

BUDDHISM IN EARLY SOUTHEAST ASIA: A Contribution to the Study of Culture Change

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The historical development of Buddhism is a highly complex problem. For Buddhism is not merely a philosophy with a defined doctrine and a set of rituals but involves a whole range of human activity which includes literature and art. The impact of Buddhist ideals on social institutions form an intricate network of relationships whose links are difficult to trace. And adding to the complexity of the problem is the immense area of dispersal which covers almost the entire region of Asia from Afghanistan as its Western-most boundary, to Java in the South and up to Japan, Korea and China-Mongolia in the North. The time span covers over 2,500 years and is still going on today.¹

What I propose to do is to give a general survey of the cultural features transmitted to Southeast Asia from the earliest periods of Buddhist expansion up to about the twelfth to fourteenth century, placing emphasis on Indonesia particularly Sumatra and Java. The process of transmission and possible effects Buddhism had on Southeast Asian cultures will be indicated by presenting the major contributions of scholars on the subject. The problem is complicated and needs deeper research than what has been done for this paper. Be that as it may, the history of Buddhism in Southeast Asia is a fascinating story and deserves to be re-told at a time when peoples of this region are re-establishing their common heritage and ties which were so rudely severed by European intrusion.

First of all we cannot understand the historical development of Buddhism in Southeast Asia without taking into account the parallel developments in India. For Buddhism grew out of the fecund cultural subsoil of that subcontinent. It was then still a nebulous movement in the process of formation, blending and absorbing diverse beliefs and practices and gradually evolving into an identifiable system about the time of the Buddha in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism were just three of the many idealistic-ethical systems of thought which were current at the time. There were equally famous schools of thought that contrasted with the first group. They were characterized by skepticism and materialism, and practicality was preached almost to the point of ruthlessness. The *Artha-*

¹ For a general survey of Buddhism the following books are very useful: Edward Conze, *Buddhism: its Essence and Development*, Harper and Row, N.Y., 1959 (reprint of an earlier edition).

James Bissett Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism*, The MacMillan Co., N.Y., 1928.

sastra by Kautilya was a late compendium of such teachings held by many schools, one of them the Lokayâta School provided the rationale for the tyrannical dictatorship that operated in the Kingdom of Magadha.²

Just as many influences came into Buddhism from Indian cultural sources, many kinds of influences and changes were also at work in Southeast Asia. The reconstruction of indigenous Southeast Asian cultures before the influx of Indian traditions is another problem that requires a separate study.³ Suffice it to say at this juncture that when Indians came upon the scene, they found well-organized societies that could seize upon and benefit from such contacts. This is evidenced by their active participation in the international trade that had its terminus in the Mediterranean and the South China Sea.⁴ More significantly, in analyzing the transformation of Southeast Asian culture as a result of the contacts, we should keep in mind that this region is considered by scholars as one cultural area, and fundamentally the same as the early cultures of South and East India and South China. Scholars also believe that their subsequent divergence have been the result of more recent historical encrustations.⁵ Furthermore scholars have argued that the processes of change that occurred in India as a consequence of Aryan invasion have direct repercussions in Southeast Asia. The Aryans introduced new ideas from Western Asia and systematized these with the multifarious traditions floating about in the country they conquered. In fact, the historical developments in Southeast Asia have been traced exactly to this source. The complex of historical phenomena from the beginning of the A.D. era to about the fifteenth century have been encompassed into one large category as "Aryanization" or "Indianization." These terms as applied to Southeast Asian history refer to the changes brought about by the intro-

² A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that Was India: A Survey of the Culture of the Indian Sub-Continent before the Coming of the Muslims*, Grove Press, N.Y. 1959 (reprint of an earlier edition), 47-48, 57.

R. C. Majumdar, *The History and Civilization of the Indian People: The Age of Imperial Unity*, Volume II, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1960, Chapter II, "Rise of Magadhan Imperialism," pp. 18-38.

³ The reconstruction of Southeast Asian cultures before Indian influences have been summarized by various scholars whose works are cited by:

Georges Coedes, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, East-West Center, Honolulu, 1968, pp. 3-14. 266. For Indonesia see:

J. J. Brandes, "Een jayapatta of acte van eene rechterlijke uitspraak van Çaka 849," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde uitgegeven door Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, Vol. XXXII, 1889, 98-149.

G. Coedes, "Le substrat autochtone et la superstructure indienne au Cambodge et à Java," *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale*, Vol. I, 2, October, 1953.

⁴ O. W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce. A Study of the Origins of Srivijaya*, Ithaca, New York, 1967.

Based primarily on Chinese sources, Prof. Wolters traces the internal dynamics of this international trade as it pertains to the Indonesian archipelago.

⁵ Paul Mus, "Cultes indiens et indigenes au Champa," *Bulletin. Publications de l'Ecole Française d'Extreme-Orient*, XXXIII, 1933, pp. 367-410.

Przyluski, Jean, "La Princesse a l'odeur de poisson et la naga dans les traditions de l'Asie Orientale," *Etudes Asiatiques*, II, 1925, pp. 265-284.

N. J. Krom, *Hindoe-Javaansche Geschiedenis*, 's-Gravenhage, 1931. See Chapters II and IV.

duction of the great traditions of India based on literature, theology, and the arts which were transmitted by Aryans or peoples related to them, if not racially at least culturally. "Indianization" in which Buddhism played a most significant role is the accepted analytical category in Southeast Asian history.⁶ This had led Indian scholars such as Majumdar and Sastri to consider Southeast Asian developments as an extension of Indian history.⁷ Some Europeans have invalidated this thinking for it displays according to them, Indian ethnocentrism. And yet we ought to be aware that behind Majumdar and Sastri's "Greater India" concept lies a very important historical assumption, that Asian history within this period is a unified fabric of human relationships and shared ideas rather than an account of discrete political entities. It is into this fabric that I would weave the history of Buddhism in Southeast Asia.

The most remarkable fact about the spread of Buddhism in Southeast Asia was the manner of its transmission for this was crucial to the ease with which it was received. Buddhism came peacefully often as a guileless missionary or converted sailors and traders aboard ships that bustled about these great waters. In addition, Buddhism was in a kind of malleable form which rendered itself susceptible to the demands of the recipient cultures. This is not to say that Buddhism at the beginning of the A.D. era was not a recognizable system as such. Buddhist literature by the time it reached Asian countries in the last century B.C. was already a sizeable collection. The major texts were already written down along with a larger body of legends, oral traditions, commentaries, exegeses and travel accounts. Buddhist art was already a rich expressive language involving symbolism and iconography. The *Sangha*, however loosely it might have been organized formed more or less into different sects or communities, each organized according to its own rules or *Vinaya*. It was sufficiently organized to provide continuity to the training of *bhikkus* (monks) and had set down the standards of regimen. Already there was a rich lore of great personalities. Chandragupta (315 B.C.), Mahindra (216 B.C.), Ashoka (274 B.C.) were famous throughout Asia.⁸ In the case of Ashoka he was the first to give Imperial patronage to Buddhism. He sent missionaries to the "border lands." Buddhist missionaries and scholars who were also tireless travellers took on important functions in the affairs of Southeast Asian kingdoms. And perhaps more important to the development of Southeast Asian states was the fact the Buddhism, along with Hinduism formed a demonstrable system of beliefs that operated in India. The Southeast Asians must have been impressed by

⁶ Georges Coedes takes this position in organizing his two major books on the early history of Southeast Asia, see note 3.

Georges Coedes, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, London, 1966.

⁷ K. A. Nilakanta Sastri and R. C. Majumdar have been the most active Indian scholars to take this position.

⁸ see note 1, Conze.

Sir Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, 3 Vols., London, 1957.

the sophisticated organization of human and material resources in India which to them was the concrete embodiment of their own aspirations. The role of Buddhism as a magnetising force was of no mean proportion compared to that of Hinduism. These two systems were the polestars in the constellation of cultural benefits that India held out to Southeast Asia.

The historical developments in India as discussed by Dutt in *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries*⁹ have similar parallels in Southeast Asia. I shall not discuss these developments in detail except to trace the general outlines. What is important is that once Buddhist ideas took root in Southeast Asia, these thrived and flourished in most original ways. The first important development is the elaboration and diversity of interpretation of Buddhist ideals and practices. Even in the Buddha's lifetime we know that controversy among his followers were already in the making. In the second century B.C. the most important "schism" occurred that led to the founding of the Mahayana and Hinayana doctrines. In-between these two were a whole range of grouping each with its own bias and practices. The Southeast Asians had therefore a wide spectrum of doctrines to choose from when Buddhism arrived. Some scholars considered the schism as a sign of institutional weakening.¹⁰ Other writers interpret the break as a sign of intellectual ferment — the burgeoning of ideas and activities within the Buddhist world.¹¹ Such a state of affairs led to the necessity of writing down as precisely as they could what the Buddha taught and led to a compulsion to obtain original texts. Translations and collation of Buddhist materials became a gigantic enterprise involving in most part large resources of a kingdom.¹² Southeast Asian kingdoms became contributors to such endeavours. Along with the transmission of literature pilgrimages were undertaken. All over Asia they treaded their way to the "Holy Land" — teachers, scholars who carried with them sacred texts, relics, art objects and with these the ambience of Indian culture. What happened was that no sooner was Buddhism introduced when even the small obscure kingdoms were making contributions to Buddhism. The Pali Tripitaka was written down in Ceylon in the first century A.D. under the reign of Vattagamani and from whence Burma, Ceylon and Cambodia built their own collection of texts.¹³ As the centuries wore on, the flow of influences was reversed for India had to look towards these countries for inspiration when Buddhism waned with the coming of Islam.*

⁹ N. Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries*, Calcutta, 1941.

¹⁰ Eliot, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 5-7.

¹¹ Conze, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-128.

D. T. Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*, New York, 1967 (reprint of an earlier edition), pp. 1-30.

¹² P. V. Bapat, *2500 Years of Buddhism*, Publication Division, Government of India, 1959, pp. 92-93.

Coedes, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.

¹³ Bapat, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.

* Sindh fell to Muslim invaders 711 A.D.

The cultural milieu of Southeast Asia when Buddhism arrived was characterized by a multiplicity of beliefs and practices. Buddhism and Hinduism formed part of this stream of diverse beliefs and occupied equal and sometimes stronger hold on the courts. And simultaneously with the schism of Mahayana and Theravada "sects" Buddhism as a whole was undergoing increased popularization. These were the conditions that sustained Buddhism in Southeast Asia even as it faded in India in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Buddhism found a more receptive society in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia, countries which continue up to today to espouse Buddhism as the core of their social ethos and where the cycle of Buddhist rituals form the focus of social relationships even on the village level.¹⁴

What provided the right conditions for Buddhism to grow was the mutual accommodation of Buddhism and indigenous beliefs. However, it should be pointed out that to Dutt and Eliot, tolerance and non-assertiveness, teachings central to Buddhism were the very factors that diluted and made it indistinguishable from Hinduism as it happened in India. If I may venture an opinion, it seems to me that this did not happen in the Theravada countries where Buddhist doctrines are strictly maintained at least by the *Sangha*.¹⁵ Besides it is necessary to make a distinction between Buddhist doctrine and theology on one hand and the practice of religion in daily life on the other. This is particularly true when referring to peasants in remote villages away from the centers of Buddhist learning and the repositories of national culture. We should not also discount the fact that the flow of influences is not always from the "Great to the Little Tradition."¹⁶ There is often a significant flow from the "little" to the "Great" tradition. We can in fact make a good case of mutual influences and interchange between the "Little" and the "Great" traditions as the history of Buddhism of Southeast Asia illustrates.

And so it is that Buddhism was transformed particularly so under the blessings of Mahayana. The native cults and deities were identified with the Bodhisattvas and arhats and whose roles were equated with the stages of Enlightenment. Even the more doctrinaire Theravadins gave grudging tolerance to the beliefs of the people whom the *Bhikkus* (monks) considered to be in the "lower stage of spiritual development." The nagas, yakshas and Bhutts of India were absorbed. We can see these deities as the most engaging ornaments of the holiest sanctuaries from Sanchi to Ajanta. A whole array of ancestral cults, local guardian deities were incorporated into

¹⁴ Manning Nash, Gananath Obeyesekere, Michael M. Ames, *et al*, *Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism*, Central Report Series, No. 13, Southeast Asia Studies, Yale Univ., 1966, pp. 72-74, 112-115 and 175-191.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Robert Redfield, *The Little Community*, Chicago, 1955.

Robert Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture*, Chicago, 1956.

Redfield has developed useful conceptual tools in the analysis of cultural influences and transformations by positing the concept of "Great" in contrast to "Little" traditions and the intermediate type of the "Peasant" community.

Buddhist worship: the *nat* of Burma, the *phi* of Thailand, *kami* of Japan, *shen* of China, *devas* of Ceylon, the *kon* and *dinh* of Vietnam. These deities became personages in the Buddha's life, enlivening and enriching what otherwise would have been a crystalline path to *Nibbana*. Many paths to wisdom and enlightenment were explored. Contemplative and austere detachment belong to those who followed the orthodox Theravadin Schools. But no less effective as a means to salvation were the teachings of the Tantric Schools that preached indulgence in all bodily pleasures, the use of magic and spells, teachings which were more congenial to the native Southeast Asian beliefs.¹⁷

The history of Buddhism is closely linked with Hinduism in Southeast Asia so that it is very difficult to distinguish their respective influences on specific aspects of Southeast Asian society. We can only say that with the spread of Hindu—Buddhist traditions a corresponding development of general culture evolved that contributed to the building of nation states by the medieval period. We are constrained from making any statements about the degree of pervasiveness of these new imported ideas among the wider populations because our evidences were the result of the activities of kings, nobles and their court advisers and priests. Consequently, the general impression was that Hindu-Buddhism was the primary concern only of the nobles and royalty. It is only by inference that we can more or less deduce the religious beliefs of the people.

In the early A.D. era we learn that Southeast Asian kings vied with each other in gathering scholars in their courts and that they had no particular preferences between Hinduism and Buddhism. The contributions of these scholar-priests must have been of great consequence outside the field of religion for they were often employed in directing state projects. Not the least of their contributions is the education and upbringing of the young nobles. It is important to note that far from obliterating the indigenous potentials of Southeast Asians, Hindu-Buddhist traditions provided a rich medium through which these potentials achieved brilliance in all aspects of culture whether in government, technology, literature or the arts. The succeeding paragraphs will merely illustrate this idea and do not by any means come even close to being an exhaustive discussion.

The earliest record of Buddhist influence in this region is from Ceylon where the *Pali Tripitaka* was written down in the last century B.C. Throughout history, the influence of Buddhism has remained "the focus of political formation of modern nationalism."¹⁸ The same analogies can be found in Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and early Indonesia. Even in modern times Buddhism exercises a strong ethical force, particularly in Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos where it remains up to today something of a

¹⁷ Nash, *ibid.* See also:

Kenneth P. Landon, *Southeast Asia, Crossroads of Religion*, Chicago, 1947.

¹⁸ Bapat, *ibid.*, pp. 59-95.

state religion. The earliest historical evidences to survive in time were mainly of Hindu-Buddhist provenance which give a strong indication of the pervading influence of these two great traditions over the more powerful segments of Southeast Asian societies. Outside Ceylon where Buddhist influences pre-date the A.D. era, in the rest of Southeast Asia these influences appear through archeological remains from the second to third century A.D. These influences follow on the whole the areas situated along the trade routes between India and South China, in a pattern of transmission that never let up. Small kingdoms since then obscured by history were documented through their participation in the chain of Buddhist relations: Dvaravati, Shrikshetra, Pegu, in Burma, Langkasula, on the Malay peninsula, Funan, Oc-eo, Champa in South Vietnam were among the earliest known kingdoms up to fifth-sixth centuries to be superseded later by Shrivijaya, Shailendra in Central Java, Angkor, Thaton and Pagan.¹⁹ Apparently Buddhism both of the Mahayana and Hinayana schools flourished alongside Hinduism which in itself was divided into Shivaite and Vishnuite tendencies. There were fluctuations and much overlapping between these two traditions and their respective variant schools. These religious influences in turn combined with indigenous religions, although we know very little about the latter from the available records. Except for Ceylon, Burma and Central Java (ninth to tenth century), Buddhism played a minor role compared to Hinduism specifically Shivaism. Still there were Mahayana statues in considerable quantity in Indonesia and the Malay peninsula in the mid-seventh century. But it was not until the eleventh to the twelfth centuries that Buddhism of the Mahayana type became the favored religion of the kings and nobles. Jayavarman the VII (1181-ca. 1218) of Cambodia was the most avid patron of Mahayana Buddhism during this period. He was represented as Lokeshvara Samantamukha on his funeral temple the Bayon, "Lord of the World, Omnipresent and Omniscient."²⁰

By the mid-thirteenth century Buddhism of the Theravada persuasion became prevalent in Indochina, a development that linked the Indochina mainland closer to Ceylon. The ascendancy of Theravada was also marked by its deeper penetration to the larger population. In the meantime Mahayana was eclipsed by the middle of the fifteenth century. On the other hand Vietnamese Buddhism developed differently for it moved towards Mahayana blended with Chinese Taoism-Confucianism and local ancestral cults.²¹

The predominant religious attitude was that of eclecticism and syncretism judging from historical records and art works. This was a wide-

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.* See also Coedes, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Coedes, *op. cit.*, 173.

Louis Finot, "Lokeshvara en Indochine," *Etudes Asiatiques*, Publication de l'Ecole Française de L'Extreme Orient, I, pp. 221-235.

²¹ Dietrich Seckel, *The Art of Buddhism*, N.Y., 1963 Provides short summaries of the historical development of Buddhism in the different Asian countries.

B. P. Groslier, *The Art of Indochina*, N.Y., 1962, pp. 168 and 188.

spread phenomenon all over Southeast Asia and it was much more in evidence in Indonesia. Shivaite temples for example were built contemporaneous with the Barabudur, end of the eighth to the tenth century in Central Java. In Prambanan itself, a temple dedicated to Shiva there were Bodhisattvas depicted. And the ruling dynasty in Central Java, the Shailendras although devout Buddhists collaborated with the Shivaite King Sanjaya in establishing a sanctuary.²² In Vietnam, the sanctuary at Dong-Duong with inscriptions dated 875 A.D. was consecrated to Lakshmindralokeshvara which is a combination of two Hindu deities, Lakshmi and Indra, and the Buddhist figure Lokeshvara.²³ Even Suryavarman II (1113-ca. 1150), the builder of Angkor Vat who was a devotee of Vishnu had Buddhist subjects depicted on one of the temples dedicated to his ancestors, the Beng Mealea.²⁴

As was said earlier, tolerance and syncretism characterized Southeast Asian attitudes towards Indian religions. And yet they selected certain specific themes and figures absorbing only these as their own. The process of selection fall into a clear pattern. From Hinduism the most favored gods were Vishnu and Lakshmi, Shiva and Uma and these two gods were often combined into one figure, Hari-hara. As for Buddhist deities the preference was for the Bodhisattva Lokeshvara and Avalokiteshvara with the corresponding female consorts as those of the Hindu gods. It is noteworthy that the female element is almost always depicted with the male deity. But we need to make further qualifications at this point for there are features that distinguish Indonesian and most Southeast Asian adaptations of Indian themes. For even when Tantric deities are represented, there is none of the intense sensuality nor the histrionic display of passion that characterizes Nepalese, Tibetan and Indian statuary of the same type. By comparison, Indonesian statues appear calm and restrained. The importance placed upon the female deity and why such Buddhist figures as the Lokeshvara were selected will become clear in the subsequent discussion, in the meantime we shall take up in more detail the history of Buddhism in Indonesia.

Of Buddhism in Indonesia, we can speak only of Sumatra, Java and make some very spotty references to West Borneo and Western Celebes. In the last two places, Buddhist sculptures and ruins were discovered dated by comparing the art style to Amaravati statuary in India (second to fifth century A.D.) A statue of the same type was discovered at Dong-duong Vietnam. (See plate 24 in Bernet Kempers) Similar to the situation in the Indochina mainland, Buddhism came along with Hinduism and the records show that Buddhist influences presuppose previous contacts with India. Indeed the island of Sumatra was mentioned in a Buddhist text dated first

²² Krom, *op. cit.*, 283.

N. J. Krom, *Inleiding tot Hindu-Javaansche Kunst*, 's-Gravenhage, 1923, 3 vols., Vol. I, pp. 44, 87-120.

²³ Coedes, *op. cit.*, 123.

²⁴ Groslier, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-165.

century A.D. in the *Milindapanha*. Another Pali text the *Mahaniddesa* dated third century mentioned Suvanabhumi, Wanka and Java.²⁵

In Java we know that Buddhism must have been known there before the fifth century although temporarily overshadowed by other faiths because when Fa Hsien, a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim visited there in 414 A.D. he said nostalgically, "Buddhism was not worth mentioning."²⁶ We know too that Gunavarman (ca. 420-424) the Kashmiri prince-scholar was in Indonesia and served as adviser to the king. Damais relates the charming story. The Javanese queen saw Gunavarman in a dream so that when the sage arrived at the Javanese court she immediately recognized him. Gunavarman readily converted the Javanese Queen to Buddhism. Meanwhile the King sought Gunavarman's advice regarding a war he was planning to conduct against his enemies. Upon Gunavarman's advice, the king waged and won the war. This led to the rise in Gunavarman's prestige and his religion was accepted at court where he won many converts. Gunavarman's reputation must have been widespread for the Sung Emperor sent an embassy to invite him to go to China. However when the Chinese envoys reached Java, Gunavarman had already left. It was this Chinese embassy that provided us the date for Gunavarman's stay in Java which was 424 A.D.²⁷

The fifth century was the extension of Buddhism to Sumatra and Java beginning in the first quarter, it increased in momentum up to the rise of Shrivijaya and the Sailendras, beginning of the seventh century. Again Buddhist texts are important sources of early records about Indonesia. A Buddhist text entitled *Mahakarmavibhanga* dated from available Chinese translations to about 582 A.D. but considered of much older provenance played a great part in Asian literature and art. The *Mahakarmavibhanga* speaks of the archipelago and a saint Gavampati who converted to Buddhism the inhabitants of Suvarnabhumi (toponym for Sumatra). The same text cites a Sanskrit term which designates the whole archipelago, Dvipantara, the equivalent in Chinese chronicles is K'un Lun. This text is also important for our understanding of the bas relief in the covered base of Barabudur which illustrates the principle of *karma* in daily life.²⁸ Then in 665 A.D. another Chinese pilgrim came to Java on his way to India, his name was Hui Neng. He translated several Theravada texts with the collaboration of a Javanese scholar named Jnnabhadrā.²⁹ Even at this early period when Budd-

²⁵ Louis Charles Damais, "Le Bouddhisme en Indonésie," *Presence du Bouddhisme, France-Asie*, Saigon — Paris, 1959, pp. 813-824. (A special volume dedicated to Buddhism edited by René de Berval.)

²⁶ Krom, *Geschiedenis*, p. 81.

²⁷ Damais, *op. cit.*, p. 813.

²⁸ Sylvain Levi, "The Karmavibhanga Illustrated in the Sculptures of the Buried Basement of Barabudur," *Annual Bibliography of Indian Archeology*, 1929, Leyden, pp. 2-7.

N. J. Krom, "Het Karmavibhanga op Barabudur," *Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen*, Afdeling Letterkunde, Vol. 76, No. 8, 1933, pp. 215-283.

Krom, *Geschiedenis*, p. 219.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 115-118.

hism was the current vogue in court, we also have evidence of Hinduism.³⁰ A Vishnu image was found in West Java in the village of Tjibuaja. Interestingly enough, this Vishnu image is very similar to contemporary statues in mainland Southeast Asia. (see plate 23 in Bernet Kempers)

In Palembang in the last quarter of the seventh century I Tsing another Chinese pilgrim had a six month sojourn in Shrivijaya and in Jambi in order to study Sanskrit before proceeding to India. He observed and brought back to China the Indonesian Buddhist liturgy which Krom identifies as Mahayanist. This is one of the proofs of the prestige the maritime kingdom of Shrivijaya enjoyed during the height of its hegemony. In 717 Vajrabodhi a monk from Ceylon on his way to China was in Shrivijaya. He is known as the monk who introduced Tantra to China. We can infer that there must have been great excitement in this maritime kingdom from the presence of a variety of foreign monks who came to Shrivijaya to study. And what is remarkable for the history of the Malay language is that these scholars were versed not only in the sacred languages of Buddhism, Sanskrit and Pali but also in old Malay. This language was the means of communication used by the pilgrims who came to the area.³¹ Moreover the Shrivijayan inscriptions not only prove that Mahayana Buddhism was espoused but provide us some of the earliest records in the Malay language.³² Besides Mahayana Buddhism, the Shrivijayan court must have shown interest in other schools for Punyodaya, a master of Yoga-Tantric studies taught there in 655 A.D.³³ However, we must take note that Hindu faiths were stronger than Buddhism in the courts for reasons that Hindu priests were the constant advisers to the kings.³⁴

What all these early accounts show is that the early Indonesian kings like their counterparts in Indochina were in step with the cultural developments in the Asian world and enjoyed high prestige among other Asian thinkers of the time. Despite the hazards of travel, Southeast Asians were in constant touch with the most productive centers of Asian civilization and this they maintained for as long as they were building up their knowledge not only about religion but of human learning in general. For we can readily presume that they were concerned with knowledge of practical application: pharmacopoeia, medicine, philology, navigation and not the least was the study and practice of government.

Instead of following Buddhist influences chronologically we shall now shift our approach by concentrating on the changes brought about by such influences. As was discussed earlier, the most obvious evidences of cultural

³⁰ The Dieng edifices considered about contemporary to the Kedu structures are all Vishnuite. *Ibid.*, 127.

³¹ Damais, *op. cit.*, 816.

³² For the Malay inscriptions of Srivijaya, see Codes' article in *Bulletin, Ecole Française de l'Extrême Orient*, 1930.

³³ Krom, *op. cit.*, pp. 115 and 117.

³⁴ On Shivaism as the dominant court religion and possibly more influential on the people see Krom's article in *MKAJWAL*, Vol. 58, No. 8, 1924.

transformation is on the courts. The institution of kingship was precisely the end result of these transformations. We shall not dwell on this topic at length for there is ample literature on the subject.* As far as our discussion is concerned what is important to keep in mind regarding early Southeast Asian ideas of kingship is that they revolve around the figure of the divine king. We should also remember that Buddhist contributions to the fund of ideas on kingship cannot be dissociated from Hindu influences for they share a common cosmology and were deeply rooted in the same cultural milieu not only in the country of their origin but in the countries that received them.³⁵

As in most Southeast Asian countries, the kings and rulers made capital use of Hindu and Buddhist symbols as powerful instruments to articulate their paramountcy and to solidify claims. These imported religions brought about the formation of a coherent system of political thought as manifested by the Devaraja cult. One of the earliest records of this cult in actual operation was at Mison where inscriptions tell us that the cult of Siva-Uma was practiced and that the god Bhadresvara was represented by a linga (ca. 375 A.D.)³⁶ The cult was based on Shivaite Tantric texts and on the iconography of this deity. This explains to a great extent why Shivaism was the dominant religion at the Southeast Asian courts. In India itself even at the time of the Buddha his religion was ignored and even persecuted by Kings. Buddhism remained for a long time the religion of freeman traders, sailors whose patron deity was Dipankara, "the Buddha who calmed the waves" and of course scholars and wandering priests.³⁷ Indeed Buddhist efforts to appeal to the class of nobles were one among the many reasons for the rise of Mahayana.³⁸ But no less important to Mahayana ascendancy was their response in competition with the Hindu cults, to the felt needs of the people, particularly if such people belonged to royalty. This development of let us say, "applied" Buddhism is very well evidenced by the Mahayana texts, one of them the

* An excellent introduction to this topic is Robert Heine-Geldern, *Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia*, Ithaca, N.Y., 1956.

³⁵ For the prominent role played by priest scholars of different religions see the Inscription of Kelurak dated 782. The inscription was found not far from Loro Jonggrong, a temple complex dedicated to Shiva. The inscription begins with a homage to the three jewels Buddha, Dharma, Sangha and Lokeshvara (the Lord of the light who illumines the universe), all Buddhist. Also honored are Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The inscription also informs us that Kumaraghôsa from Gaudi, a province of the Pala empire in Bengal, consecrated a Manjusri statue. According to Bosch, the Buddhist concept of Manjusri is that he represents the Buddha's supreme wisdom. But in the Kelurak inscription, the Manjusri image is called a *dharmasetu* which means that the statue has been installed as a means of protecting the sanctuary. In this sense it is closer to the native concept of guardian of the soil and the sanctuary.

F.D.K. Bosch, "De Inscriptie van Keloerak," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal —, Land —, en Volkenkunde* uitgegeven door het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, Vol. 68, 1928, pp. 21-32.

³⁶ Coedes, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50. See note 34 above.

³⁷ Majumdar, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, 18-38.

³⁸ Conze, *op. cit.*, 85-88.

Milindapanha, was a text intended for the guidance of kings.³⁹ In any case, Buddhism played a minimal or at least a secondary role in the Southeast Asian institution of kingship and even then its role was a very late occurrence.

First we need to outline the essential components of the Devaraja cult in order to understand how Buddhist symbols fitted into the cult and how Buddhist ideas transformed it.⁴⁰ The foremost notion is that the king is divine or the human manifestation of god on earth. There is no suggestion whatsoever of the people's participation in the choice of the king. In Buddhism there is a tradition of democratic procedure in that the selection of the master and leader of the congregation is chosen from among those most learned and considered closest to having attained Enlightenment.⁴¹ Nowhere in the Devaraja cult is such a notion suggested for in this cult the king's ordination derives only from the gods. According to this royal cult once the king's authority is established, he usually builds a sanctuary atop a mountain, a natural one if possible or an artificial mound is built. Atop this mountain a lingam is installed symbolizing the fiery essence and energy of Shiva which represents at the same time the power of the king. The first records of royal linga cult in Indonesia are found in the Changgal inscription 732 A.D. and the Dinaya inscription dated 760 A.D. (rather late compared to the fourth century record we have for Champa).⁴² A sanctuary dedicated to Agastya (the sage and teacher) was built by King Gajayana and mentions that Putikesvara was installed as the guardian of the linga "which embodied the essence of royalty."⁴³ The Changgal inscription mentions the installation of the linga, "upholder of hereditary royalty" which belongs to the Shivaite dynasty of Mataram and founded by king Sanjaya who is very important to the succeeding kings in East Java. We have therefore in the Devaraja cult the needed unifying principle that could transcend the specific and localized authority of the chiefs and could absorb at the same time local deities and their efficacious powers. For the authority of local chiefs were tied to the confines of the cultivated lands of the village, each with its own localized deity and ancestral cult. The primary and sacred duty of tribal elders and chiefs therefore was to propitiate and invoke their own local gods and ancestors. In contrast to the particularity of indigenous gods, Hindu and Buddhist deities, having no local habitation so to speak, readily served the purpose of transcending the powers of all local gods. The imported deities provided the most powerful chiefs wider scope for their operations allowing them to claim peoples and territories beyond their immediate sur-

³⁹ Henry Clarke Warren, *Buddhism in Translation*, N.Y., 1963 (reprint of an earlier edition). See section on the *Milindapanha*.

⁴⁰ G. Coedes, *Angkor: An Introduction*, N.Y., 1963, pp. 22-33.

G. Coedes, *op. cit.*, 1968, 97-103.

⁴¹ Conze, *op. cit.*, 53-68.

⁴² Coedes, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

⁴³ Krom, *Geschiedenis*, 281-283.

roundings and outside their own lineage.⁴⁴ Thus the Maharajah of Shrivijaya in exercising suzerainty over the chiefs and nobles of Sumatra, the Malay peninsula and the surrounding small islands on the straits, appropriated the name Maharajah using symbols and attributes from Hindu and Buddhist iconography. The Maharajah of Shrivijaya erected a sanctuary to the Buddha and Bodhisattva and Vajrapani on the newly "conquered" territory across the straits away from his traditional center of power in Palembang. Furthermore the Ligor inscription 775 A.D. provides more clues to new developments for it is only one of the many inscriptions that show (along with statues and sanctuaries) the persistence and dominance of the figure of Bodhisattva in the historical records from the eighth century. From this we can infer to some measure the way kings conceived of themselves and their roles and the corresponding changes in their held beliefs. For we must not forget that to them religion was not merely a bundle of formalized liturgy and dogma but the very substance upon which their socio-political and economic organizations were based. Hence shifts of religious persuasions are indices of many other aspects of life. In this case, the preference for the Bodhisattva rather than other available and well understood deities show most likely that the kings have taken a different view of themselves and of their roles. For the Bodhisattva figure in Buddhist iconography and literature is the material embodiment of the Buddha's compassion, he is the instrument of the Buddha's concern for Humanity and therefore the Saviour of Mankind. The Bodhisattva is Saviour in the sense that he postpones his own enlightenment to guide others. He helps quell passion and desire which are the sources of illusion and ignorance. In the *Prajnaparamitra* text famous throughout Southeast Asia from the seventh century A.D., the Bodhisattva is portrayed as a heroic being, who risks his own life to save others. The text explains this idea in narrative form using concrete even homespun examples. It is interesting that among the qualities of Bodhisattva, the heroic qualities were the ones most often emphasized.* Many inscriptions echo this analogy between the Bodhisattva and the King. In art it is the Bodhisattva figures that provide the archetype for the Indonesian conception of the royal personage. Representations of this Buddhist deity either as Lokeshvara, "Lord of the World," or Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva in royal regalia began from the seventh century and persisted with increasing intensity up to the last quarter of the fourteenth century.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ This line of interpretation has been suggested by Paul Mus, "Cultes indiens et indigènes au Champa," *BEFEO*, 1933.

⁴⁵ Edward Conze, I. B. Horner, *et al*, *Buddhist Texts through the Ages*, N.Y., 1964 (reprint of an earlier edition), 127-135.

* Contemporary Vishnuite cults stress precisely the same qualities, for example, Suryavarman I (1002-1050) Cambodia, and Airlanga (1016-1049) Java, have the same qualities in common with the Buddhist Anōratha (1044-1077) Burma.

⁴⁶ Louis Finot, "Lokeshvara en Indochine," *Etudes Asiatiques*, EFEO, Vol. I, 1925, pp. 227-256.

Paul Mus, "Le Buddha Paré," *Bulletin*, EFEO, Vol. 28, 1928, Nos. 1 & 2, pp. 153-287.

Buddhist ideals represented by the Bodhisattva figure are integrated within the Hindu and native Indonesian belief systems that together form what might be called Indonesian conceptions of kingship. The indigenous culture heroes who were the harbingers of new ideas and technology within the tribe, the guardians of the soil and of the crops, and the tribal ancestors all coalesced into the magnified personality of the deified king. The chief turned Maharajah, the Universal Monarch *Cakravartin* and the Bodhisattva. As this was not enough Buddhist deities were fused into Hindu gods and we have Siva-Buddha in which form Kritanagara (1294-1309) had himself portrayed. The king is the powerful ruler who maintains the prosperity of his people, guarantees the fertility of the soil and the abundance of harvests. He is the arbiter and maintainer of peace and protector of his people. As such, the king holds the energy and fiery essence of Shiva represented in the lingam which the king installs inside the sanctuary. Buddhist iconography was searched for the equivalent symbol for power and energy, hence the sword of Manjusri, symbol of the hard, swift-cutting edge of knowledge, and the *vajra* symbolizing the indestructible force of diamantine truth⁴⁷ were incorporated into royal attributes. The principal statue dated 1343 at Chandi Jago is a Manjusri. Another favorite statue is Amoghapasha, the eight-armed Avalokitesvara symbolizing multiplicity of its power which it can wield simultaneously, and Aksobhya, the Imperturbable, one of the Dhyani Buddhas who rules the East Buddha land of Abhirati. This statue was sent by Kritanagara as envoy to Malayu in 1286 and reconsecrated in honor of Adityavarman (ca. 1350-1375) in 1347 A.D.^{47a}

We can assume that by the same token the earlier kings of Shrivijaya and the Shailendras placed themselves at the most exalted position above the lesser chiefs and rajas whom they promptly designated as their "vassals." The process of incorporating all religious systems was already at work before the tenth century. The exception to this general trend were the Shailendras whose dynastic monument represents exclusively Buddhist subjects although records showed them to be tolerant of Hindu faiths. The Barabudur need not deter us here for there are excellent sources in the English language on this great Buddhist monument.⁴⁸ What we need to say here is that the monument presents the fullest development of Mahayana Buddhism. It represents into one comprehensive system, the architectural and sculptural forms equated with the successive hierarchy of spiritual stages,

⁴⁷ Conze, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-147.

^{47a} There are loose, undated Avalokitesvara statues in bronze found in Indonesia which can be dated on stylistic grounds to Gupta and Post-Gupta art. Note that in the 14th century Kritanagara had himself represented as Aksobhya and as Amoghapasha. This last statue has an inscription which shows that this was re-consecrated and sent to his vassal in Malayu. See Krom, *Inleiding*, Vol. II, pp. 131-134.

⁴⁸ W. F. Stutterheim, "Chandi Barabudur," *Studies in Indonesian Archeology*, 's Gravenhage, 1956, pp. 7-13.

W. F. Stutterheim, "The Meaning of the Hindu-Javanese Candi," *Journal of American Oriental Society*, Vol. 51, 1931, pp. 1-15.

A. J. Bernet Kempers, *Ancient Indonesian Art*, Amsterdam, 1959, pp. 41-49.

from the mundane world of people chained to the cause and effect pattern of their lives, to the intermediate stages of knowing and to the final stage of absolute knowledge. Although it is the "unnamed, formless" Buddha that is supposed to be at the zenith of this monument, it is the Bodhisattva figure that predominates and brings the worshipper closer to the Absolute Reality that unfolds at the summit. Subsidiary temples of Plaosan, Mendut, and Pawon all have as their central deity the Bodhisattva, the intermediary between Supreme Reality and Mankind, the intercessor between illusion and reality, and the Jina Buddhas, "the victorious, conqueror of ignorance."⁴⁹

In Indonesia the main features of the cult of divine kings is comparable to that of Cambodia with stronger accent placed on ancestor worship and equal importance given to the female principle. Into this general pattern, Buddhist themes were incorporated. The kings besides building their sanctuaries and mausoleums had their statues installed therein. The statues were actually portraits of the kings and queens in the features of deities and gods to whom they were devotees during their lifetime. The sanctuaries were not only temples of worship but were also tombs wherein the ashes of the cremated royalty were buried. Since it was believed that the King personified all beneficent powers for the well-being of the state, his mausoleum was in this sense the focal center of the entire kingdom and often also the *nagara* or the capital. The portrait statues whether Shivaite or Buddhist were the concrete images of the continuity of the dynasty as well as the principle of royalty itself.⁵⁰ This practice is documented for us in a text dated 1365 entitled the *Nagarakertagama* written by a poet who professed the Buddhist faith.⁵¹ In this text we learn that the portrait statues had functions other than those we already mentioned earlier. Apparently these statues also served as the receptacle or medium to enable the deceased royal ancestors to descend on earth and thereby be in benign contact with their descendants. The installation of the statue and the periodic rituals commemorating the death anniversary of the deceased kings and queens were occasions of state celebrations which consist of religious rites, banquets, dances, literary, song and dramatic presentations, sports and all sort of activities⁵² that remind us of our own *feria*. It was considered a most happy occasion by the royalty and the people for this marked the final deliverance of the deceased from their mortal remains. Only bones and ashes remain and these were enshrined inside the sanctuary to bestow benevolent effects on the people. This ritual called *Sraddha* have many similarities with ancient indigenous burial practices prevalent all over Southeast Asia and still practiced in Bali

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-49.

⁵⁰ Stutterheim, *op. cit.*, see note 48.

Coedes, "La destination funeraire de grands monuments Khmers," *BEFEO*, Vol. 40, pp. 239-252.

⁵¹ Th. G. Th. Pigeaud, *Java in the Fourteenth Century: A Study in Cultural History*, 5 vols., The Hague, 1960.

⁵² *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 72-81.

as reported by Stutterheim before World War II.⁵³ The deceased ancestor commemorated in the *Sraddha* ceremony as narrated in the *Nagarakertagama* was Queen Rajapatni, grandmother of King Rajasanagara who died sometime in 1350 A.D.⁵⁴ During her lifetime Queen Rajapatni was a devoted Buddhist and was a member of a "nun's organization" who went into regular retreat in a Buddhist sanctuary identified for us by Stutterheim as the cave at Guwa Pasir near Tulung Agung in the mid-fourteenth century.⁵⁵ That the *Sraddha* in the *Nagarakertagama* was a common practice in earlier times was proved by Stutterheim who was able to identify the subject matter of the bas relief in the Cave of Selamanglang in Kediri as secondary burial of bones inside boxes and urns. The cave relief is dated to about the tenth century.⁵⁶ The importance of this account also lies on the fact that this state ceremony was celebrated for a female ancestor, Queen Rajapatni. The account in the *Nagarakertagama* also illustrates the importance given in Indonesia to the female ancestor as Universal mother whose figure is indispensable in the cult of divine kings.⁵⁷

These were the symbols that aided kings in consolidating their kingdom under one ruler, the Universal Monarch, *Cakravartin*. The great kingdoms of Pagan, Angkor, Ayuthia, Shrivijaya, Shailendra and Majapahit shared this common fund of royal symbols. And yet, as Buddhism together with Hindu beliefs served as aids to royal power, these same symbols functioned in a way to mitigate the exercise of royal authority. For a new kind of relationship between king and subject came to be defined primarily under the stimulus of Buddhism. Foremost among the edifying notions is that the king must be both a sage and a saint whose concern for his people must be expressed in good and pious deeds. It is therefore understandable that among all Buddhist deities the Bodhisattva Lokeshvara — Avalokitesvara were the persistent themes in Indonesian history and art. Our conclusion from the evidence is that the kings and nobles even as they fought fiercely to gain control over peoples, territories and the profits from trade, had espoused in peace the highest ideals in the regulation of human conduct.

This last point can be pursued further by answering the question, why sanctuaries and mausoleums were built. Invariably every successful king able to consolidate his control over territories signified his *de facto* rule by building sanctuaries, temples and installing images and lingas when Shivaite.

⁵³ *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, 169-186.

Stutterheim, 1956, "Some Remarks on Pre-Hinduistic Burial Customs of Java," 67-73. (See note 48).

⁵⁴ Pigeaud, *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Stutterheim, "Notes on Saktism in Java," *Acta Orientalia*, Vol. 17, 1939, pp. 144-152. Stutterheim, "De Goewa Pasir bij Toeloeng Agoeng," *Tijdschrift...*, Vol. 73, 1933, pp. 453-468. There is an inscription in this cave sanctuary which gives the date in Tjandra Sengkala, Saka 1272-1350 A.D. date corresponds to the dates of Queen Rajapatni. See Damais for figuring out dates based on Tjandra Sengkala.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ "Saktism.," p. 150-152. "De Ouderdom van Kluisenarij Selamanglang, Toeloeng Agoeng," *Bijdragen...*, Vol. 89, 1932, pp. 266-270.

Within the Buddhist tradition the building of stupas and other edifices were considered among the highest expressions of piety. For ordinary people with little resources at their disposal substitutes were used such as small votive replicas of stupas, or of the Buddha figure shaped in clay or on other precious or semi-precious metals. There were hundreds of such items discovered in Bali which could be dated to the eighth and ninth centuries A.D. While substitute replicas were sufficient for the ordinary people, this was not so for the wealthy and much more so for the kings for whom the building of stupas and sanctuaries were considered their obligation. This affected the social arrangements regarding land. Lands were given to monasteries and temples which were already inhabited by villagers whose labor and produce were appropriated for the maintenance of the temples. Together with donation of metals, revenue was also exacted from the people. Thus the expressed motivation of building temple complexes also instituted new social arrangements in the vicinity where they were founded.⁵⁸ The significance of these temple complexes does not only remain as pious expressions of kings and subjects. More than the expression of faith they show the working out of a larger socio-political order that coordinated the various aspects of life. For along with the proliferation of stupas, viharas, chaityas and other sacred edifices there were also built what we might call today constructions of more secular nature. The kings built or claimed to have built wells, tanks, irrigation canals, bridges, roads, and shade trees planted along routes of approach to the temples.⁵⁹ At Angkor Thom we have records that libraries, hostels, storage houses and hospitals were built at regular intervals on the way to the city.⁶⁰ From a social point-of-view we have here all the possible elements of a properly functioning administrative center of the state. Prapanca, author of the *Nagarakertagama* extolled the Majapahit capital for providing such amenities to the people and we have reason to believe him even if we make some allowances for a certain amount of exaggeration.⁶¹

Apparently the founding of sanctuaries had some other secondary functions. It was also the means of forging alliances or finalizing such alliances

⁵⁸ Seckel, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-105.

Coedes, *Angkor...*, pp. 29-30.

Krom, *Inleiding...* Vol. 1, Chapter III.

⁵⁹ In the Ratu Baka and Dieng plateaus and on Mt. Penangoengan are evidences of drainage systems and causeways.

F. H. Van Naerssen, "Some Aspects of the Hindu-Javanese Kraton," *The Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1963.

F. H. Van Naerssen, "Twee Koperen oorkonden van Balitung," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde van Nederlandansh—Indie*, Vol. 88, 1949, 22-26.

Hugh Tinker, "The City and the Asian Policy," *Bulletin*, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1963, pp. 7-18.

⁶⁰ G. Coedes, "Des edicules appelés bibliothèque," BEFEO, XI, pp. 3-4, & 5-18.

G. Coedes, "L'assistance médicale au Cambodge a la fin du XIIIe siècle," *Revue Medicale Française d'Extreme-Orient*, 1941.

⁶¹ Pigeaud, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 92-109.

an example of which we already saw in the temple Kalasan ca. 778 between the Buddhist Shailendras and the Shivaite king Sanjaya. A similar alliance is recorded in the Nalanda inscription 850-860 A.D. between Sumatra and the king of Nalanda. And then again a similar charter designating villages and their revenues for the maintenance of temples built by the Shrivijayan king in the Chola charter ca. 1005 A.D.⁶² A curious account along the same lines is given in Chinese chronicles. It tells us that a Shrivijayan embassy informed the Emperor that a temple was erected in their country in order to pray for the Emperor's long life and that they requested bells to be cast for the temple.⁶³ This account shows how Indonesians must have exploited their Buddhist relations for purposes of trade.

So far we have been discussing the contributions of Buddhism to the cult of divine kings. We must yet pick up the thread in the development of Buddhism after the Central Javanese period when it received fullest support under the Shailendras. During the East Javanese period from the eleventh century on we have the fusion of Hindu-Buddhism. Both religions were no longer clearly distinguishable from each other. First because both of them developed within the main currents of Tantrism.⁶⁴ The main pre-occupation according to Zoetmulder was to achieve "union with the absolute" or the "mystical union with reality" and the path to achieve this end was of little importance.^{64a}

The *Sang Hyang Kamahayanikan*,* a Tantric Buddhist text best exemplifies developments of the latter periods. The text is composed of Sanskrit verses with Javanese translations. It is mainly an exposition of Vajrayana teachings on how to attain mystical experience in order to rid one's self of all passions and illusions. Portions show an earlier influence traceable to the Mahasanghika School (organized between 250 B.C. onwards in India) whose activities centered perhaps around the university called Dhanyakata located on the Krishna-Godavari region near Amaravati. Another portion is related to the Yogacharya school (ca. 400 A.D.) located up north at Nalanda University which is a later school than the Mahasanghika. The text underwent successive modifications up to the medieval period and had absorbed in the meantime a great deal of Hindu ideas. The main point to be raised here is that the gods Isvara, Brahma, Vishnu were brought together and placed side by side with the Buddhist Bodhisattvas who together form one consistent pantheon. Hence several layers of various influences that flowed

⁶² Coedes, 1968, p. 141.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.

⁶⁴ Conze, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-179.

^{64a} Piet Zoetmulder, *Les Religions d'Indonésie*, Paris, 1965.

S. B. Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, Calcutta, 1950.

Esoteric, magical techniques in obtaining salvation has always been part of the traditions out of which Buddhism grew. Hence Tantra as it developed about 500-600 A.D. was not new to Buddhism.

* For a Dutch translation of the text see: J. Kats, *Sang Hyang Kamahayanikan*, The Hague, 1910.

continuously from India became fused into one system in Indonesia.⁶⁵ From these texts the story of Buddhism in Indonesia has still an interesting sequel that will bring our narrative to the eve of the coming of Islam. For the history of the writing of this text is consistent with historical, literary and iconographic evidences which all points towards fusion of all diverse influences, integration of all beliefs and the search for the synthesis of contradictions.

As we said earlier, Southeast Asians were more predisposed towards syncretism and tolerance. Southeast Asian history seem to have relatively less degree of partisanship, sectarianism and religious rivalry that fill the historical accounts of India and China. Indeed, the attitude of syncretism seem to be most characteristically Indonesian and which appear in greater evidence as we go into the East Javanese period.

During this period we find the fusion of Hinduism and Buddhism to the extent that it is no longer useful to make any distinctions between them. The two religions were practiced simultaneously even within the same family for we know from inscriptions that Sindok the first East Javanese King although Shivaite had a daughter who worshipped Lokapala, a Buddhist deity (one of the Guardians of the four quarters). In Airlangga's reign beginning the eleventh century, we learn that in an important liturgy involving the division of the kingdom into two apportioning each part to his two sons, three different priests officiated, a Shivaite, a Buddhist and Brahmanic.⁶⁶ Then under Kritanagara (1294-1309) we have the second brilliant phase of art and literature. As Kritanagara inaugurated the political expansion of his kingdom he also paved the way for the development of a new style of art and religion which was unfortunately cut short by his death. Kritanagara brought about the final amalgamation of the hitherto separate, co-equal but distinguishable faiths. He had himself represented at Chandi Jago as Amoghapasha, (1286 A.D.), the eight-armed Avalokitesvara and later as Siva-Buddha. He also had the statue of Ardhanari represented, the god who combines both male and female attributes in union with his consort the female Sakti. Derived primarily from Hindu beliefs as it developed into Tantrism, the Buddhist equivalents of the Sakti are represented by Tara and Prajnaparamita. Legend ascribes that Ken Dedes, consort of the founder of Singhasari was represented as Prajnaparamita (ca. 1220+).⁶⁷

It is noteworthy that the representation of the King in the form of *Bhairava* (plate 259 Bernet-Kempers) the demonic figure with terrifying attributes supercede that of the Bodhisattva Lokeshvara. The attributes of

⁶⁵ Krom, *Geschiedenis*, pp. 115-119.

Inleiding, Vol. I, 396-397. Krom gives earlier dating for the text, possibly late 8th to 9th century and identifies this as the source for the iconography of Chandi Mendut. Zöetmulder believes that there is no religious text that can be reliably dated earlier than the eleventh century. He dates the *Sang Hyang Kamahayanikan* to this later period. Zöetmulder, *ibid*, p. 269.

⁶⁶ Krom, *Geschiedenis*, pp. 239-271.

⁶⁷ Stutterheim, "Saktism...", *passim*.

Bhairava are all symbols of death. His cup is a skull, at his feet is a circle of skulls, and he stands over a corpse. The best location for such a statue is considered to be inside a cemetery. Zoetmulder believes that this is completely Tantric and can longer be placed within the purview of Buddhism. However, within the traditions of Mahayana Buddhism, the inverse of Gôtama's teachings has always played a prominent role in its philosophical development and more importantly in the practical application to life. Thus the reverse of the teachings of the Theravadins and the Yogacarya Schools who emphasized introspective contemplation were the ones exploited by Tantric Schools. What is taught instead are irrational, esoteric methods, the fullest and extravagant enjoyment of all the seductive pleasures of life, food, drink, sex in order to seek magical powers. Such techniques are intended to generate and seize control of forces immanent in the universe in order to induce them to obey one's will. These are aims which are contradictory to the initial and fundamental teaching of Buddhism that of selflessness. This inherent paradox in Tantrism, the search for magical powers in order to release oneself from all illusion of self does not seem to bother its practitioners. In canto 42 of the *Nagarakertagama* mentions that Kritanagara underwent rituals identified by Pott as the *ganacakra* rite which is a Tantric ritual similar to the one performed by Kublai Khan to reinforce his emperial powers before he launched his far-flung wars of conquest.⁶⁸ We have every indication from the successive wars waged by and against Kritanagara that the preoccupation of the kings for the "search for the Absolute unity" could very well be part of the king's political strategem to overcome his opponents.

It is extremely difficult to assess the historical events under the influence of Tantrism. The texts for one thing have not been systematically compiled, edited and analyzed, and adding to the complication is that the texts were deliberately written in garbled, esoteric language. Many texts were kept secret for a long time which make them very difficult to date. Given this information, we can better appreciate the works of Dasgupta and Pott who have written on Tantra. The secrecy of Tantric rites must have been well kept since there were already disagreements on how to interpret certain historical events which were connected to Tantric practices. The circumstances surrounding the death of Kritanagara are reported in two contradictory accounts. One by Prapanca in the *Nagarakertagama* is sympathetic, while the writer of the *Pararaton*, (a fifteenth century book) is completely hostile. According to the *Pararaton*, Kritanagara was assassinated by a rebel while he was indulging in food and drink.⁶⁹ The *Nagarakertagama* on the other hand recounts that the king strictly followed his religious obligations "in order to protect the world from destruction." It continues by saying that the King observed the pancasila (the five commandments) and was the possessor

⁶⁸ P. H. Pott, *Yoga en Yantra in hunne betekenis voor de Indische archeologie*, Leyde, 1946, pp. 220-224.

Krom, *Geschiedenis*, pp. 328-340.

⁶⁹ Krom, *Geschiedenis*, pp. 328-330. *Inleiding...*, Vol. II, pp. 138-150.

of the six perfections and that he served the "lion of the race of Sakya." All of these terms belong to Buddhist terminology.⁷⁰ As corroborative evidence that Kritanagara was actually a devotee of Bhairava Tantric cults, we have a dated statue which is inscribed and its location identified. It is a Mahak-sobhya which was accordingly exposed in a cemetery.⁷¹

Whether in liturgy, art and literature the tendency in the East Javanese period is toward the resolution of all differences and contradictions. Nothing is completely discarded but rather absorbed into its opposite. The same theme that runs through the *Sang Hyang Kamahayanikan* "union with the Absolute" explains the meaning of the rites performed and the type of statues represented.

The merging of all the beliefs continue in the latter part of the fourteenth century. At the very height of Majapahit power according to Prapanca, the king and his court respected the autonomy of all sects, they were all considered important as a means of achieving "Absolute Truth." At the same time different religious topics were carved on the same temples and in the same manner, literary texts combine diverse materials. That this was the general attitude pervading Indonesian society at the time can be illustrated by a tale wherein Buddhist ideals were clearly involved. The tale is in Balinese and of recent dating but the antiquity of the tale itself is attested by the fact that it is represented on the Chandi Panataran, dated the last half of the fourteenth century.⁷² The story goes this way.

Two brothers, one named Gagang Aking (literally means dried stalk) and Bubukshah (the glutton) are in search of Ultimate Wisdom. They go up the Wilis mountain in a retreat. Gagang Aking undergoes asceticism and meditation following strictly the Shivaite restrictions and austerities. In contrast to his brother, Bubukshah follows no prohibitions whatsoever and in fact indulges in all kinds of drinks and food. He even goes to the extent of hunting and killing forest animals. This is the Buddhist way, according to the tale. In the meantime, Bhatara Guru sends out his servant Kalawiddjaya in the form of a white tiger to test the two brother's progress towards spiritual perfection. The tiger asks the brothers if he could eat them for he could only eat human flesh. On the pretext that he is too emaciated to satisfy the tiger's hunger, Gagang Aking declines. On the other hand, Bubukshah willingly offers himself to be the tiger's meal. Whereupon the tiger reveals his true mission to the brothers. As a reward for his willingness to sacrifice himself, Bubukshah is carried on the tiger's back up to the highest realm in heaven. But he does not leave Gagang Aking behind. The tiger takes him along and places him in the level of heaven lower than the place assigned to Bubukshah.⁷³

⁷⁰ Pigeaud, Vol. III, p. 48.

⁷¹ Krom, *ibid.*, 122-123.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 277-279.

⁷³ For a detailed analysis of this tale which is part of the Panji cycle, see Rassers who uses the Dutch method of "anthropological structuralism."

From this tale we can see that while Buddhist ways are glorified, Shivaite ways are not derided but given an equally important place in heaven. Hence each sect or religion has its own importance and its own contributions to one's achievement of the same goal. Each path has its own validity under various circumstances and for different personalities at different times. As long as one is led to the ultimate goal, the path taken matters very little.

The preceding discussion is only an attempt to show how and why Buddhism developed the way it did in Southeast Asia in the early period particularly in Indonesia. We noted that Buddhism came slowly and peacefully along with many kinds of ideas and objects. It was received hospitably by the people who looked upon it not as a competitor nor as a threat but as the gauge of their own development. The gift of India was seized upon by Southeast Asians as the fertile medium by which they could realize their own potentials. They played an active part in the transference of cultural equipment, sorting out, retaining some and rejecting others at a pace well within their control and understanding. In this manner, Buddhist ideals along with other ideas from India brought about transformations of great consequence in the way Southeast Asian societies were organized. As one instance of this transformation, we have shown how the institution of kingship, the vantage point from which we measured other developments was magnified and elevated in its conception by the imported religious symbols. Much of the symbols although derived from Hindu-Buddhism grew upon the underlying framework of indigenous belief system that not only took on some of the elaborate superstructure it received but contributed to its further elaboration. We have seen too that among all Buddhist ideas and deities, it was the Bodhisattva (as the heroic saviour of mankind) and the Bhairava (Tantric deity charged with magical superpowers and conqueror of all ills) which were the predominant inspirations in Indonesia as elsewhere in Asia. We interpreted these religious preferences as indicative of something more significant, affecting as it were, social-political beliefs of the more powerful groups in society. Hence, the king's devotion to the Lokeshvara or to the Bhairava represents in a way certain radical changes in the attitude of their adherents. The idea that there is a better world than the present one, that there is latent potentialities in certain individuals at certain times who are capable of changing things as they are, is the central notion to bring out if we try to look for the main thrust in the social impact of Hindu-Buddhist ideals. And yet, even if such a stirring concept came to be accepted, Buddhist ideals did not stop short of this aim. For Buddhism teaches that as all men must strive, the ultimate goal of human striving is to achieve wisdom, knowledge, and the integration of all life.

W. H. Rassers, *Panji, the Culture Hero, a Structural Study of Religion in Java*, The Hague, 1959.

The absence of any centralized, infallible authority that can enforce its will on people was an important factor in maintaining the relation of partnership between India and Southeast Asia. Such a relationship stressed compromise rather than the annihilation of native tendencies. It made possible too the continuance of religious tolerance and syncretism. It is interesting that Indonesian history barely hints at heretics and infidels although there were plenty of sorcerers, magicians and witches. This is particularly applicable not only in the case of Tantric Buddhism but to Buddhism in general since it is a religion that did not impose purity of teachings. Neither did Buddhist institutions seek its survival to the exclusion of others. Buddhist scriptures in fact prophesied its own demise. So that when it succumbed to Islam, it was only being consistent to its own teaching that all things must come to pass.

Today the institution of Buddhism has been eclipsed in Indonesia. Compared to the Theravada countries of Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, or the Mahayana countries of Vietnam, China and Japan, Buddhism in Indonesia was short-lived. Buddhists form a very tiny minority composed mostly of Chinese and still smaller number of Indonesians. Except for the Vaisakha ceremony (in commemoration of Buddha's birth, enlightenment and Parinirvana) celebrated on the tenth stage of the Barabudur annually, there is no other Buddhist event of national import in Indonesia. Nevertheless we can surmise that the Buddhist ideals of *ahimsa* (non-killing), tolerance, self-discipline in order to attain wisdom are ideals that Islam readily absorbed. And the great prestige of the Buddha remains in the minds of many modern Indonesians who designate the great achievements of their civilization under Shrivijaya and Majapahit as *Jaman Buda* (the Buddhist Age.)⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Damais, *op. cit.*, p. 824.