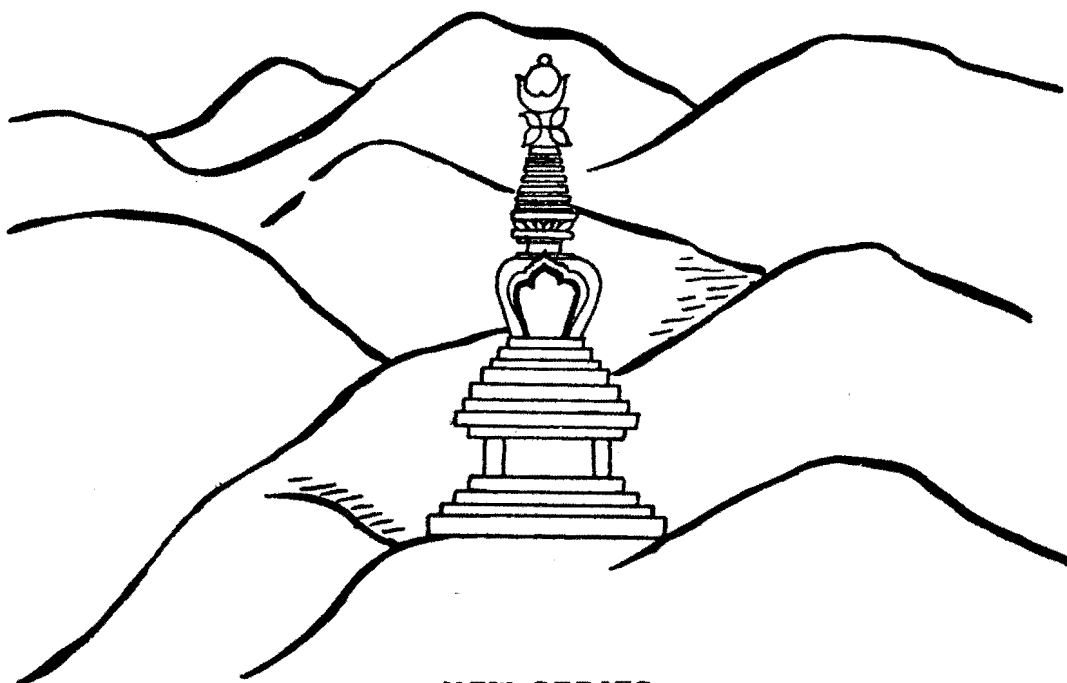


# Bulletin of Tibetology



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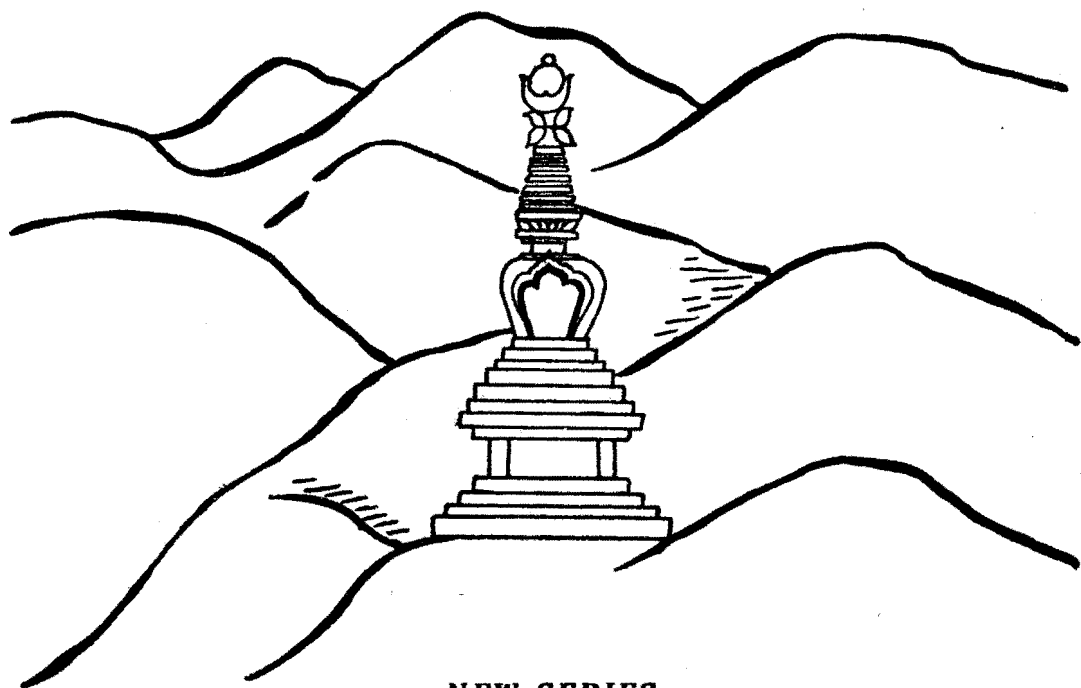
**23 November 1986**

**SIKKIM RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY  
GANGTOK, INDIA**

- *The Bulletin of Tibetology* seeks to serve the specialist as well as the general reader with an interest in this field of study. The motif portraying the Stupa on the mountains suggests the dimensions of the field -

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# BUDDHA IN ART : FROM SYMBOL TO IMAGE

Kalyankumar Ganguli

There is a common impression about Buddhism that its impact was completely lost sight of in India long before the present age. Facts bearing to the contrary are, however, not quite rare to trace. One of the positive outcomes of the impact of Buddhism was probably the realisation of objects of veneration into technically formulated shapes held as images which have been used for the purpose of divination and worship. Realisation of divinities in visual form of idols and the worship of the same have been existing as a common phenomenon among many ancient civilizations of the world. But in India there has been a marked difference in the phenomenon of image worship from the same as existing elsewhere. Here, the figure of the deity put into visual form is found to have evolved as an aid in the endeavour on the part of the worshipper to attain concentration. It came to be technically known as a *yantra* or instrument, which has been processed in order to help the worshipper to imbibe within his or her inner consciousness a complete identity with the object of veneration and full realisation of the essence of the same within one's own inner self. In every possibility, as traditions may help in establishing, it had been through the endeavours of some thinkers owing allegiance to Buddhism that this aspect of image worship was evolved as a means of absorption and fulfilment. The realisation of this highly efficacious measure had not been accomplished all at once at a particular time. The process had probably started when the followers of Buddha had developed the idea of looking upon the master as an ideal to be meditated upon as a means of attaining *arhat*-hood. As long as the master was alive and present in the company of his followers, the very effulgent personality of the master could keep them inspired and drawn towards the ideals of *nirvana*. As Buddha had obtained *mahaparinirvana*, there had ensued a void in the wake of visual perception and at this state the Stupa enshrining the mortal remains of the master was held as a perpetual reminder of the very presence of the master. The Stupa had thus come to be held as a visual embodiment of the ideals that Buddha had propounded and lived for. This abstract symbol and several other motifs such as the Bodhi-trees at Gaya, supposed foot prints of the master at places sanctified by his presence or the Wheel of Law symbolising the master engaged in preaching had held the ground for long as sustaining the message and ideals preached by Buddha. But a demand for a likeness of the master in the concentrated attitude of the fulfilment of his ideals was being increasingly felt and some visualiser ultimately had taken the daring step of bringing into realisation an idealised likeness of the master in order to provide the seeker an instrument

to gain access to the ideals sought for. An attitude commonly known as *bhakti* could have been an element leading to the realisation of the likeness of Buddha in visual form but the basic factor which could have inspired the artist to bring into realisation the image can probably be discerned from such texts dealing with the Dhyanas of the dieties, as the *Nispanna Yogavali* attributed to Abhayakara Gupta (c. 1114 A.D.) and the *Sadhanamala*. In these texts the devotee is enjoined to meditate upon one self as one and identical with the deity held in divination. These texts bear affiliation to Buddhist thinking of quite late development, pertaining to the philosophical system known as *Yogachara* descending from the tenets known as *Madhyamika* propounded by the celebrated proponents of Buddhism, Asanga and Vasubandhu. There is every reason to believe that concrete realisation of Buddha image had been brought into being not by the orthodox followers of the Theravada school but had been accomplished by those belonging to this new dispensation known as the Mahayana school.

A mere representation of a person of veneration in visual form cannot be held as an icon; to be held as an icon a figure has to have some definite characteristics indicating the significance of a figure to be deemed as an image. It has been pointed out by some in this respect that the *Rigveda* has a passage wherein a person is stated to have offered his Indra for sale. (Rv. IV. 24.10) From this it has been concluded by some that this indicated the existence of image in the Vedic tradition. There is however, no positive indication that this Indra offered for sale had actually been a figure of Indra in human form. It could as well have been a symbol representing Indra. Even if this Indra was a figure of the deity in human form, this was definitely not an image put into shape for the purpose of worship, but could have been something like a protective talisman. The same holds good for many symbolic or human representations of deities to be met with upon the punch mark or cast coins of ancient age.

With the passage of time the accounts pertaining to the life of Buddha had gained very wide popularity and in artistic representation of such accounts symbols of various denomination such as the foot print, the vacant seat, the *dharma chakra* wheel and a tree with railing around its bottom came to be used as indicating the presence of the Master. In literature and accounts dealing with the life of Buddha, the presence of Buddha is always described in human form. In the artistic representations, however, the artists, it appears, had been prevented by some powerful injunctions, from the representation of the master in human form for quite a length of time. This tradition of non-exhibition of the master in human form was pursued with great strictness in such monuments at Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodhgaya, all belonging to the pre-Christian era. In the art of Gandhara, artists are found to have worked under no such inhibition and the stories pertaining to the life of Buddha here are all through shown with representation of the master in

human form. At Mathura also events from the life of Buddha are represented almost uniformly with figures of Buddha in human form. It is only in the Krishna-Godavari region of Andhra at Amaravati and such other places, where scenes from the life of Buddha are found represented with the use of symbols in some of the panels of the same age with figures of the master in human form. As it is the case with the figures of Buddha shown in the life-stories at Gandhara, at Amaravati region also the figures appearing in these life-stones are found to represent the master as a monk engaged in dispensations as required in the particular scene and not as an image, commanding worship. Though the presence of the Buddha had come to be shown in human form in such life scenes, at these centres of Buddhist art, when and how the Buddha figure had come to be accepted as an image for worship does not appear to have been established yet with any amount of certainty.

Born as Siddhartha, the son of a patriarch of the oligarchic tribe of the Sakyas, Buddha had been reared up in a cultural environment which prevailed among people pursuing the Vedic traditions. Some old texts hold that the Sakyas were scions of the Ikshvakus (Okkaka) descended from the legendary name called Manu. Though some modern scholars are sceptic about this claim, poet Asvaghosa is known to have upheld this idea. This association probably indicates a link with the family of rulers known as Janakas, also claiming descent from the ancient Ikshvakus; one of these Janakas, has been celebrated as the patron of Yajnavalkya of Upanishadic fame. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, attributed to Yajnavalkya is considered to have given a new turn to the philosophical quests developed in India. This Upanishad is known to have laid supreme stress upon the pursuit of wisdom, laid emphasis on the doctrine of *Karma* and rebirth, and had virtually nullified the efficacy of sacrifice. The way of fulfilment as laid down by Gautama after attaining Buddhahood, is found to bear intimate awareness of those Upanishadic principles. Though growing out of Vedic thinkings, the Upanishads had emphasised on the pursuit of wisdom and a right course of action and behaviour but did not promote any idea conducive to image worship.

In this perspective it may be worthwhile to point out that nowhere in the accounts dealing with the life of Buddha there is any indication of existence of image in worship. As Buddha moved about, meeting people and admitting eager persons to the *Sangha* by giving *pravarya*, he was growing in estimation and respect of his followers who had given him such adulation as would be given to a person of unparalleled veneration. In the dispensation preached by Buddha there was no prescription of any rites or rituals. The veneration commanded by Buddha during his life time could not have taken the place of any functional ritual; however, offerings were brought to him with great respect and he was certainly adulated with great

touching his feet. Performance of Vedic rituals and pouring oblation into sacrificial fire invoking such deities as Indra, Vishnu, Bhaga, Pushana etc. were abandoned and to those in the *Sangha* and to the lay disciples, Buddha had become the supreme recipient of veneration, homage and prostration (*Pranama*).

### **Mahaparinirvana of Buddha and the rise of the Stupa :**

After a long and eventful life after the attainment of Bodhi, the Master had obtained *Mahaparinirvana* at a village called Kusinagara situated in the kingdom of the Mallas. The death of the master had cast a spell of deep sorrow and gloom and had brought about a sense of void among the followers of Buddha. The sacred remains of the body after cremation were distributed among the tribes who had contended to gain possession of the sacred remains and monuments in the form of stupas had come to be erected at different places upon such remains. The erection of the stupas and the shape of those stupas appear to have been ordained by Buddha himself. It is on record that on the eve of his *parinirvana* Buddha had stated that in his absence all advice given by him in his lifetime regarding *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* would remain as the all time guide for his followers. It is further known that Buddha had made a sign with his two hands indicating a spherical shape, apparently suggesting a stupa which would be symbolical of his presence for all times.<sup>1</sup> All these facts had laid the way for the establishment of the stupa and acceptance of the same as symbolical of the presence of the master and as such a symbol of supreme value to the Buddhists after his *mahaparinirvana*.

The practice of erecting *stupa* upon the mortal remains of a deceased person was probably in vogue from long before the time of Buddha and such stupas had been erected not only by the Buddhists but the Jainas as well. Though the practice appears to have been discontinued by the Jainas, with the Buddhists the stupa came to acquire characteristics of very significant nature, having come to be recognised as important as the very presence of Buddha himself. Some early Buddhist texts tend to indicate that the *stupa* had come to be recognised as a symbol of the presence of the Buddha and commanded respect and veneration as such. Buddha himself is known to have stated that after his *mahaparinirvana* his *Sarirapuja* would be performed by *Khattiyas, Brahmanas* and *Gahapatis* (*Santananda khattiya panditani bahmmana panditapi/Gahapati panditapi tathagate abhippasanna/tetathagatassa sarirapuja.karissanti*). This idea of *Sarirapuja* had given rise to the acceptance of the stupa as an object of veneration in course of time as would be apparent from the stupas surviving at different places and also scenes showing stupas being venerated as objects of worship as found depicted in the sculptured panels at Bharhut, Sanchi and

other places. In the process of its being held as an object of veneration, the stupa had come to be known as a *chetiya*. The term *chetiya* as a place of veneration finds mention in the Ramayana,<sup>2</sup> as having railings (*Vedika*), stairs and high roof. Coomaraswamy felt that this indicated a temple (Coomaraswamy, A.K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p.48). The Atharvaveda has mention of *chaitya-vrikshas*.<sup>3</sup> This may be held as the earliest mention of the word *chaitya*, here attached to *vriksha* or tree, indicating that such trees as were held in veneration. Pali texts have mention of *rukkhacetiani* and the celebrated Bodhi tree at Gaya had been held as a *rukkhachetiya*.

No literary source can be cited as bearing any sure evidence as to when exactly a stupa came to be known as a *cetiya* or *chaitya* and as such an object of veneration. In this connection mention may be made of the Rummindei inscription of Asoka. In this inscription it has been stated that "Twenty years after his coronation king Priyadarsi, beloved of gods, visited this spot in person and offered worship at this place, because Buddha, the sage of the Sakyas was born here. He had caused a stone wall to be built around the place and also erected this stone pillar to commemorate his visit." (Pillar inscription of Asoka at Rummindei). This inscription mentions of Asoka's offering of worship at this place but there is no indication as to what specific object this worship was offered. That the place was marked can be inferred from the fact that a stone wall was set up around the place. A similar pillar existing at Nigalisagar (Niglibha in U.P.) bearing another inscription of Asoka states that the king Priyadarsi, beloved of gods, had visited the place after fourteen years of his coronation and had enlarged the *thuva* (*stupa*) existing there enshrining the relics of the Buddha Kanakamuni and had offered worship at this place. The word for *stupa* used here is *thuva*. From this record it is apparent that the *puja* offered by Asoka at this place was directed towards the stupa enshrining the relic of Buddha Kanakamuni. It may be inferred from this evidence, that though there is no mention of the existence of a *stupa* at Lummindei, there could have existed a *stupa* here as well, built to enshrine some holy relic of the Buddha of the Sakya clan.

It is quite possible that Asoka had set up the wall that is mentioned in the inscription round this stupa existing at Rummindei and he had actually offered worship to this *stupa*. Thus it can be inferred that formal offering of worship to a stupa as a symbol representing the Buddha had already come into practice before Asoka the emperor had followed a practice well in existence from an earlier age.

### ***Stupa turns into Chetiya (Chaitya) :***

A stupa is usually held as synonymous with *Chaitya*; but nowhere it can be found clearly stated as to when and how a *stupa* came to be accepted as a

*chaitya*. The word *chaitya* derived from the root *chi* probably indicated some high rising object held in veneration. Coomaraswamy held *chetiya* as standing for an altar or fire-altar.<sup>4</sup> Earliest mention of the word *chetiya* in any inscription is probably found in a railing pillar of the *stupa* of Bharhut. The inscription reads as *Migasamadaka-chetaya*.<sup>5</sup> An inscription found at Jagatpur near Derhadun (U.P.) there is mention of the erection of a *chetyo* to commemorate the fourth Asyamedha sacrifice by a ruler, named Silavarmana,<sup>6</sup> dateable from about the third century A.D. All these references would establish that a *chetya* or *chaitya* (or *chitya*) would stand for a shrine commanding respected veneration, where people would come to offer worship. As a *thuva* or *stupa* grew to command respect and worship, it also came to be known as *chetya* or *chaitya*. Though Asoka does not explicitly mention that the *thuva* at Nigalisagar was a *chetya*, the *thuva*, as it has been stated, it can be presumed that the *chetiya* had already come to be held as an object calling for worship. This was because of the *stupa* did enshrine the holy relic of the person held in reverence. The very saying about Sarira-puja put in the mouth of Buddha had given rise to, and establish the validity of relic worship enshrined in stupas. The famous relic inscription from Piprawa mentions Buddha as Bhagavata and the relic as Salila (Sarira) (*Jyam salila-nidhane Budhasa Bhagavata sakiyanam*).<sup>7</sup> The stupa containing sarira remains had thus come to be held as an object of veneration, and had come to be known as *sariraka stupa*. Though the idea of *sarira-puja* is found attributed to Buddha himself, the actual promotion of the idea of worship of the *stupa* as a *chetya* could not have taken place all at once unless the initiative was taken in this direction by somebody at some particular time, after the *Mahaparinirvana* and before Emperor Asoka, by which time it had come to be an established practice.

In this connection mention may be made of one Mahadeva who is credited to have brought into practice of a cult known as *chaityavada*. This Mahadeva is held by some as different from the person of the same name who is widely known as the convenor of the Second Buddhist Council. According to this creed of *Chaitya-vada*, great merit could be earned by worship of *chaityas* by offering of flowers, garlands and incense and also by circumambulating the same. After the *Mahaparinirvana*, eight *stupas* containing the sacred relics of Buddha were reported to have been built by king Ajatasatru at different places as stated in the *Mahaparinibbana Suttanta*. Later Asoka is credited to have distributed these relics to be enshrined in numerous *stupas*, set up at different places under his orders. Inscriptions of Asoka, however, do not preserve any mention of such an endeavour on the part of the emperor. The inscriptions at Rummindei and Niglibha would prove that Asoka had undertaken pilgrimage to places sanctified with the memory of Buddha Sakyamuni as well as such previous Buddhas as Kanakamuni. In the Rummindei record Buddha has been referred to as Bhagavan and offering of worship by Asoka is indicated by the

word *Mahiyite*. It may be concluded from these records that a *sariraka-stupa* containing *sarira dhatu* relic of Buddha had come to be held as an object fully symbolic of Buddha held as *Bhagavan* deserving of worship and as such had come to be held as a *chetya* or a shrine of utmost respect and veneration. Numerous representations may be found of scenes showing *stupas* being worshipped by devotees with flowers, garlands etc. and devotees prostrating before such *stupas* and circumambulating the same, upon the sculptured panels at Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodhgaya, Mathura and Amaravati, indicating how the *stupa* had come to be a symbol of the ever existing presence of Buddha, even after his *Mahaparinirvana*. Other symbols, such as the seat with lotus marks, foot prints, Bodhi tree, Dhammachakra were, however, used in art to indicate only the presence of the master during his life time.

### From the *Stupa* symbol to the rise of the image :

Early Buddhist monuments such as the works sponsored by Emperor Asoka, the *stupa* balustrades and gateways at Bharhut and Sanchi, the sculptures at Bodhgaya, Mathura and Bhaja bear positive proof of non-existence of any representation of Buddha in human form. The earliest Buddha figures so far known, hail from Gandhara and date from either the closing parts of the pre-Christian era or the beginning of the first century A.D. It is probable that Buddha in human figure had appeared for the first time in the sculptured panels showing stories from the life of Buddha at Gandhara. There was a strong inhibition against the realisation of the figure of Buddha in human form in Indian tradition for many centuries after Buddha. There have been several reasons advanced in explaining this phenomenon by scholars, none of which, however can be held as quite convincing.

The balustrades of the *stupa* at Bharhut bear representation of a number of male and female figures identified by accompanying inscribed labels as *Yakshas*, *Yakshinis*, *Nagas* and *Devatas*. Prof. J.N.Banerjee, depending on Jaina source had called those as *vyantaradevatas*, who according to him were held in worship by ordinary folks of people.<sup>8</sup> It is to be noted in this connection that though such *vyantara devatas* are found represented upon these balustrades, no Vedic deity has been found represented in the same way, as showing respect to Buddha, upon these Buddhist monuments. In every possibility, figures of such Vedic deities were not put in conographic form or worshipped as such by people pursuing the Vedic creed of performing *yajna* or sacrifices. It has been generally held that the worship of such *yakshas*, *nagas* and the like had been influenced by folks of non-Aryan or un-Aryan or pre-Aryan stock and bore evidence of 'contact of the Aryans with the previous settlers of India' as stated by Prof. Banerjee.<sup>9</sup> European

scholars had tried to establish that the Buddha image was brought into existence for the first time by artists in Gandhara under Graeco-Roman influence and this Buddha type had served as the model of Buddha images produced by artists in India. Coomaraswamy had, however, strongly argued that the Buddha figure in the Indian tradition had been modelled on *Yaksha* figures existing in Indian artistic tradition from a much earlier age. The strong sense of avoiding the display of the figures of Buddha in the anecdotal sculptures had held the ground for long as would be evident from the Buddhist monuments of the pre-Christian era. It was in the monuments of Amaravati region that the phenomenon of the appearance of the figure of Buddha in such panels dealing with the life of Buddha appears for the first time. However, here at Amaravati region also, in many of the panels dealing with the life of Buddha, the old tradition of non-representation of the figure of Buddha was followed. This region in Andhra country had become a centre of artistic activity already in the third or second century B.C. and this activity had continued to flourish here till the third-fourth century A.D. almost in a continuous stretch. In the style of modelling, physical features, grace and liveliness the art at Amaravati region stood significantly different from the art forms of other art centres like Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodhgaya, etc. However, in the figures of Buddha found here scholars have found influence from Gandhara and Mathura.

Without going into details about the stylistic peculiarities of the Buddha figure of the Amaravati school, certain matters may be taken into Amaravati art. Broadly speaking, as in the case of earlier monuments, here Amaravati art. Broadly speaking, as in case of the earlier monuments, here at Amaravati also, the *stupa* was held as the principal object of veneration as the living symbol of the ever existent presence of the Master. Mention has earlier been made of *Chetiya-vada* according to which sect a *chetiya* was to be worshipped with flowers, garlands and incense etc. Likewise as at Bharhut and Sanchi, the carvings upon the *stupas* here at Amaravati have numerous panels showing worship of *stupas* by devotees. There is no mention of *chaityavadins* at Bharhut and Sanchi but at Amaravati there is an inscriptional reference to *chaityavada*.<sup>10</sup> In Tibetan translation of a canonical book attributed to a noted monk named Bhavya there is mention of this sect of *chaityavada* being founded by a monk named Mahadeva. This sect was held as a branch of the celebrated Mahasanghika school which broke away from the orthodox *Theravada* school on principles of the true character of *Vinaya*. According to the *Mahaparinibbana Suttanta*, Buddha, before his decease had enjoined a *thupa* of the Tathagata to be erected at the crossing of four roads: 'whoever shall there place garlands or perfumes or paint or make salutation there shall be to them a source of *hita* and *sukha* (*hitaya sukhaya*)'.<sup>11</sup> According to *Suttanipata* commentary a *dhatughar* was a *chetiya* (*Dhatugharam katva chetiyam patitthapesun*). Thus a *stupa* became a receptacle of worship. Originally the body of the *stupa* was left in the form of a plain dome with the *harmika* and the *chhatra*, the *chhatra* being a symbol of the *Chakravartihood* of Buddha.

### Early sculptured panels :

At Vengi region there are *stupas* without any decoration. But some panels belonging to the pre-Christian era have representation of the *stupas* shown with snakes are shown as covering the *anda* of the dome. In one such panel showing a *Stupa*, dated by Coomaraswamy in the second or first century B.C., a snake having five hoods is shown represented as occupying a rectangular panel at the front while two human figures fitted with snake hoods upon their heads are found shown on two sides of this five-hood snake standing with folded hands in pose of worship (Coomaraswamy, HIIA, Pl. XXXIV, 146). Another similar panel has the representation of a bigger *stupa*, shown covered by a number of snakes entwining each other.<sup>12</sup> Here on either side of the *stupa* are shown quite a few human figures with similar snake hoods upon their heads, paying homage or bringing offerings and *puja*. Then, in a number of other panels showing representation of *stupa*, Buddha is found shown in human form, either seated or standing, often with ornamentations of very wide nature around. Of these panels, one may call for particular attention. In this panel, stated as a votive slab, upon the central position in the front of the *stupa*, a figure of Buddha is shown as standing in the *abhaya* pose, as if he has descended there from above. At a height on two sides of Buddha are shown two human figures and beneath the platform upon which he stands are also shown two figures in kneeling posture. On two sides of the enormously tall figure of Buddha are shown a male and a female figure with folded palms as if receiving the master with great devotion. The male figure here is shown with a big auriola of snake hoods behind his head while the female figure has one snake hood upon her head. The appearance of the figure of Buddha becomes almost a certainty in the front of the *stupa* onwards from this time as would be evident from the *stupas* found in the chaitya caves at Karle, Bedsa, Nasik, Ajanta, Ellora, Aurangabad and such other places. When the idea of devotion as such, commonly expressed by the word *bhakti* found admitted into the tradition of Buddhism cannot be said, though there had been very little scope for this phenomenon in a pursuit mainly based on wisdom and logic. Conservative *theravada* creed had never given any consideration to this cult of *bhakti* and the eight-fold path of ancient Buddhism bore no credence to devotion to Buddha as such. It was not probably before Buddhaghosha who flourished about the 5th century A.D. and lived in Sri Lanka, that the cred of *trisarana* or taking refuge in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha had come to be sanctified in the *Theravada* creed. But Buddha had come to be qualified as *Bhagavat* in the inscriptions associated with the *stupas* found at Bharhut and other places. The inscription found upon the relic casket found at Paiprawa also bears the qualifying word *Bhagava* before the name Sakyamuni (*Budhasa bhagavate sakiyanam*). This attitude of worshipfulness associated with the *Sarira-dhatu* of Buddha as can be inferred from the relic casket of Piprawa and the *chaityas* enshrining such reliquary had probably a definite

influence in bringing about the aspect of deification of Buddha and ultimately the realisation of the figure of Buddha as an image.

Now the question may be posed as to whether the image had preceded the emergence of Buddha figures to be put in the visual representation of the life stories of Buddha or such figures used in anecdotes were formulated earlier than the image. A study of the two types of figures would definitely show that the import of the two had been quite different in character and ideation. The image had a clear import of commanding veneration and worship while a figure shown in illustrations of the life stories had the bearing of a living being engaged in affairs of his many wanderings and involvement in many events. The figure found at Katra bearing an inscription qualifying the figure as that of a Bodhisattva and the figure found at Aniyor with the inscription stating this figure as that of Buddha would probably bear out the inhibition which had been operative in the realisation of the figure of Buddha as an image. In every possibility the visual form of Buddha represented as an image commanding worship had made its appearance for the first time upon a *stupa* as an ancillary of the relic or *sarira-dhatu* which was installed inside such *stupa*.

In this connection some reflections may be dwelt upon regarding the contribution of a group of people known as the *Nagas*. In the Indian tradition frequent mention is found of a people known as the *Nagas* from quite an early time. These people very probably came to be known as *Nagas* from their adherence to the cult of snake worship. The *Atharvaveda* has mention of a number of snake gods,<sup>13</sup> who are sometimes mentioned in this text along with *Gandharvas*, *Yakshas* (*Punyajanas*), *Pitris*, etc.<sup>14</sup> Here is also found mention of the name of *Airavata's* son *Dhritarashtra* who, according to the *Mahabharata*, was the best of the *Nagas*.<sup>15</sup> In the *Rigveda*, *Vritra* the formidable antagonist of Indra, the king of gods, had been mentioned as *Ahi* or a snake. In the *Grihyasutras* there is mention of snake worship as *Sarpabali*. Coming to the Buddhist tradition, mention is found about a tribe *Ahiraja-kulani* in the *Chullavagga*.<sup>16</sup> Here, four snake kings are named as Virupaksha, Erapatra (Elaputra), Chhabyaputra, and Kanthagotamaka.<sup>17</sup> There had been a very widespread distribution of these *Naga* people over the whole of India, and the cult of *Naga* worship was in a flourishing condition in different places from a very ancient time. From Mathura region have been recovered several figures bearing *Naga*-hood. One such figure found at Chargaon, five miles south of Mathura, is held as a typical cult object where a figure delineated in a vigorous gait is shown standing in front of a polycephalous serpent.<sup>18</sup> This *naga* figure, as well as a similar figure found from Kakargam<sup>18A</sup> have their right hands raised in *abhaya-mudra* pose. All these figures are attributable to early Kushana age revealing that Mathura had been a centre of *Naga* cult, probably from a much earlier age.

The *Vaishnava Puranas* have the legend of the Naga king *Kaliya* dominating over the region around the river Jamuna near Mathura. This *Kaliya* had been overwhelmed by Krishna during his childhood. Krishna after his being deified as *Narayana-Vishnu* came to be held as one and the same with the primeval serpent *Ananta* while *Balarama* also was held as an incarnation of this same serpent *Ananta* or *Sesha*.

In the balustrade of the stupa at Bharhut are found representations of several figures shown with snake hoods upon their heads. One of these figures is named by the accompanying inscription as *Nagaraja Chakovako* (*Chakravaka*) while in a sculptured panel there is a story represented in continuous narration about the Nagaraja named Elapatra, who got redeemed from a curse through the grace of Buddha. The accounts dealing with the life of Buddha have the story of how *Nagaraja Muchalinda* had spread his enormous hood upon Buddha to protect him from the great storm which had broken out after Buddha had obtained *Nirvana*. These accounts in the Buddhist sources and the representation of *Naga* figures with human body and snake hood upon their heads as showing their devotion to Buddha would undoubtedly reveal that quite some people of the *Naga* community had come under the influence of Buddhism. But among common people there was a general apprehension about the trickiness of the *Nagas* since they were believed to be capable of assuming human form at will though they were actually fearsome reptiles. That is why they were held in apprehension because of their superhuman powers. It is held in some Buddhist accounts that a candidate desirous of admission into the Buddhist order was often asked whether he was a naga or not.<sup>19</sup> Though there was such apprehension about the people known as *Nagas*, many celebrated adepts to Buddhism are known to have hailed from the *Naga* community. Of such celebrated *Naga* followers of the Creed, mention may be made of Nagasena who has been immortalised by the extremely reputed Buddhist text known as *Milindapanho*. The book has records of the very learned discussions which had transpired between the Indo-Greek ruler called Milinda (Minander - c.100 B.C.) and the Buddhist monk Nagasena whose exposition of Buddhist creed is acclaimed as of a very high order. In this discourse with Milinda, Nagasena had revealed his great wisdom and independent thinking. Regarding the worship of the relic (*Sarira-puja*) he is said to have observed that this was meant for the laity only, while the monks should rather practise "understanding and meditation".<sup>20</sup> The entire tenor of the discourse of Nagasena, delivered to meet the scepticism and doubts of his distinguished and learned disciple Milinda was imbued with deep confabulation of metaphysics not met with in the general types of Buddhist texts like the *Kathavatthu* where it had been stated that all legends about Buddha were heresay and Buddha had never existed in this world as a man.<sup>21</sup> Thus Buddha was raised to the status of a celestial sphere, and virtually held as deified. Nagasena's clear exposition regarding this

problem has been held as having a considerable importance in respect of the development of Buddhist philosophy.<sup>22</sup> The venue of this disputation as mentioned in the *Milindapanho* was at Sagala, modern Sialkot, one of the capitals of ancient Gandhara. Nothing is, however, known about where Nagasena hailed from. Gandhara itself was associated with *Naga* tradition; the Mahabharata has mention of Takshasila in Gandhara as the venue of the well known snake sacrifice. In historical times a *Naga* dynasty called the Sisunagas are known to have ruled in Magadha sometimes after the advent of Buddha. A powerful *Naga* dynasty had established itself in Padmavati (Paidaya near Gwalior) after the Kushanas while one of the Satavahana rulers, Satakarni I, known as a great conqueror had a queen named Nayanika or Naganika, apparently a daughter from a *Naga* family. The empire of the Satavahanas extended over wide areas including what are presently known as Naga-Vidarbha region and Nagpur area in Maharashtra. The famous city of Dhanakataka, modern Amaravati has been the capital of the Satavahanas, where Nayanika had exercised her power. The remains of the *stupas* and the wide range of Buddhist artistic remains from the area around Amaravati bear out very close association with a powerful *Naga* tradition that had been prevalent over this area. The human figures with naga hood upon their head at Bharhut would remind one of the association of the locality of Bharhut with *Naga* tradition having been known as Nagodh.<sup>23</sup> Similarly the name Nagarjunikonda in the Andhra area recalls the name of the celebrated Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna who is known to have been a founder of the *Mahayana* creed. Traditions hold close connection of the Satavahanas with the propagation of the *Mahayana* school. It is claimed that Buddha himself had predicted that "There will be a king named Satavahana in South India. When the Law is on the point of extinction -- he (Satavahana) will appear and propagate the Vaipulya-sutra of the Mahayana and will save the Law from extinction."<sup>24</sup> Apart from the *stupas* at Dhanyakataka (Amaravati) region, the caves at Karla, Nasik and the earlier *Chaitya* caves at Ajanta belonged to the period of the Satavahanas. Nagarjuna held as the founding mentor of the *Mahayana* school is known to have been a close friend of the Satavahana king, Gautamiputra Satakarni, to whom he had addressed an epistle named *Suhrillekha*.

It has already been shown earlier how the art at Dhanyakataka region reveals very close imprint of *Naga* tradition. The worship of stupa had been brought into being very probably by the foundation of *Chaityavada*, a school of the *Mahasanghikas*. Here at Amaravati region the representation of quite a few stupas are found as being guarded or intertwined by snakes. Finally appears, what may be held as the figure of the Buddha, which can be held as an image, occurring at the outset upon the body of the *stupa*. As a matter of fact the worship of the *sarira-dhatu* had the sanction of this creed, and since this *sarira-dhatu* was enshrined in *stupa*, such stupas came to be

held as objects of veneration. The image in itself had no sanctity as an object of veneration, but it was its association with the *stupa* that the image had come to earn its sanctity being held as an object of worship. Coomaraswamy had strongly pleaded about the origin of Buddha image from *Yaksha* figures depending on a study of the figures representing Yakshas found from Patna, Parkham, Gwalior and other places. Traditions hold that Asoka had entrusted a large number of *Yakshas* with the sacred remains of the master for erection of *stupas* enshrining those relics.<sup>25</sup>

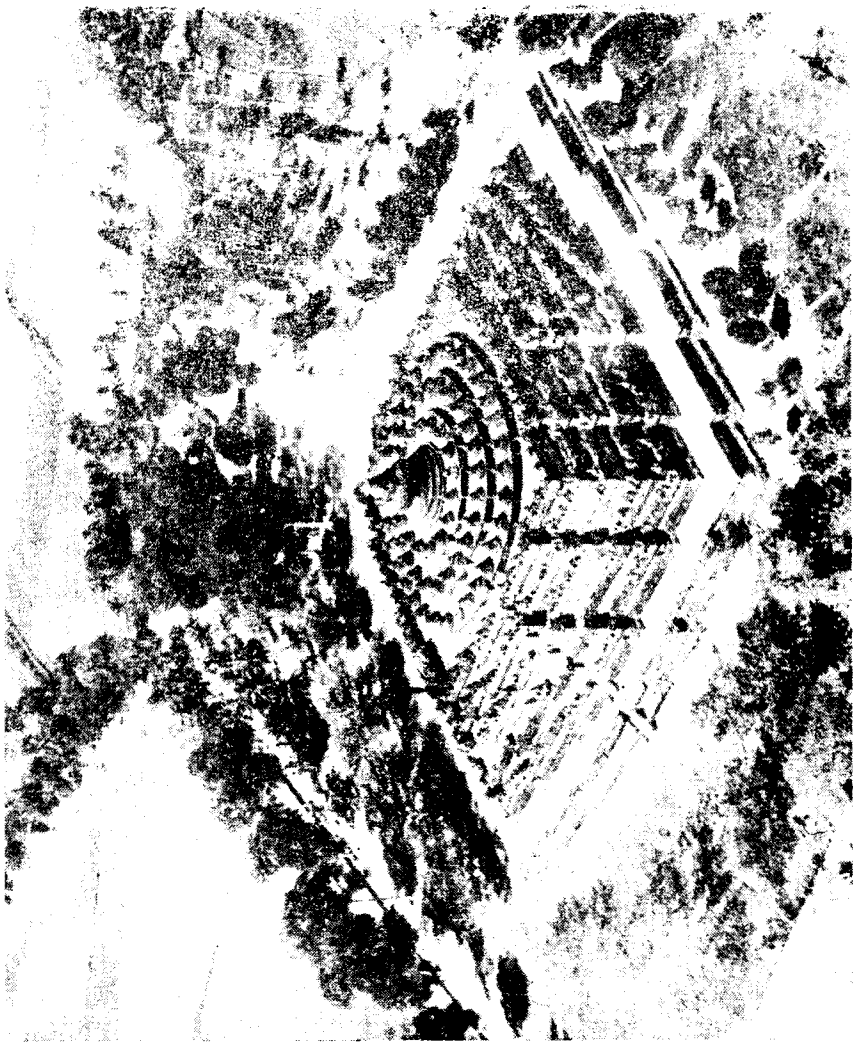
A sculptured medallion found at Amaravati bears representation of a small *stupa* installed upon a throne around which appear a throng of figures in poses of deep devotion and profound submission.<sup>26</sup> It is worthwhile to note in this representation that snake hoods are invariably to be found upon the heads of all the male and female figures shown around the throne, particularly a big police-phalious canopy behind the head of one having the most dignified appearance, shown standing with folded hands just behind the *stupa* bearing the throne. This representation showing worship of the *stupa* by people bearing *Naga* affiliation may be held as holding some close relationship with such panels where the *stupas* are shown as being protected by snakes and finally may be cited the case of the appearance of the image of the Buddha upon the body of the *stupa*, almost invariably shown as being flanked by couples with *Naga* hoods upon their heads. This aspect of veneration, an outcome of the cult of *bhakti* might have been a phenomenon developed by the community of people who had this *Naga* affiliation. In Brahmanical tradition the cult of *Bhakti* is found associated primarily with Vaishnavism in which tradition the god Narayana-Vishnu's connection with the serpent *Sesha* is well established. In case of the other most popular Brahmanical deity named Siva, the images of Siva are also always found represented with a snake hood upon his head. In the Jaina tradition the images of Parsanatha are invariably shown with a snake hood canopy. The earliest association of this attitude of *Bhakti* may be traced in a seal hailing from Mahenjo-daro in which is shown a male human figure shown seated in *yoga* pose upon a raised seat flanked by two persons on either side bent down on their knees in an attitude of supplication. The most interesting feature to be noted in regard of these two side figures happen to be the representation of two snakes holding their raised hoods upon the heads of these two persons on the two sides of the central figure, which can unmistakably be identified as an image.<sup>27</sup> A few similar seals showing the same scene have also been reported from Mohenjo-daro revealing the widespread distribution of the motif. No other artistic representation from Harappan sites reveal so clearly the idea of *bhakti* and worship of image as such and it may not be unreasonable to think that the cult of *bhakti* could have been conceived and promoted by people having *Naga* totem affiliation, as these scenes from Mohenjo-daro would strongly uphold.

The development of image and the worship of the same could have been a direct outcome of this cult of *bhakti* and it may be concluded that the image of Buddha could have been actually brought into being by the people of *Naga* tradition, who had taken to the cult of Buddha and had given a new turn to the creed under the dispensation of the famous saint Nagarjuna, the founder of the *Mahayana* creed. That is why such figures of Buddha, held as worthy of worship as images are to be found represented only upon *stupas* at the initial stage and are shown as being venerated and worshipped by persons shown with *Naga* hood upon their heads, indicating their *Naga* affiliation.

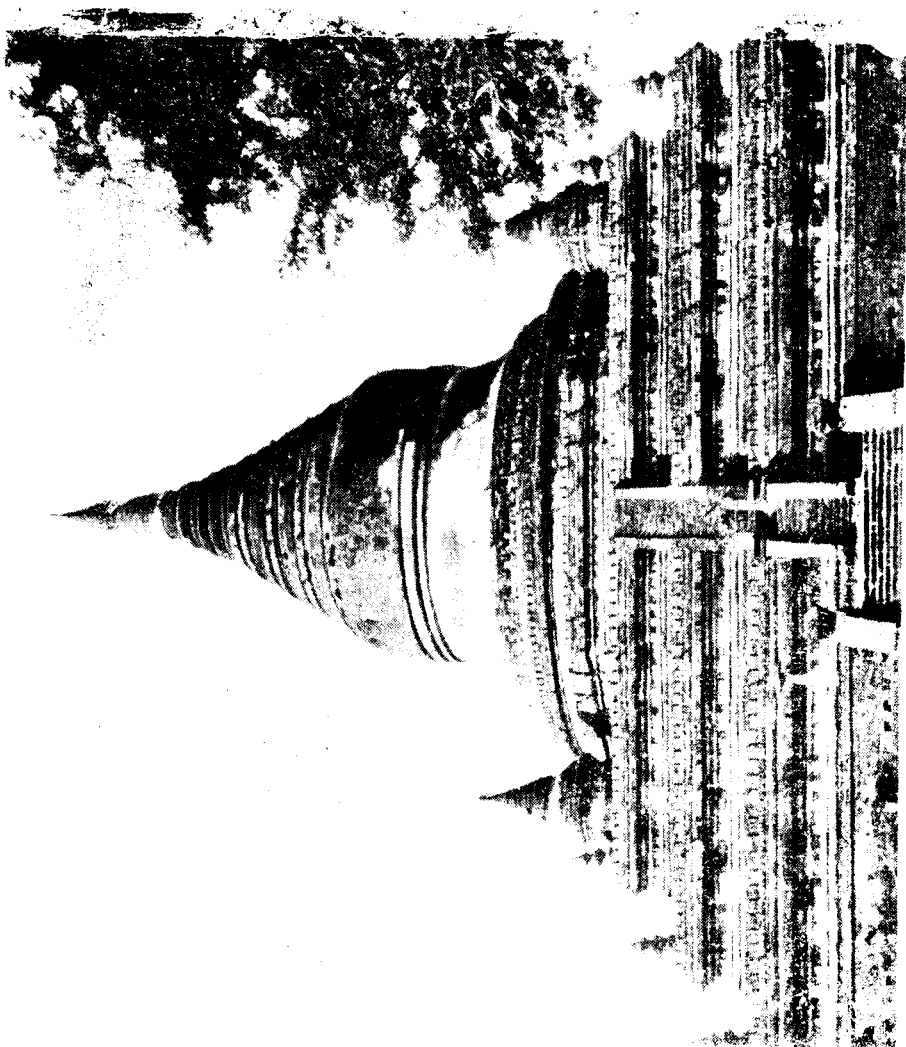
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MAIN STUPA : SANCHI



AIR VIEW OF BOROBUDUR : JAVA



MINGALAZEDI PAGODA : PAGAN, BURMA



SVAYAMBHUNATHA : NEPAL



CHORTEN : GYANTSE

# TIBETAN LAMAS IN WESTERN EYES

H.E. Richardson

The quiet competence with which many Tibetan exiles from their own land have found success in a new life in India, Europe and America is a fine example of their national resilience and initiative allied to a natural friendly charm and good manners.

That is no surprise to those who knew them in Tibet and I remember when Dr. David Snellgrove and I went in 1960 to discuss the future of the Tibetan refugees with the U.N. High Commission and were faced by a generally gloomy view that they would find it very difficult to adapt themselves to strange conditions, we vigorously maintained that, given a helping start, the Tibetans would rapidly do very well in their new surroundings.

Now among the many successful and popular figures in a variety of activities, there are many learned Lamas. Some have established teaching and meditation centres where they inspire their disciples by their dedicated sincerity and conviction. The most notable of the Lamas is, of course, the Dalai Lama.

On 17th March after two shells from Chinese batteries had fallen in the grounds of his summer palace when the hope of finding a peaceful outcome for the growing tension and hostility between Tibetans and Chinese had broken in violence, His Holiness left his capital secretly at night to seek refuge in India. A month later, after a journey full of danger and hardship, he arrived at Tezpur in Assam. Instead of the careworn exile some may have expected, the assembled pressmen saw a serene figure of great dignity and presence. He might have been a ruler secure in his throne paying a ceremonial visit; but behind the ease of manner and unfeigned friendliness many could perceive the spiritual depth which without affectation set the Dalai Lama apart from familiarity and made him effortlessly master of his surroundings.

There is beyond doubt something about a high lama that is outside the ordinary experience of our Western civilization. Even among the lesser lamas, of whom there were many, I found as well as calmness, benevolence, dignity and humour, the unfeigned certainty – so much part of the man that it would never occur to him to analyse or explain it – that he was not only the person we see but the same who had lived in the bodies of many predecessors. He is as sure of that as that he is himself. I shall not speculate

how that comes about: but now H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama has become an international figure, the friend of religious and political leaders all over the world but also accessible with direct simplicity to many thousands of ordinary people whom he influences by his teaching of peace, mutual understanding and goodwill. I am not going to attempt the impossible task of explaining him; charisma is not something to be put into words, only to be experienced in personal contact. What I set out to do is to recall how some earlier lamas, who were never seen outside Asia, appeared to the eyes of the rare western visitors who chanced to see them in the seven centuries or so preceding this.

The first foreigners to meet Tibetans were Franciscan friars in the 13th century, braving the arduous journey to the court of the Mongol Khans who took pleasure in assembling round them representatives of every available religion whose blessings they accepted, indeed demanded, indiscriminately. They also enjoyed hearing debates between champions of the different faiths. In 1254 William of Rubruck met at that court a red-robed Tibetan priest with whom he had a long conversation - in what language it is not specified - and from whom he acquired some ill-digested information. He also saw a ten-year old child-monk said to be a reincarnation of two predecessors. He took part in a debate with the Buddhists in which he claims to have triumphed. If the Tibetans were his opponents they probably enjoyed debating then as much as they do today and, in the end, it was they who won the Khan's favour. William brought to the west the first version of the six letter prayer which he represents as Om Mani Baccam. About half a century later another Franciscan, John of Montecorvino, was at the Mongol capital in Peking where he met a red-hatted "Tibetan" pope - the Grand Trutius, (perhaps the Tisri who was at that time Sa-skya Lama Ye-shes Rin-chen) but he has nothing significant to say about him.

Then and for many years to come, foreigners who came in touch with Tibetans were mainly missionaries and so, professional critics and rivals of Buddhism. Further, lack of a common language stood in the way of mutual understanding. An exception, at least to the extent that he was a layman, was Marco Polo who was in China and Mongolia some years before Montecorvino. It is not clear whether he actually spoke to a Tibetan but he has a good deal to say about the priesthood whom he describes in general as "idolaters" and "Baksi". He never uses the word lama but mentions some idolaters as leading an ascetic life in great monasteries where the monks were of a superior kind. Marco's chief interest was in the more spectacular activities of the Bakshis who were able to control the weather and to perform miracles such as raising the Khan's drinking cup from one place to appear on the table in front of him. These persons whom he describes as generally dirty and unkempt, resembling perhaps some types of modern *ngags-pa*, were also credited with good deeds such as persuading the Khan to make charitable donations to the poor.

After the fourteenth century there was a long interval before a further meeting between foreign missionaries and Tibetans; and the scene moved from the east to the western spheres of Tibetan influence when the Jesuit Antonio d'Andrade paid a short visit in 1624 to the kingdom of Tsaparang. His mission had been sparked off by a report from a Portuguese merchant Diogo d'Almeida who claimed to have lived two years in Tibet, perhaps Ladakh, and affirmed that there were traces of Christian practices in that country, among them a bishop called Lama. That appears to be the first mention of the word in the western vocabulary. Andrade won favour with the lay ruler of Tsaparang who pressed him to return, describing him in a letter as his Lama. Andrade did go back the following year and met many lamas with whom he could communicate after a fashion through one of them who spoke Hindi. But close relations or any real study of Tibetan religion were not possible because his patron, the king, was on very bad terms with his priesthood who before long brought about his fall; and with it the Christian mission too came to an end.

A nearly simultaneous Jesuit mission reached central Tibet by way of Bhutan under fathers Cacella and Cabral. In Bhutan they saw the great reverence in which the Dharma Raja - the Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che - was held and the great state in which he lived but they were still seeking for traces of Christian practice and did not get the least idea of Tibetan religious beliefs. When they went on to Shigatse they became, like the Jesuits in Tsaparang, involved in rivalry between their protector the lay king and the lamas of differing sects, and learnt little more about Lamas and their ways except that they gradually perceived that they were not relics of past Christianity. Moreover they did not display the bigotry of another pair of Jesuits, Grueber and D'Orville, travelling from China to India who were the first foreigners to see Lhasa. They declined to seek a meeting with the Dalai Lama, describing him as "that devilish god the father who puts to death those who refuse to adore him". Doubtless he kept that ungracious thought to himself at that time for he admits that they were treated with great kindness by the Dalai Lama's own brother.

At last, in the early years of the 18th century there came to Lhasa the first foreigner to acquire a sound knowledge of Tibetan and an insight into Tibetan thought and learning. It is difficult to exaggerate the greatness of Ippolito Desideri and impossible in a few words to summarize his achievement. On his arrival at Lhasa in 1716 he was graciously received by the actual ruler, Latzang Khan. Within nine months he had learned enough Tibetan to write, in traditional verse-form, an exposition of Christian doctrine which he presented to the King and which created a great stir of interest. The King arranged for him to continue his studies first in Ramoche and later in Sera where he was allowed to celebrate mass for himself. His command of Tibetan led to many discussions with learned lamas and he was engaged on

composing a refutation of Buddhism when his studies were interrupted by the Dzungar invasion. The work, sadly now lost, was completed just before he had to leave Tibet in 1721. Later he wrote a careful account of Tibet, its people, customs, administration and, of course, its religion. In general he shows a respect for the institutions and conduct of the lamas and monks; and he found, as has been agreed many times since, that there is much in common in the moral principles and aims of both faiths; but his Christian beliefs made him denounce some aspects of Tibetan Buddhism as idolatrous and abominable. The sticking points then as later were Tibetan denial of a God and their doctrine of transmigration. Although he knew many lamas and had one special favourite who taught him Tibetan, he paints no picture of the character and personality of any of them; it is only of his patron Latzang Khan, to whom he was much indebted and whom he obviously liked, that he gives any personal description.,

He records the amazing veneration accorded to the Dalai Lama and to other lamas too: "would to God", he says "that Christian Catholics showed one-hundredth part of such sentiments to ... Religious of our Holy Church". And having seen the devotion of the common people to "Urgyen" which made them ready to sacrifice everything they had rather than give up their faith in him Desideri comments "I confess I blamed myself and was ashamed to have a heart so hard that I did not honour, love and serve Jesus, sole Master, sole and true Redeemer, as this people did a traitor and deceiver".

Desideri's view of reincarnating lamas carries Christian logic to a conclusion which modern readers may find an excess of dogma. He was impressed by the recognition of past possessions and associates and by the claims by newly discovered lamas to remember past existences and he rejects the idea that this is simply due to deceit and collusion; so, since it cannot be the work of God, it must be that of the Devil. But his careful examination of other Tibetan religious doctrines is generally impartial and acute.

The Capuchin missionaries who briefly preceded Desideri and continued after his departure until 1745, like him, enjoyed the protection and friendship especially of the lay chief administrator, Pholha Miwang, and also of the Dalai Lama and other monks. But they had no one of the calibre of Desideri among them and although several of them must have acquired the rudiments of Tibetan, only one, the gentle, devout, Orazio Della Penna is said to have been fully proficient in the language. They had many close acquaintances among the lamas with whom they held lengthy discussions; and they met the VIIth Dalai Lama on several occasions. They seem to have been more concerned with preaching their own beliefs than with attempting to understand those of the Tibetans and some of their letters show an

amusing naivety. They claim to have proved in argument with learned lamas that the Buddha was neither a deity nor a saint, that it was no sin to kill animals, and that the lamas with whom they were debating could not possibly be reincarnations. The lamas listened attentively. Orazio himself presented the Dalai Lama with a copy of his work refuting Buddhism. The Lama accepted it with interest and politely advised Orazio not to condemn the religion of other people. Nevertheless, one of the Capuchins reported that the Dalai Lama was teetering on the verge of conversion. All such optimism came to an abrupt end when a handful of lowly Tibetans whom they had converted were persuaded to disown their loyalty to the Dalai Lama. After being given every opportunity to recant, they received a comparatively mild flogging of twenty strokes and the fathers who tried to intercede were told by their patron Pholha Miwang that they should not interfere with the faith of other people, adding "we do not do so". After a short time when Pho Lha and the Dalai Lama declined to receive them, they were once more granted audience and were treated with the customary kindness but it was made clear that their actions were, in Tibetan eyes, an unworthy and discourteous return for years of tolerant hospitality. That was in effect the end for the Capuchin fathers and for a permanent Christian mission in Central Tibet. Dispirited and out of funds, the good Orazio Della Penna, who had been for twenty two years in Tibet, left Lhasa in April 1745 only to die of weariness and sorrow at the age of sixty five soon after his arrival in Nepal.

Nearly thirty years later there was a mission of quite a different sort when Warren Hastings despatched George Bogle as his envoy to Tashilhunpo with the aim of encouraging friendship and commerce between India and Tibet. Bogle, an intelligent, observant and cheerfully sociable Scot, was singularly fortunate to meet in the person of the Third Panchen Lama the most powerful and popular figure in Tibet at the time and he has left the first lively description of a great Lama as a warm human personality as well as a charismatic leader.

On his first receptions at Tashirabgye Bogle was charmed by the engaging manner of the Lama and thereafter for the best part of five months was frequently in his company and in that of his hospitable, light-hearted family. The Lama clearly enjoyed Bogle's presence and treated him with the greatest consideration, sending dress and food to make his stay more comfortable. Bogle attended the Lama on his journey to Tashilhunpo, at formal reception and at religious ceremonies; and, more important, he had about thirty private meetings when the Lama who had a fair knowledge of Hindi, received him with friendly informality, spoke freely about all aspects of the political situation and approved of Bogle's hopes of closer relations between India and Tibet. Bogle was regularly invited to religious services and, from courtesy and in the interest of occupying his time, he always attended. He has described well enough what he saw of temples, services

and so on but shows no real interest in the meaning of it all and on the one occasion when the Panchen initiated a conversation about religion Bogle seems to have absorbed little of his explanation of Buddhist doctrines and, on his part, made it clear that he was no missionary with an evangelistic axe to grind, and was politely vague and non-committal in his interpretation of Christian tenets. They came to the usual agreement that the moral aims of their faiths were similar.

His close acquaintance with his host moved Bogle to admiration, respect and affection. He wrote :

"His disposition is open, candid, and generous. He is extremely merry and entertaining in conversation and tells a pleasant story with a great deal of humour and action. I endeavoured to find out, in his character, those defects which are inseparable from humanity, but he is so universally beloved that I had no success and not a man could find in his heart to speak ill of him."

He has much more to say about his gentleness, his preference for conciliation, his diplomatic sagacity, and of the profound veneration and devotion in which he was held; and, in general he says "I never knew a man for whom on so short acquaintance I had half the heart's liking".

No foreigner has lived on terms of closer confidence and intimacy with a Great Lama; and Bogle parted from the Panchen, his family, Tibet and its people, with genuine sadness. Later, writing to his sister, he regrets the absence of his friend the "Teshu Lama" for whom I have a hearty liking and could be happy again to have his fat hand on my head".

Bogle may not have achieved any great practical success but he had paved the way for future friendly relations and Hastings determined to follow this up by another mission. Sadly the Panchen and Bogle were not to meet again; the former died in China in 1780 and Bogle a year later in Calcutta.

So, the next envoy to Tashilhunpo, in 1783, was Captain Samuel Turner, an English officer in the East India Company's army. Hastings was good at choosing men and Turner like Bogle was able, observant and intelligent, also he was patient and able to get on well with Tibetans but from the rather formal language of his account he seems to have lacked Bogle's warm spontaneity and sense of fun, and he did not have Bogle's advantage in meeting any figure comparable to the Third Panchen Lama for at his visit the new reincarnation was only eighteen months old; but he has left, in the

rather staid language of the eighteenth century, an enchanting account of his reception by the child:

"The Lama's eyes were scarcely ever turned from us and when our cups of tea were empty he appeared uneasy, throwing back his head and contracting the skin of his brow, and continued to make a noise, for he could not speak, until they were filled again. He took some sugar out of a golden cup ... and stretching out his arm made a motion to his attendants to give it to me". Turner then addressed the child briefly for "it was hinted that notwithstanding he is unable to reply, it is not to be inferred that he cannot understand". During Turner's speech "The little creature turned, looking steadfastly towards me, with the appearance of much attention while I spoke, and nodded with repeated but slow movements of his head, as though he understood and appreciated every word but could not utter a reply. His parents who stood by all the time eyed their son with a look of affection and a smile expressive of heartfelt joy at the propriety of the young Lama's conduct. His whole attention was directed toward us; he was silent and sedate, never once looking towards his parents, as if under their influence at any time; and with whatsoever pains, his manners may have been so correctly formed, I must own that his behaviour, on this occasion, appeared perfectly natural and spontaneous, and not directed by any external action, or sign of authority"

The child, Bstan-pa'i Nyi-ma, grew up to be a personage of almost equal importance to his predecessor, Bogle's friend, and lived to the age of seventy three.

The promising start to relations between India and Tibet was stultified by the closing of the country after the Gorkha invasion in 1792, and it was left to Thomas Manning, a sensitive, intellectual, English eccentric to find his own way to Lhasa in 1811, apparently without serious obstruction. Manning was a friend of Charles Lamb who was fascinated by his "incomparable genius, congenial nature, sparkling eccentricity and addiction to occasional levity"; he was also a considerable linguist who became specially attracted to China and having mastered the language and manners, wanted to travel in remote parts. He arrived at Calcutta in Chinese dress which did little to disguise his nationality, and with a Chinese servant and the help of Chinese living in Tibet, he found his way through Bhutan to Lhasa. His fragmentary diary, though containing several significant observations, is largely given up to the discomforts of the journey. At Lhasa he paid his respects to the Chinese Amban and seems to have received official hospitality from the Tibetans, apparently in his role as a foreign physician. He had no difficulty in securing audience of the Ninth Dalai Lama, Lung-rtogs rgya-mtsho. At his reception Manning prostrated himself three times and offered a scarf and presents. His

account is another classic : 'The Lama's beautiful and interesting face engrossed almost all my attention. He was at the time about seven years old (actually, he was just six); had the simple, unaffected manners of a well-educated princely child. His face was, I thought, poetically and affectingly beautiful. He was of a gay and cheerful disposition; his beautiful mouth perpetually unbending into a graceful smile, which illuminated his whole countenance. Sometimes, particularly when he had looked at me, his smile almost approached to a gentle laugh. No doubt my grim beard and spectacles somewhat excited his risibility". There was an exchange of formal questions and compliments before Manning withdrew. He says: "I was extremely affected by this interview with the Lama. I could have wept through strangeness of sensation. I was absorbed in reflections when I got home". He paid five more visits to the Lama but has left no detailed comment on those occasions.

In 1845/46 missionaries appeared once more at Lhasa. The Lazarist fathers, Evariste Huc and Joseph Gabet had set out in 1844 from the borders of China, north of Peking, on instructions from the Pope to survey the mission field in Mongolia. A long journey brought them at the end of 1845, by way of Nagchukha to Lhasa where they were received kindly by the Tibetans but with suspicious hostility by the Chinese Amban who evicted them after about three months and compelled them to return eastwards through Tibet instead of proceeding by the short journey to India. During their stay, like all missionaries before them, they received the patronage of the lay authority, in this case the senior minister, Shatra, whom they wrongly describe as the Regent. They were allowed to make a chapel and preach their faith and they had the usual anodyne discussions about religion with Shatra and a few monks. Owing to a smallpox scare they were unable to meet the Dalai Lama, Mkha's-grub rgya-mtsho, who was then about eight years old, and have little to say about him as a person. But they were much impressed by what they heard of the Panchen Lama, the same whom Turner had met in 1784, now sixty-five years old, a figure of majestic presence with a great reputation for sanctity and learning. He had also acted as Regent for eight months from September 1844 to May 1845. Petech appears to state that he remained at Lhasa until about September 1846 but this seems improbable for the missionaries evidently did not meet him but were advised to go to Tashilhunpo to do so, which they were unable to do.

After the Lazarists the age of explorers and adventurers in the competition to be first into Lhasa, set in. The arrogant bullying and not infrequent deceit by some of these travellers did nothing to enhance the reputation of foreigners in Tibetan eyes. They met few Tibetans of any standing, had no common language and were generally more interested in the topography than the people.

It was not until the mould of exclusion was broken by the rough wooing of the Younghusband expedition that a Great Lama was seen again by foreigners. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama after his enforced flight to China was met by the American diplomat W.W. Rockhill who spent a week with him at Wu-tai shan. He comments on the Lama's undoubted intelligence and ability, great natural dignity, quick temper but kindly cheerfulness; his thoughtfulness and courtesy as a host. He also describes his personal appearance in considerable detail. The Vicomte D'Ollonne also met the Dalai Lama at Wu-tai shan for a short rather formal visit from which he got an impression of the Lama as a statesman and man of action. Later, the friend of longest standing and closest intimacy was Sir Charles Bell who looked after the Dalai Lama when he took refuge in India in 1910 and was in constant contact with him when he was invited to Lhasa in 1921. Bell has written about the Dalai Lama with deep affection and respect in 'Portrait of the Dalai Lama', which I cannot attempt to summarize: enough to quote him that the Dalai Lama and he were "men of like minds". From Bell's account the powerful personality of the Lama emerges clearly but it is as a strong-minded man of action and administrative ability and political interests rather than of deep spirituality and that is the impression conveyed not only by Rockhill and D'Ollonne but also by the Japanese Kawaguchi and by Political Officers who visited Lhasa after Bell until the death of the Dalai Lama in 1933. He was nevertheless profoundly learned in Buddhist doctrine but apparently in an intellectual way and he was eager in his position as head of the church to see that the standard of teaching and achievement in religious studies was improved.

By contrast, his contemporary the Sixth Panchen Lama impressed all who met him by his gentleness and spirituality. Sir Frederick O'Connor, who was fluent in Tibetan, enjoyed a warm friendship with him beginning with visits to Tashilhunpo in 1904 and 1905; he later accompanied the Lama on his visit to India. O'Connor tells a pleasant story that on their first meeting, the Panchen Lama, referring, without the need of explanation, to the visits of Bogle and Turner to two of his predecessors, expressed his pleasure at meeting British officers "again" and recalling the happy relations he had had with them. He also showed O'Connor a number of presents - watches, china, silver and so on - received on those early occasions. O'Connor writes with affection of the gentle and saintly character of the Lama and the love and reverence of his people towards him. Unfortunately he was drawn innocently into a short-lived plan in which O'Connor, perhaps carried away by his admiration for the Lama, sought to set him up as a substitute for the absent Dalai Lama. This had tragic consequences for the Panchen Lama who was to end his life in exile, and for the peace of Tibet. Sir Charles Bell wrote of him: "Truly the Tashi Lama has a wonderful personality. Somewhat short in stature, with a fair and healthy complexion, the smile with which he regards you is touched with the quiet saintliness of one who prays and works

for all mankind, but it is at the same time the smile of a friend who takes a personal and sympathetic interest in your own concerns. It is not surprising that he should be loved by his people. It is good that there is such a man in Tibet; it is good that there are such men in the world". The great explorer Sven Hedin described him in even more enthusiastic terms: "Wonderful, never to be forgotten, incomparable Tashi Lama", and related the deep impression made by his calm, dignity and courtesy and his wide humanity: "Extraordinary, unique, incomparable !"

The participation of the Panchen Lama, whether willingly or not, in political matters beginning with the plans of Frederick O'Connor and continuing through his enmeshment in Chinese designs on Tibet since his flight from Tibet in 1926 until his death in 1937 are a sadly uncharacteristic story. And the involvement of the two Great Lamas in international politics to some extent robbed them of their remote mystery but, although there remained an aura of spirituality it made them more credible human beings.

Today the balance has changed. The present Panchen Lama is something of an enigma. In the early days of the Tibetan tragedy he appeared as the political creature and puppet of the Chinese; and contentious and offensive words were put into his mouth. But people who have met him lately emphasize that when he is able to speak for himself he is a true Tibetan and Buddhist.

The Dalai Lama - Chos-srid gnyis-ldan, Master of Religion and State - is inevitably and deeply concerned with the politics of his country and when he speaks of them, which he does mainly on special occasions and when he is specifically asked about them, he makes his views and meaning clear but in balanced and temperate language. In his daily life and in his public utterances politics are subordinated to his deep, innate feeling for religion, and the good of all beings. His radiant, generous spirituality in all he says has restored the mystique of the incarnate Lama underlying his warm humanity and approachability.

As I have said charisma is not to be described. I make no further attempt to do so and will only add my twentieth century workaday account of a child Lama to the incomparable descriptions by Turner and Manning.

On 6th October 1939 the whole population of Lhasa, so it seemed, had congregated in bright cool autumn weather on the plain below Rikya monastery some two miles from Lhasa, where a great camp had been ornamented with auspicious designs in blue, sheltered the tent proper, the roof of which was even more splendidly decorated with religious symbols in gold, red and blue and with golden peacock figures perched on the roof

pole. The front was open showing the inner walls lined with splendid gold, red and blue brocade hangings and with bright banners hanging from the supporting poles. In the centre stood the tall throne of the Dalai Lama, covered in patterned gold and red brocade. There was a lower throne at one side for the Regent. The crowd waited in tense excitement which was heightened when the band of the Dalai Lama's bodyguard, which had gone out to meet him, was heard in the distance; and soon in a cloud of dust and of incense smoke from burners all along the route, the first banners of the procession came in sight. Long trumpets sounded from the monastery above and the crowd pressed forward eagerly. A small troop of Chinese soldiers in dusty quilted clothes came first at a quick pace and then a long line of mounted men, carriers of banners and symbols, and then the whole body of Tibetan officials in ascending importance in magnificent brocades and white or crimson topped hats. At last in the centre of the cavalcade we saw a small carrying chair draped in yellow silk, and through the glass window the face of the little Dalai Lama could be seen looking calmly but curiously at the mass of people prostrating themselves by the roadside, many weeping with joy. The procession moved at a rapid pace up the hill to the monastery where the child was to have a short rest and change his clothes. Soon he was carried down the winding path in the large gilded state palanquin with eight bearers in yellow silk and red tasselled hats. The whole official body accompanied him into the camp to the Peacock Tent where he was lifted on to the throne by his Lord Chamberlain. Everyone then took their proper places in the enclosure and we members of the British Mission and those of the Nepalese and Chinese, were led to our seats. Ours were just in front of the Dalai Lama's father, mother and family. The Regent opened proceedings by prostrating three times before the Dalai Lama and then offering him a scarf; after which the officials began to file past to offer white scarves and receive the blessing. The child, wearing yellow brocade and a yellow, peaked hat with a fur brim sat quietly and with great dignity, completely at ease in these strange surroundings, giving the proper blessing to each person, with both hands or one, or with a tassel on the end of a rod, according to their rank. He looked often in our direction, partly because we were so near to his parents but also it seemed, fascinated by our unfamiliar appearance; and when our turn came to offer our scarves he was smiling broadly and as I bent down for his blessing he took a pull at my hair. But a greater centre of amusement and interest were the rosy face and fair hair of Reginald Fox, the Mission Radio Officer; the Dalai Lama felt his hair for quite a long time. After us the stream of worshippers continued to flow for over an hour until at last tea in a golden tea-pot studded with turquoise was brought in; the tea was first tasted formally by a high official then poured into a jade cup and offered to the Dalai Lama. He was then lifted down and carried back in state up to the monastery.

Although not surprisingly he **seemed** a little tired at the end of the **long day** his behaviour through the whole ceremony was movingly **impressive**. He maintained a calm and interested appearance and a look of happy benevolence. The rapt devotion of the Tibetan crowd could almost be felt and all of us like Manning experienced "the strangeness of sensation".

Later, Sir Basil Gould came to Lhasa for the installation ceremony. By then I had left Lhasa but Gould has left a very full account of the story of the discovery and recognition of the child as well as of the enthronement. He tells of his receptions by the Dalai Lama, describing his steady gaze and absorption in what was going on, and using the language of Isaiah "Unto us a child is born".

When I returned to Lhasa in 1944 and on many later occasions, I was formally received by the Dalai Lama and never failed to be impressed, as he grew up, by his composure, his self-possession and his look of kindly interest. As he was a minor all my time in Tibet and state affairs **were** conducted by the Regent, I never had an opportunity to meet and talk to him privately. During much of that time my friend Heinrich Harrer **was** frequently in contact with the Dalai Lama whose curiosity about the **outside** world and things mechanical he was able to satisfy in many ways. Harrer has told his remarkable story in 'Seven Years in Tibet'. I was fortunate in being able to exchange, through him, messages with the Dalai Lama to whom I used to send cinema films, illustrated magazines and books, and flowers from our garden. But it was only after he had reached safety in India that I was able to meet him personally on several occasions, first at Mussoorie in 1960 and then at Dharamsala in 1961 when I was privileged to enjoy his hospitality at delightfully informal family lunch and dinner parties. At those meetings I could feel the immediate impact of his personality. Behind the simple often humorous friendliness of manner shone a transparent goodness, an inner peace devoid of hatred and a wide compassion not only for the pressing needs of his own people but for the wider troubles and cares of all humanity. That feeling perhaps developed even greater intensity in the travels he was later to undertake all over the world and in his meetings with leading religious and political figures in many countries.

For me, my experience in those meetings in India showed that "His Holiness" was not merely a title but a reality.

# A NOTE ON ATĪŚA DĪPAṆKARA, DHARMAKĪRTI AND THE GEOGRAPHICAL PERSONALITY OF SUVARṆADVĪPA

H.B. Sarkar

In a recent paper published by Helmut Eimer in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Vol. XXVII, no. 4, on "Life and activities of Atīśa", the writer suggested (p.8) that Atīśa might have met Dharmakīrti in Bodh Gaya or some monastery and that the account of Atīśa's sojourn in Suvarṇadvīpa has not yet been confirmed. The learned Director of the Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology having invited my comments to these two points, I wish to discuss them below but in a larger context, so that I may also present my current thinking in a somewhat newer orientation.

## I

Atīśa's meeting with his future guru Dharmakīrti of Suvarṇadvīpa at Bodh Gaya or some monastery is apparently based upon a Tibetan tradition of legendary character, one of which has been translated by S.C.Das in *JBTSI*, i, pp. 8-9. It refers to the congregation of outstanding scholars of the Buddhist world at Vajrāsana, i.e. Bodh Gaya. At this congregation, the great Ācārya Mahā Śrī Ratna was present. According to the same tradition, Lama gSer-gling-pa, the future teacher of Atīśa was also present there and he attached himself to the great ācārya for sometime. He was given the title of Dharmakīrti by this guru. It is not easy to determine the date of this congregation. There are however two considerations which make it likely that Atīśa and Dharmakīrti might have met at Bodh Gaya or at some monastery. First Dharmakīrti is reported to have stayed in India for several years to study the Law and during this time he might have visited the famous sacred places of the Buddhist world like Bodh Gayā, Rājagṛha, Nālandā and Vikramśīlā. Second, Atīśa is also reported to have studied the Law at Nālandā, Rājagṛha, Vikramśīlā, completing his studies at Maṭi Vihāra in Bodh Gayā. So it is not unlikely that Atīśa and his future guru might have met each other in one of these centres of learning, but at present there is no trustworthy document anywhere to authenticate this point, as far as my information goes.

## II

The question of the geographical identity of Suvarṇadvīpa is however much more important and complex than the points discussed above. Unfortunately all previous authors including the present writer, have followed S. Lévi in regard to the identity of Suvarṇadvīpa in his famous article "Ptolémée, le Niddesa et la Brhatkathā" published in *Etudes Asiatiques*, t.II, 1925 pp. 1-55 and 431-2. Research during the last fifty years or so convinced me that the paper had become obsolete in some major respects and was rather creating anomalies in the progress of research. I discussed these difficulties in a paper entitled, "A geographical introduction to South-East Asia: The Indian perspective," which was published in the *Bijdragen (Bki) of the Royal Institute*, Leiden, the Netherlands, vol. 137 (1981) pp. 293-324. In that paper, I have shown that Suvarṇabhūmi and Suvarṇadvīpa are two distinct geographical entities. Of these two, the former refers to lower Burma. I also pointed out in the same connexion that the geographical entity known as Suvarṇadvīpa did not figure at all in any authentic text prior to the date of the Nālandā Charter of king Devapāladeva of the Pāla dynasty. Further researches have led me to the conclusion that Sumatra was merely a segment of the much bigger geographical entity called Suvarṇadvīpa. As the date of the Nālandā Charter and the significance of what is Suvarṇadvīpa have very often been confused, these have led to the distortion of the history of the Malayo-Indonesian world also in some major respects. This distortion needs rectification by authors dealing with the history of that part of the world. For this reason also the geographical personality of Suvarṇadvīpa should be better defined.

The above mentioned Nālandā Charter (*Ep. Ind.* XVII, pp. 322-24), which mentions king Bālaputradeva as a contemporary of Devapāladeva, was issued on the 21st day of the Kārtika in the 35th or 39th regnal year of king Devapāla. The reading of the second numeral in the regnal year was uncertain, but it has probably to be read as regnal year 35. Due to the discovery of some new epigraphs, D.C. Sircar, in his *Dynastic Accounts of the Pāla and Sena Epoch*, (in Bengali), 1982, pp. 12, 67 ff., revised the reign-period of Devapāla as being from AD. 810-847, that of Śūrapāla I from C. 847 to 860 and that of Vīgrahapāla from 860-861. So the date of the Nālandā Charter should be AD. 845. Many scholars, notably J.G.de Casparis, have placed date of the Nālandā Charter in C. 850 AD. in one place (*Pras. Ind.* I, p.97) and between AD. 860 and 870 in another (*Pras. Ind.* II, p. 297). The fixation of the latter date is absurd, as it unsettles the firm chronology of several dynasties of India. The date of the Nālandā Charter cannot therefore be latter than AD. 847, when Devapāladeva died. If this is admitted, the chronology of the later Śailendra monarchs of Java, the account of civil war propounded by de Caspairs and his theory about the flight of Bālaputradeva to Suvarṇadvīpa will prove to be somewhat illusory,

or at least would demand a fresh assessment. Since the grandfather of Bālaputradeva has been described in the Nālandā Charter as *Yavabhūmipālah* and Bālaputradeva has been described in contradistinction as "Suva (rṇa)-dvīpādhipa-ma(hā)rāja" in Verse 37, a difference in status between the two kings has been deliberately thrown in.

Let us now look for contemporary records to define the Geographical Personality of Suvarṇadvīpa. Fortunately for us, the Perso-Arabic travelogues for at least two centuries throw considerable light in the elucidation of his point. In the shorter text of the Ligor inscription found in Malaya and dated AD. 775, it was already stated of King Viṣṇu "that the selfsame (person) is known by the appellation of Śrī mahārāja because of the mention of his origin in the Śailendra dynasty." As a matter of fact, for a very long time thereafter, the designation mahārāja was applied only to the rulers of the maritime empire of the Śailendras, and later on, of Śrīvijaya. This vast empire figures in Arabic texts as Zābag (var. Jāvaka, Sāvaka), and ibn Khurdadhbch, writing in AD 844-48, said that the ruler of Zābag is king of the islands of the southern ocean and is called the mahārāja. As ibn Khurdadhbch and Bālaputradeva were contemporaneous, and the latter was ruler of Suvarṇadvīpa, it is obvious that Zābag of the Arabic text could only refer to Suvarṇadvīpa, but its headquarters were in Java where Bālaputradeva lived in AD 845. The position becomes clear from the statement of another author of a contemporary text (prior to AD 851), edited by Abu Zayd Hasan in C. 916 AD. We read there, "Kalāhbar (formed) part of the empire of Zābag, which is situated in the South of India. Kalāhbar and Zābag are governed by one king." Now, Abu Zayd Hasan has stated that the city of Zābag, whose circumference is 900 *parasangs* is ruled over by a king who "is known by the name of Mahārāja." We read further : "this king is in addition, the Sovereign of a great number of islands that extend for 1000 *parasangs* and even more. Among the states over which he ruled is the island called Sribuja, whose circumference is 400 *parasangs*, and the island Rami (Achin, north of Sumatra) ... Also part of the possession of the mahārāja is the maritime state of Kalāh, which is situated half-way between China, and Arabia ..... The authority of the mahārāja is felt in these islands." Here Sribuja has been shown as a segment of Zābag. Ferrand thought that Zābag referred to Sumatra, but Pelliot understood it in the sense of Java - Sumatra. It seems to have been a bigger geographical entity, because a little later Masūdi, who had visited both Zābag and China, wrote in C. 955 AD about "the kingdom of the mahārāja, king of the isles of Zābag and other isles in the sea of China, among which are Kalāh and Sribuja ... Voyaging in the most rapid vessel, one cannot go round all these isles in two years." Zābag is thus the metropolitan country, exercising authority in various degrees over many parts of Sumatra, Malaya and smaller isles all about. This is explicitly stated another part of his text which reads : "Zābag is the chief island of his kingdom and the seat of his empire."

Al-Bīrūnī, the greatest scholar of his age, wrote about Suvarṇadvīpa in the following terms (Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, i, p 210): "The eastern islands in this ocean, which are nearer to China than to India are the islands of Zābag called by Hindus Suvarṇadvīpa, i.e. the gold islands." The same idea is repeated in pt. II, p. 106 of the same text, but he was particular in distinguishing it from Suvarṇabhūmi, which he rightly placed in his classified list under : IX, as being in the north-east (aiśānya)" (of India). In this context, it should not be forgotten that Al-Bīrūnī and Aṭiśa Dipaṅkara were contemporaries. So, Tibetan MS-notions about Suvarṇadvīpa receive better precision in the writing of Al-Bīrūnī.

What all the relevant Arabic texts had not recorded specifically have been supplied by the *Kathāsaritsāgara* (C. 1060 AD.), in *taranga* 54, Verses 97 ff., where we read that Kalasa (n) was the capital of Suvarṇadvīpa. As the earliest reference to Kalasan in connexion with Tārā worship occurs in the Kalasan inscription of Java, dated AD. 778 and not long thereafter in the Sanskrit text called *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, dated C. 800 AD., this toponym could not have possibly been borrowed from the *Bṛhatkathā* of Guṇādhya, usually believed to be the source of the Kathā-text referred to above and placed in a date not later than the fifth century AD. (S.N.Dasgupta and S.K.De, *A History of Sanskrit Literature : classical period*, P. 696 and H.B.Sarkar in the *Bijdragen* article referred to earlier). As the East-West trade route passed by the maritime belt of Western India, particularly the Cambay region, traders of this region must have disseminated the information about the capital of Suvarṇadvīpa at Kalasa (n). It is also for this reason that I did not dismiss this information lightly, as it concerns a problem whose solution is not yet in sight.

When I visited Java in 1985, I had this problem in mind. The temple of Kalasan was a royal temple, established by rake Panangkaran (king Indra) with the assistance of "the Guru-s(preceptors) of the Śailendra king" (no. V in H.B.Sarkar, *Corpus of the Inscriptions of Java*, Vol. 1). As this was a royal-temple established by the royal preceptors, it stands to reason that the royal palace, according to Indian religious conception, could not be far off, as the members of the royal house-hold obviously worshipped here, irrespective of the change of dynasties among collateral branches. That struggles for power took place in its neighbourhood in subsequent times have been sought to be delineated by J.G.de Casparis in his *Prasasti Indonesia* II, pp. 244 ff., although I have reservations about the interpretation of the events.

The identification of the capital-city of Suvarṇadvīpa, having central authority over the loose segments of the confederation having thier respective zonal quarters, is as yet an unsolved problem, but it cannot escape one's attention that most of the durable archaeological treasures,

monumental and sculptural art are found only in the Southern half of central Java and not in any other part of Suvarṇadvīpa. As the founders of the Śrīvijayan kingdom in Sumatra were Sailendras from the start, as I have tried to prove elsewhere (vide my article 'Kings of Śrī Sailam and the foundation of the Sailendra dynasty of Indonesia' in the *Bijdragen*, 1985), there was nothing incongruous in their ruling over the isles of Suvarṇadvīpa from Kalasan, at least for a long time. It is indeed against human psychology to erect saga in stone in places where their founders do not live. Military and strategic needs might have compelled them occasionally to live in zonal headquarters for sometime and send missions therefrom to China, as classified dates on Ho-Ling and Śrīvijaya missions seem to at least, but this cannot be interpreted as the dismemberment of the empire of the mahārāja. A new investigation is no doubt needed to clear up all the issues involved in this context, but Ho-Ling seems to be no other than the central Javanese part of the Sailendra empire.

### III

After the discussion made above, it will be easier for us to take up the account of Atīśa Dipaṅkara and his *guru* who lived in the Śrīvijayan part of Suvarṇadvīpa. There are some references which have been noted by Alaka Chattopadhyaya in her work *Atīśa and Tibet*. In the *Abhisamaya-alamkāra-nāma prajñāpāramitā upadeśa-śāstra vṛttidurbodha-āloka-nāma-līkā* (A.C. l.c., p. 475), Colophon K makes it clear that it was composed by Ācārya Dharmakīrti of Suvarṇadvīpa in the tenth regnal year of Sri Cūḍāmaṇivarman of Suvarṇadvīpa from a place called Malayagiri in Vijayanagara. As Cūḍāmaṇivarman's successor Māravijayottuṅga Varman ascended the throne of Śrī Vijaya not later than AD 1008, the text in question could have been composed sometime before the death of the former. Here the geographical particulars are important. About the second text called *Bodhisattva caryāvatāra-piṇḍārtha* (A.C. l.c., p. 484), it has been stated that it was expounded at the request of Kamalarakṣita and Dipaṅkara Śrījñāna, who were students of their *guru* Dharmapāla of Suvarṇadvīpa. This *guru* is generally believed to be no other than Dharmakīrti himself. There are some other texts of similar nature, but they do not yield any new information. Taken together these and other Tibetan data seem to imply that Atīśa went to Suvarṇadvīpa at the age 31, studied there for twelve years - this is rather a stereotyped duration assigned to studentship in general, about which I am sceptical - in the place called Malaya-giri in Śrīvijaya.

The foundation of Śrīvijaya by the dispossessed scions of the Ikṣvāku dynasty took place sometime between AD. 300 and 392. (vide my article in the *Bijdragen*, 1985, pp. 323-38). The Malayalam-speaking people collaborated in the foundation of Śrīvijaya and they themselves seem to

have settled down at a place which came to be known as Malāyu, after the name of their home-country on the Malabar coast of Southern India. It is usually identified with modern Jambi on the northern coast of Sumatra. A bigger influx organised by Śrīvijaya strengthened the demography of the place between AD. 671 and 695. It gradually grew up in importance and its ruler sent a mission to China in 644 and again in 645.

In the days of I-tsing (AD. 671), there were more than 1000 Buddhist priests in the "fortified city of Bhoja". They were told, "study all the subjects that exist in the Madhyadeśa (India) ....." Pelliot thought that this Bhoja, i.e. Śrīvijaya was located at Palembang, a view I also share. It is very difficult to state why the Buddhist centre at Palembang declined and that at Malayu-Malayagiri prospered. Whatever be the reason, it saw its prosperity in the tenth century AD., at least in the reign of the Sailendra King Cūḍāmaṇivarma-deva in the last quarter of the tenth century AD. The name of Malaya as Malay-giri seems to be justified, as it is a hilly terrain.

Atisa came to Malaya in AD. 1012, when the previous king of Śrīvijaya had already died and after Māravijayottuṅgavarman had ascended the throne in AD 1008. No evidence is however available at present from the Indonesian side regarding the existence of the Buddhist University at Malaya in the beginning of the eleventh century or Atisa Dīpaṅkara's sojourn there for advanced studies in Buddhism.

A critical study of the progress of researches on Śrīvijaya up to 1979 had been furnished by O.W. Wolters in his "Studying Śrīvijaya", published in the *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 52 pt. 2, 1979, while a Bibliography on the same topic up to the same year has been furnished in the *Pra Seminar Penelitian Śrīvijaya*, published by the Pusat Penelitian Purabakala Dan Peninggalan Nasional, Jakarta, 1979. The latest authoritative discussion on Śrīvijaya and some other matters related to it is to be found in P. Wheatley, *Nāgara and Commandary University of Chicago*, 1983.



DIPĀNKARA ATISA

## NOTES & TOPICS

### STUPA SYMBOL

An authority on Buddhist as well as Hindu art forms, Kalyan Kumar Ganguli, in his article (Supra p p. 5 ff) states that the Stupa, as an object of veneration or a receptacle for relics, is anterior to the life and times of Buddha Sakyamuni. This is in accord with Tibetan tradition, which holds that there were several Tathagatas prior to Buddha Sakyamuni. Tibetan tradition also confirms Dr. Ganguli's opinion that Buddha in iconic form is later than Stupa for Buddha and that first Buddha image, in high or low relief, was on the body of the Stupa or railings around.

Stupa as a common feature of all schools and sects of Buddhism is admitted by scholars as well as believers. The five illustrations suffixed to the learned article attest this fact.

An article from Tibetan sources describing the five steps to Sumeru, the Mandala and other features as in Mahayana sources will be published in the Bulletin shortly.

Portable metal stupa, containing relics or some Mantra, has been a special feature of Tibetan Buddhism. Its popularity dates from the time of Atisa Dipankara whose baggages were only two, a metal Stupa with Buddha's relics and a basket containing a few sacred texts. This Stupa known as Kadam Chorten has special structural peculiarities. This will also be noticed in the scheduled article.

- NCS

### JAGANNATH UPADHYAYA

Professor Jagannath Upadhyaya, an authority on Mahayana and Northern Buddhism, and a member of the General Council of Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology passed away in September last. An obituary will be published in the next issue of the Bulletin.

- NCS



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