopanho*, ed. Trenckner: 268; translation Horner: 86 f.
6. Cf. *Dipovomsa* VI-18: *abhisitto tini vassani pasanno Buddha-sasane*: 'three years after having been inaugurated a king, he had faith in th~ religion of the Buddha' (B. C. Law, 'The *Dipavomsa*', *Ceylon Hist. Journ.* VII, 1957-8: 171). See also P.H.L. Eggermont, *The Chronology of the Reign of Asoka Moriya*, 1956: 19. The Kalinga campaign took place in his 9th regnal year.
7. S. Paranavitana, 'Tiriyay Rock-Inscription', *Ep. Zeyl.* IV, 1943: 151-160; B. Ch. Chhabra, *Expansion of Indo-Aryan Culture during Pallava Rule*: 109-115.
8. C.O. Blagden, 'An Inscription of the Shwedagon Pagoda, Rangoon' *Ep. Birm.* IV, 1936, No. XV, pp. 20-43, in particular lines B-8 to 13.
9. *Ibid.*: lines 16 to 21.
10. Charles Duroiselle, 'Excavations at Hmawza', *Ann. Rep. Arch. Survey of India*, 1926-27:171-83; U Tha Myat, *Pyu Reader*, no date: 25-33.21
11. S. Paranavitana, 'The Ruvanvalisaya Pillar of Budadasa', *Ep. Zeyl.* III, 1931: 120-26 and Pl. 8; B. Ch. Chhabra, *Expansion*: 12 f. and Fig.2.
12. C. Duroiselle, *ibid.*

13. The connexion with 'Pallava rule' is, however, not quite clear, as we already noticed with reference to the Ruvanvalisaya inscription. On the other hand, the script is closely related with other South Indian scripts and, at least from the seventh century, with that of the Palla vas.

14. B. Ch. Chhabra, *Expansion* etc.: 20-26.

15. *Ibid.*, note 2 top. 23.

16. Published by S. Paranavitana, *Ep. Zeyl.* III, 1931: 158-61; see also Chhabra, *Expansion*: 16 f.

17. See Alastair Lamb, 'Recent Archaeological Work in Kedah', *Journ. Fed. Mal. St. Mus.*, XII, 1928; 'Report on the Excavation and Reconstruction of Chandi Bukit Batu Pahat', *Fed. Mus. Journ.* V. 1960; 'Miscellaneous Papers', *Fed. Mus. Journ.*, VI, 1961.

18. Thus, unlike the other peoples of mainland Southeast Asia, the Cham belong linguistically and culturally to the great Austronesian (Malay-Polynesian) group; in addition, the ancient Cham inscriptions are written in a language which is apparently strongly influenced by that of the Old Malay inscriptions of Sriwijaya.

19. The only exceptions are some of the languages of the northern Moluccas (especially Halmahera), of Irian Jaya and of some tribal pockets in the Philippines and West Malaysia. The speakers of such languages are but a tiny minority of the population of maritime Southeast Asia.

20. P. Dupont, 'Varietes Archaeologiques. -- Les Buddha dits d'Amaravati en Asie du Sud Est', *B.E.F.E.O.*, XLIX, 1955:631-36, Pl. LVI-LXIV.

21. There is much literature on Dvaravati, but the basic work is still Pierre Dupont, *L'Archeologie Mone de Daravati*, Publ. E.F.E.O., 1959, 2 Vols. Cf. also the detailed review of this work by M. C. Subhadradis Diskul in *Essays offered to G. H. Luce*, /1, 1966 and H. G. Quaritch Wales, 'Dvaraati in South-East Asian Cultural History', *J.R.A.S.* 1966: 40-52.

22. Mendis Rohanadeera, 'Telakatahagatha in a Thailand Inscription of 761 A.D., New evidence on cultural relations between Sri Lanka and the Dvaravati Kingdom in Thailand, Vidyodaya, *Journal of Social Science*, I, 1987: 59-73. 22

23. Before the time of Jayavarman II Cambodia was divided into what the Chinese called Cben-la of the Water and Chen-la of the Land, but both of these were again divided into several principalities. In addition to the works by Coedes, see O. W. Wothers, 'Jayavarman II's military power: the territorial foundation of the Angkor empire', *J.R.A.S.* 1973: 21-30.

24. C. W. Nicholas and S. Paranavitana, *A Concise History of Ceylon*, 1961: 262-65.

25. See especially Pierre Dupont 1959, Vol. I: 73-78.

26. A. B. Griswold, *Dated Buddha Images of Northern Siam*, 1957.

27. G. Coedes, 'Les inscriptions malaises de Crivijaya', *B.E.F.E.O.* XXX, 1930:38-44, Pl. III.

28. SPAFA. Final Report, Consultative Workshop on Archaeological and Environmental Studies on Srivijaya (I-W2a), Jakarta 1982.
29. E. Edwards Mckinnon, Kota Cina, *An important early trading site on the east coast of Sumatra*, 1976.
30. SPAFA, final Report. Consultative Workshop on Archaeological and Environmental Studies on Srivijaya (1-W2b), 1986: 59-66. F. M. Schnitger, *The Archaeology of Hindoo Sumatra*, 1937: 16-37; *Forgotten Kingdoms in Sumatra*, 1964: 85-107; Satyawati Suleiman, *Sculptures of Ancient Sumatra (Area-area di Sumatra pada Zaman Purba)*, Jakarta 1981; SPAFA, Final Report. Consultative Workshop on Archaeological and Environmental Studies on Srivijaya (1-W2b), Jakarta 1986: 59-66.
31. F. M. Schnitger, *The Archaeology of Hindoo Sumatra*, 1937: Pl. XIV -XVI.
32. I am following the current Indonesian practice of designating all pre-Muslim structural monuments as *candi*.
33. F. D. K Bosch, 'De inscriptie van Keloerak', *Tijdschr. Kon. Bat. Gen.* 68, 1928: 1-64, in particular: 57-62.
34. Bosch, *ibid*: 1-56.
35. J. G. de Casparis, *Art. As XXIV*, 1961:241-48.
36. J. G. de Casparis, *Prasasti Indonesia*, Vol. 11, 1956: 175-206. 23
37. In addition there are numerous votive inscriptions in the Plaosan complex; see J. G. de Casparis, 'Short Inscriptions from Candi Plaosan-Lor', Dinas Purbakala Republik Indonesia, 1958.
38. B. N. Puri, *The History of the Gurjara-Pratiharas*, 1957:66-69.
39. H. Kern, 'De inscriptie van pub Sarang (Kediri), uit 924 Saka', *Verspriede Geschriften VII*, 1917: 77-82 (original article of 1883).
40. G. Coedes, 'Le Royaume de Crivijaya, B.E.F.E.O. XVIII, 1918: 51-86, especially 54. For the full text of the inscription, the so-called 'Larger Leiden Plates, see the edition by K. V. Subrahmanya Aiyer in *Epigr. Indica XXII*, 1933-34: 213-266, 15 Pl.
41. See the reproduction of the drawing in the article by Sir Walter Elliot, 'The Edifice formerly known as the Chinese or Jaina Pagoda at Negapatam', *Indian Antiquary VII*, 1878: 224-7. A smaller reproduction is found in Subrahmanya Aiyer's article mentioned in note 40 above.