

## Maritime Buddhism FREE

Andrea Acri, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, PSL

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### Summary

The spread of Buddhism across Asia has been studied mainly from a perspective focusing on the transmission through the overland routes popularly known as “Silk Roads” and emphasizing Central Asia as an important transit corridor and contact zone between South and East Asia. However, recent scholarship has increasingly recognized the significant role played by the sea routes or maritime “Silk Roads” in shaping premodern intra-Asian connectivity. This has paved the way for an appreciation of the important contribution of the southern rim of Asia—especially South India, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia—to the genesis, transformation, and circulation of various forms of Buddhism.

Evidence of the long-distance transfer of Buddhism from its northeastern Indian cradle to the outlying regions of South India, Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, and China via the maritime routes goes back to the early centuries of the Current Era. From the 5th century onward, written and material vestiges from the southern rim of Asia became more substantial, testifying to an efflorescence of long-distance maritime contacts that were to last several centuries. As is shown by textual, epigraphic, and art historical materials—including icons, ritual accoutrements, *dhāraṇīs*, manuscripts, and monuments—Buddhist cults, imaginaries, and ritual technologies flourished across the vast swathe of littoral, island, and hinterland territory that can be conceptualized as the sociospatial grouping of “Maritime Asia.” Buddhist vestiges recovered from the Indian Subcontinent littorals, Sri Lanka, the Maldives Islands, peninsular and coastal mainland Southeast Asia, and what are now called the Indonesian Archipelago and the Philippine islands, speak in favor of the existence of pervasive and sustained multidirectional Buddhist exchanges among interconnected nodes linking South Asia and the Western Indian Ocean to China, Korea, and Japan through the maritime routes. A polycentric, geographically wide, and maritime-based approach is necessary to fully appreciate how religious, mercantile, and diplomatic networks acted as catalysts for transmission of Buddhism far and wide across Asia over nearly two millennia.

**Keywords:** Buddhism, Maritime Silk Roads, Maritime Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, Indian Ocean, Theravāda, Mahāyāna, Mantranaya, Esoteric Buddhism

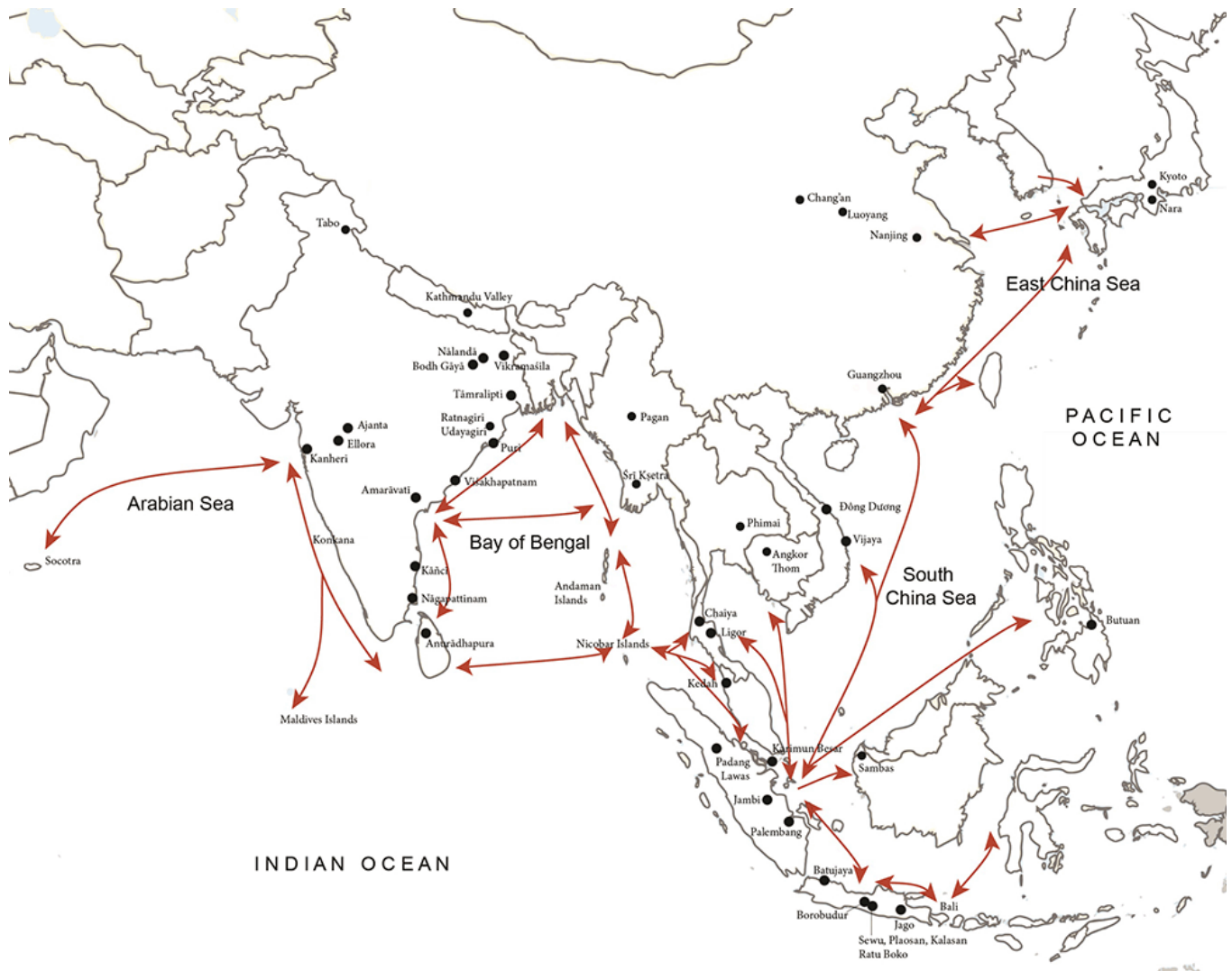
**Subjects:** Buddhism

## Maritime History and Networks of Intra-Asian Buddhist Transmission

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A new wave of scholarship on maritime history, Indian Ocean Studies, and global history has revealed how the mainstream historical discourse has tended to focus on predominantly land-based national trajectories and has adopted a wider, maritime-focused geographical approach. The maritime-focused approach helps make sense of complex circulatory phenomena that do not fit neatly within the boundaries of nation-states, let alone geographical areas divided according to the artificial boundaries drawn by the post-World War II Area Studies paradigm. Applying this perspective to Buddhist Studies, one can make an argument for the important and constitutive role played by the sea and the Southern Asian littoral and insular regions in the genesis and circulation of Buddhism across the sociospatial grouping or world region of Maritime Asia. This geographically wide perspective emphasizes the maritime interactions that occurred across geographical and cultural boundaries in the region comprised of a web of coastal and inland polities connected to each other through a network of cosmopolitan ports and entrepôts from the Bay of Bengal to the South and East China Seas in the course of several centuries. In so doing, it advances an alternative, and complementary, historical narrative that takes the “southern pathways,” that is, the sea-based networks, into due consideration, thereby revealing the limits of a historiography that is uniquely premised on land-based, “northern pathways” of transmission of Buddhism across the Eurasian landmass.

Making a case for a multicentric circulation of Buddhism rather than a monodirectional transmission from a South Asian “homeland” to Southeast and East Asian “peripheries,” recent scholarship has unveiled the multidirectional connections that exist between Buddhist centers, tied to each other by overlapping networks of relations that were religious as much as economic, diplomatic, and political in nature.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, to understand the establishment (and disruption) of complex networks, and to better grasp such a multifaceted, transregional phenomenon as the patterns of Buddhist transmission across Maritime Asia (see Figure 1), which was shaped by sociopolitical, economic, and perhaps even environmental factors, one may try to apply, as Jason Neelis did with respect to South, Central, and East Asia, a “networks approach” or “networks model.”<sup>2</sup> This approach individuates the nodes, conduits, and hubs that facilitated the dynamic processes of exchange, thus going beyond the metaphors of cultural “influences” that have so far characterized the scholarly discourse.



**Figure 1.** Buddhist sites and nodes across Maritime Asia, 500–1300 CE.

Source: Courtesy of Andrea Acri.

Undeniably, the overland and maritime “Silk Roads” were interlinked and complementary, forming what has been called a “great circle of Buddhism.”<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the combined archaeological and textual evidence increasingly points to a predominant role of the maritime Silk Roads in facilitating the mobility of Buddhist agents, artifacts, texts, and ideas over long distances from the early centuries of the first millennium CE—if not earlier, as testified to by the presence of Sri Lankan and Southeast Asian toponyms in the *Mahāniddesa* and some Jātakas dating to the late third–first centuries BCE. Sea travel was the fastest, most economical, and safest way to move people and goods in the ancient world. By the 2nd century CE, the seasonal monsoon winds were fully exploited by maritime traders plying the routes connecting the ports in the Mediterranean Sea with those along the coastal and insular areas of South, Southeast, and East Asia. The sea was a connecting factor in Asian history since time immemorial.<sup>4</sup> Cutting across the natural boundaries and barriers of continental topography, sea-based routes formed a network of conduits that led to the formation of a medieval global Buddhist Asia. By the middle of the 7th century CE, factors such as a radical

expansion of commercial maritime routes connecting South with East Asia, as well as the gradual decline of Buddhism and Buddhist exchanges in Central Asia following the Muslim conquest of Transoxiana and other sociopolitical contingencies, contributed significantly to the sea-based exchange not only of mercantile goods but also of Buddhist beliefs and ritual practices. Unlike the Central Asian networks, the interlocking maritime networks of Buddhism survived well past the 13th century into the 19th century—for instance, the Bay of Bengal circuit linking Sri Lanka to Myanmar and Thailand, and the China Sea circuit linking China to Southeast Asia, Korea, and Japan.<sup>5</sup>

## Buddhism and Maritime Trade

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### Monks, Traders, and Kings

Traditionally, emphasis has been laid on traders and merchant guilds as the original propagators of Buddhism from its early stage and as the main agents of disseminating Maritime Buddhism across Asia.<sup>6</sup> Early Buddhist literature is permeated by an imaginary, highlighting the important role of seafaring in the expansion of the dharma overseas: witness the many Jātakas—such as the *San̥kha*, *Suparaga*, and *Mahājānaka Jātakas*, among many others—containing references to merchants engaged in sea travel between port cities in India, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia.<sup>7</sup> Buddhist narratives of sea travel across the Bay of Bengal find a match in the available historical evidence. As suggested by the existence of monasteries near major commercial nodes and trading routes, the establishment of trade networks may have facilitated the spread of Buddhism as well as ensured its support by merchant communities. Buddhist sites in the Western Deccan, the Konkan coast, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu were strategically located in the vicinity of ports along the trade routes connecting the mainland to Sri Lanka and further afield to Southeast Asia. Buddhist vestiges, however scant, have been found in such remote insular locations as the Maldives Islands in the Indian Ocean and Socotra in the western Arabian Sea.<sup>8</sup> The widespread presence of maritime scenes of navigation and shipwreck—depicting sea travel in its political, spiritual, and economic ramifications—in sites located on/near the coast or along trading routes in South Asia, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia suggests that those scenes, rather than being purely symbolic and metaphysical representations of spiritual dangers, were linked to an actual imaginary.<sup>9</sup> This, in turn, testifies to the increasing popularity of maritime travel in Buddhist communities from the 6th century onward. The concurrent development in the same locales of “Savior Cults” focusing on the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara, Tārā (especially in her aspect of *aṣṭamahābhaya* or Protectress from the Eight Great Perils), and Mahāpratisarā as protectors of travelers (especially of sailors) against the perils encountered along their journeys may be due to the increasing number of merchants and monks plying the commercial routes.<sup>10</sup>

The vehicles of the monks’ sea passages were the merchant ships that plied the maritime routes connecting the Indian Ocean to the China Sea alongside their valuable cargos. These ships also carried pilgrims, diplomats, and, indeed, religious personalities of disparate

affiliations. The relationship between itinerant monks and seafaring traders may have been in many respects mutual: the monks provided (spi)ritual services to the lay community, whereas the traders ensured the sea passages of monks and their accoutrements, either directly or through donations or other forms of patronage. There is also evidence, however, of antagonistic encounters between Buddhist monks and merchants of various ethnicities and religious allegiances.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, while lay householders active in trade, crafts, and warfare decidedly played a role in patronizing and spreading Buddhism through pilgrimage, travel, or migration, the success of Buddhism overseas has been too often simplistically perceived as the unique result of economic and social forces connected to a mercantile class-ideology, characterized by an inherent dynamism and opposed to a “static” Brahmanism. In fact, itinerant Buddhist monks likely circulated along the same networks that were already plied by their Brahmanical competitors, who contributed to the spread of Hindu traditions, Sanskrit language, and other Indic cultural elements to Southeast Asia since the beginning of the Common Era. It is also a fact that many of the most prominent Buddhist monks and intellectuals from the 5th century onward were themselves (ex-)Brahmins. Some biographies tended to suspiciously attribute a Brahmanical pedigree to high-ranking monks traveling to China, thereby suggesting that their descent from a merchant milieu would be undignified.<sup>12</sup>

The presence of Buddhist traders in a given area did not necessarily lead to the adoption of Buddhism. The biographies of itinerant monks such as Guṇavarman, Vajrabuddhi/Vajrabodhi, and Amoghavajra make it clear that royal sponsorship was essential for the religion to gain a firm foothold in the regions they visited. According to Ronald Davidson, an important factor in the rise and quick spread of esoteric (or tantric) fashions of Buddhism across Asia from the 7th century was the loss of mercantile support due to the dominance of Persian/Muslim traders on the Indian Ocean network, and the concomitant escalation in royal patronage.<sup>13</sup> This was made possible through the intimate relationship between ritual specialists and the political elites who, lured by the promise of invincibility, protection for the state, and superhuman powers, often employed tantric monks as “royal chaplains.” In this way, they were following the pattern that already existed between Brahmanical ritualists and the courts they served. Davidson’s “royal” model has been questioned by Hiram Woodward, who denies the incompatibility between mercantile and royal values, and envisages an integration of the “mercantile” and “royal” paradigms.<sup>14</sup> Significantly, many of the powerful dynasties that were instrumental in the sponsorship and spread of Mahāyāna and Mantranaya Buddhism ruled over domains located along the nodes of commercial and diplomatic maritime networks. Examples are the Pālas in Northeastern India, the Bhauma-Karas in Odisha, the Early Second Lambakaṇṇas in Sri Lanka, the Śailendras in Sumatra and Java, and the Tangs in China. In some cases, the maritime passages of monks were directly sponsored by kings and doubled as diplomatic missions, involving large travel parties and including dignitaries and military exponents.

## Maritime Mobility

On the basis of information provided by Pliny and Faxian, the journey by merchant ship from the port city of Tāmralipti in present-day West Bengal to Sri Lanka (en route to Southeast Asia and China) would have taken only a fortnight.<sup>15</sup> Yijing states that his own journey from Canton to Sumatra took a month, while the remaining leg from Kedah in Peninsular Malaysia to the Nicobar Islands took ten days, and from there to Tāmralipti took fifteen days.<sup>16</sup> But according to other sources, because of the prevailing direction of monsoon winds, making a return voyage between China and the Indian Subcontinent in one year was nearly impossible.<sup>17</sup>

Be that as it may, it has now become increasingly evident that the maritime mobility of Buddhist agents was quicker and easier than hitherto assumed. A case in point is the episode of the establishment of the female Buddhist order (*bhikṣunīsaṅgha*) in China. This endeavor was started by the Kashmirian monk Guṇavarman, who, however, failed to do so due to the insufficient number of senior nuns; only three of them reached China from Sri Lanka in 429 CE. After his death in 431 CE, he was succeeded by Saṅghavarman, who managed to complete this task by requesting more nuns from Sri Lanka. These eventually reached China in 438 CE on the ship of a non-Chinese merchant called Nandin (*Zhu Nanti*)—the same individual who had brought Guṇavarman to Sri Lanka and China and who is credited with translating some Sanskrit Mahāyāna scriptures into Chinese.<sup>18</sup> The two-way traffic between such faraway localities as Sri Lanka and China within the span of a decade suggests that Buddhist communication via the maritime routes as early as the first half of the 5th century is remarkable. It is hardly surprising, however, given the existence of 4th–6th-century Chinese records of sustained diplomatic relations and circulation of relics between the mainland and Sri Lankan and Southeast Asian localities.<sup>19</sup> By the 8th century, sea travel seems to have become an even easier undertaking, as suggested by the fact that the Central Asian monk Amoghavajra was even able to send back a Sanskrit text from China to his old master Ratnabuddhi in Sri Lanka after translating it.<sup>20</sup> In addition, several monks are known to have made it back to their places of origin. For example, the Indian Parāmiti, reached Canton by 705 and went back to his homeland by boat.<sup>21</sup> The Korean monk Hyecho (fl. 8th century, Amoghavajra’s disciple), traveled to India twice within his lifespan—at least once, it seems, via the maritime route.<sup>22</sup>

## Buddhist Narratives of Maritime Crossings

The Sino-Japanese and Tibetan biographies of the monks traveling from China to India and/or vice versa makes clear that travel across the maritime trading channels linking the two regions was not devoid of perils. Besides imagined entities such as marine monsters, Nāgas, and other supernatural beings, the most feared hindrances in the mind of the travelers were storms, unfavorable winds, pirates, and unskilled or unscrupulous crews.

The biographers of the Indian monk Prajña report that his sea journey to Guangzhou in China, where he arrived in 781 CE, was marred by multiple setbacks, taking in all about twenty years.<sup>23</sup> Another Indian monk, Maṇicintana, randomly escaped death during a storm on his

way to China, while the Chinese monk Jianzhen/Ganjin (鑑真/鑑真, 688–763) allegedly attempted the dangerous crossing of the sea that separated China from Japan six times before finally making it in 754.<sup>24</sup>

Faxian (337/342–c. 422), who traveled from China to India, presents an account of his maritime journey that is striking not only for being the earliest, but also for providing rare details about his momentous voyage on a large, 200-passenger-strong merchant ship that he describes as trailing a little “emergency” boat.<sup>25</sup> Having encountered a storm between Sri Lanka and Sumatra, and fearing that the merchants would throw his precious Sanskrit texts overboard, he prayed to the bodhisattva Guanshyin/Avalokiteśvara. During the second leg of his journey, on a similar ship plying the route from Java to China, Faxian encountered a storm, and were it not for his patron and the monk’s prayer to Guanshyin, the Brahmins, thinking that the monk was the origin of their misfortunes, would have thrown him overboard.<sup>26</sup>

Faxian’s misfortunes are echoed in the biography of Vajrabuddhi by Lü Xiang, where it is recounted that the monk, when Vajrabuddhi was twenty days short of reaching the Chinese coast from Southeast Asia, escaped shipwreck (but lost the full version of the Sanskrit *Vajraśekhara*, thrown overboard by the captain) during a storm because he recited the *Mahāpratisarā-dhāraṇī* (*Suiqiu* 隨求), a spell impersonating the homonymous female deity.<sup>27</sup> A similar circumstance is associated with Vajrabuddhi’s disciple Amoghavajra when he was traveling on a Southeast Asian ship (*Kunlun bo* 崑崙舶) from China to Sri Lanka in 741 CE.<sup>28</sup> Both Vajrabuddhi’s and Amoghavajra’s accounts are very similar to those expounded in the fifth narrative in the central and longest text in the *Mahāpratisarā*-corpus, the Sanskrit *Mahāpratisarāvidyārājñī*. In this narrative, the merchant Vimalaśaṅkha saves his ship from a storm, lightning, and meteors sent by Nāgas.<sup>29</sup> While the circumstances narrated in the account may reflect standard tropes in Buddhist hagiographical literature, the textual accounts speak in favor of the popularity of this *dhāraṇī* and its deity among Buddhist travellers—monks and traders alike—and match the material evidence on the propagation of the *Mahāpratisarā* cult across the Buddhist world.

Indeed, the *Taisho* canon informs us that in 758 Amoghavajra actually submitted a copy of this spell to Emperor Suzong (*T* 2120.829b2–21). Various textual and iconographical attestations of *Mahāpratisarā* are documented in Java, especially from the 8th to the 10th century, as well as in Bali, Sumatra, and Mindanao in the Philippines.<sup>30</sup> A gold foil recovered from the c. 10th-century Cirebon shipwreck off the Java north coast, containing a *dhāraṇī* addressed to a goddess personifying the spell, and paralleling material found in the *Ekādaśamukhadhāraṇī* and *Sādhanamālā*, confirms that passengers and/or crews actually wore this type of object as amulets intended to protect them against the dangers of voyage at sea.<sup>31</sup>

Imaginary and supernatural elements became predominant in the biography of the 11th-century Atiśa, who left the Subcontinent for some years to study in Sumatra with the Buddhist master Dharmakīrti. He joined a group of merchants (curiously, and perhaps tellingly, originating from landlocked, mountainous Nepal) sailing to the Golden Island in search of precious stones. He encounters difficulties during his voyage across the Indian Ocean, namely, a storm supernaturally caused by the Hindu god Śiva, who tries to stop him from leaving India. To defeat Śiva and his consort, Atiśa and his disciple Kṣitigarbha manifest themselves

as the wrathful tantric deities Raktayamāri and Acala, respectively; Acala launches a strike against the enemies of Buddhism: Śaivas, Muslims, and Tibetan Bon practitioners.<sup>32</sup> This narrative tells us a lot about the state of Buddhism in India at that time, reflecting as it does the anxieties of coeval Buddhist circles.

## The Networks of Seafaring Monks in Maritime Asia

Historical evidence going back to at least the 3rd century CE provides us with a picture of the steady traffic of itinerant monks traveling both eastward and westward along the sea paths linking the swathe of territory comprised within the Indian Subcontinent and Japan in search of texts, teachers, and patrons. It would seem that most of the monks who traveled both ways between India and China preferred the maritime to the overland route, or at least sought to include a maritime leg in their journey. No fewer than twenty-five monks are recorded to have arrived in China in such a way between 420 and 479 CE.<sup>33</sup> Seventh-century monk Yijing stated that a significant number of the Chinese and Korean monks who went to India and Southeast Asia by his time traveled by sea on merchant ships.<sup>34</sup> A conservative scholarly estimate records that out of the total number of 103 monks, 66 individuals were involved in the maritime transmission of Buddhism to China.<sup>35</sup>

While the names and life circumstances of most of those anonymous agents are bound to remain unknown, Sino-Japanese biographies allow us to reconstruct the pedigree and social circle of some prominent monks who have gone down in history as vigorous translators (e.g., of Sanskrit scriptures into Chinese), commentators, authors of original texts, initiators of lineages, and thaumaturges. According to Chinese sources,<sup>36</sup> the first monk to travel from India to China via the maritime route was the Sogdian Kang Senghui (康僧會), who arrived in Nanjing in 247 CE. Other South Asian monks who arrived in China in the 3rd century included Jīvaka (? Qiyu 耆域) and Kumāra (? Jiamoluo 迦摩羅). Many more monks are recorded to have arrived in Nanjing and/or Guangzhou from South and Central Asia via Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia from the 4th to the 6th century. These were Faxian (337/342–c. 422), who in traveling from China to India lost three companions along the way, and who came back by ship via Sumatra and Java. Other travelers included Dharmayaśas (? Tanmoyeshe 曇摩耶舍) from Northwestern India, who arrived in China in 401 and was active in Guangzhou; Buddhajīva (? Fotuoshi 佛陀什, fl. 5th century) and Guṇavarman (? Qiunabamo 求那跋摩, 367–431), both from Kashmir (the latter was ordained and studied in Sri Lanka, and converted to Buddhism the royals of Java); Saṅghavarman (fl. 5th century), from Sri Lanka; Guṇabhadra (? Qiunabatuoluo 求那跋陀羅, 394–468), from Māgadha; Paramārtha (Zhendi 真諦, 499–569 CE), from Ujjain in Central India; and Bodhidharma (? Putidamo 菩提達摩, fl. 6th century) from either South India or Central Asia; Saṅghapāla (Sengqieboluo 僧伽婆羅, 460–524) and Mandra(sena) (Mantuoluo[xian] 曼陀羅[仙], 502–519), both from Funan in mainland Southeast Asia, who reached Nanjing between the late-5th and early-6th century.

From the 7th century, a remarkably mobile, multiethnic, and cosmopolitan network of monks is associated with the propagation of the first wave of Mahāyāna Buddhist Tantra (Mantranaya) via the maritime routes. Among the most prominent individuals are the Central



Indian Atikūṭa (Adiquduo 阿地瞿多, fl. 650s) and Puṇyodaya (Nati 那提, fl. 650s); the Chinese Yijing (義淨, 635–713), who traveled extensively to India via Southeast Asia; the Indian Maṇicintana/Maṇicinta or Ratnacinta (Baosiwei 寶思惟, d. 721) and the South Indian Dharmaruci/Bodhiruci (Damoliuzhi 達摩流/Putiliuzhi 菩提流支, d. 727); Vajrabuddhi (Jingangzhi 金剛智, 671–741) from South or Central India, and Vajrabuddhi's ordained pupil Amoghavajra (Bukong 不空, 704–774; probably a native of Samarkand); the South Indian Bodhisena (Putixianna 菩提僊那, 704–760), who traveled to China and Japan via Mainland Southeast Asia; Nāgabodhi/Nāgabuddhi (Longzhi 龍智), whose biography remains obscure but who is believed to have met Amoghavajra in Sri Lanka in the 740s, and previously Vajrabuddhi; Huiguo's Javanese disciple Bianhong (辨弘, fl. late 8th century); Prajña (Boruo 般若/Bolaruo 般刺若, c. 744–810, from either present-day Afghanistan or South India), disciple of Amoghavajra's prominent pupil Yuanzhao (d. 800); the Chinese Jianzhen; the Japanese Kūkai (空海, 774–835); and the Korean Hyecho (慧超, fl. 8th century), disciple of Śubhakarasiṃha and then both Vajrabuddhi and Amoghavajra respectively. The networks of 7th- to 9th-century itinerant monks offer a telling picture of the extraordinary period of intra-Asian maritime connectivity that became the hallmark of the rise and spread of Esoteric Buddhist traditions in the course of just two or three generations.<sup>37</sup>

Sociopolitical and economic contingencies from the middle of the 9th to the end of the 10th century caused the decline and “provincialization” of Buddhism in China, as well as a reduced scale of Buddhist building activities in Southeast Asia. As a result of these dynamics, the Buddhist traffic between India and China decreased beginning in the 9th century, although smaller regional interlocking networks remained active. Sea-based transmission of Buddhism between South and Southeast Asia was sustained in the following centuries through the monks and other (possibly nonmonastic, semi-institutionalized) agents who must remain anonymous owing to the paucity of Chinese records for that period. Notable exceptions are the famous master Atiśa (aka Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna, 980–1054), who traveled from northeastern India to the “Golden Isles” (Suvarṇadvīpa, i.e., either Sumatra or the Malay Peninsula) and stayed there for twelve years to study with Dharmakīrti from Suvarṇadvīpa, one of the five most prominent Buddhist intellectuals of his time; the (Indian?) Kīrtipaṇḍita, an adept of the Buddhist Yogatantras who was active in the Khmer domains during the reign of Jayavarman V (r. 968–c. 1000) in the capacity of royal guru, teaching the *Tattvasaṅgraha* and its commentary; and the *Guhasamāja* exegete Vāgīśvarakīrti, who flourished in eastern India in the early 11th century and may have been active in the Khmer domains shortly thereafter, as suggested by a verse in the Sab Bāk inscription of 1067 CE (K. 1158).<sup>38</sup> Almost five centuries later, the 16th-century Indian Buddhist Siddha Buddhaguptanātha is recorded by his student, the Tibetan chronicler Tāranātha, to have traveled extensively by sea from the Konkan coast to Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia (i.e., Java and Sumatra), and back to visit Buddhist vestiges and communities.<sup>39</sup>

In spite of the lack of biographic records, the continuation or (re)establishment of long-distance contacts across the Indian ocean from the 11th to the 13th centuries is suggested by certain notable facts: the royal-sponsored endowments sent by sea from Myanmar to Bodh Gaya, the (re)appearance of Nālandā-style imagery of Buddhist divinities in Angkor, Pagan,

the Malay Peninsula, and East Java, as well as the election (arguably through initiation) of transgressive and martial forms of “Phase III” tantric Buddhism as a personal and official cult by important royal figures such as Jayavarman VII in Cambodia (r. c. 1181–1220), Kṛtanagara in East Java (r. 1268–92), Kublai Khan in China (r. 1260–94), and Ādityavarman in Java and Sumatra (r. ?–1375).<sup>40</sup> The rise of these new networks of tantric Buddhism may have been triggered by unfavorable international political developments, most notably the decline of Buddhism in northern India at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries. Nālandā, Vikramaśīla, and Uddanāpura having been razed, scholars and artisans fled to Nepal and Tibet, and possibly further afield to Southeast Asia.<sup>41</sup> According to Tāranātha, most of the Buddhist scholars of central north and eastern India (*madhyadeśa*) fled to mainland Southeast Asia (i.e., the kingdoms of Pegu, Campā, Kamboja, etc.) after Magadha was invaded by the Turks.<sup>42</sup> A northeastern Indian and/or Nepalese (Newar) influence on the Khmer architecture as well as East Javanese (and Sumatran) Buddhist art and inscriptions of that period has been noted.<sup>43</sup> The fact that these artisans became popular at the courts of both Kublai Khan and his sworn adversary Kṛtanagara in East Java may be indicative of maritime contacts between the two areas.<sup>44</sup>

From the 11th to the 16th century, the Bay of Bengal trade and diplomatic networks that connected Sri Lanka with Southeast Asia became more vigorous. This gave rise to the ascendance of the influence of Pali Buddhism on western and central mainland Southeast Asia. A new corpus of Buddhist chronicles composed between the 15th and the early 20th centuries in Thailand, Myanmar, and northern Malaysia portray the period of 1000 to 1500 as a time of intensifying contacts with Sri Lanka in the sphere of Buddhist monastic and institutional life. They show that Sri Lanka strengthened its pivotal position as a center of Theravāda monasticism and a prime repository of Buddhist relics.<sup>45</sup> According to the Sinhalese chronicle *Cūlavamsa*, King Candrabhānu (d.u.) from Southeast Asia attacked Sri Lanka in 1247 and 1262 to obtain Buddhist relics. The same interest could have been the main reason for Kublai Khan’s (1215–1294) missions to Sri Lanka in 1284 and to southern India in 1272 and 1275.<sup>46</sup> A diaspora of Buddhist monks to Myanmar followed Sri Lanka’s invasion by the Cōlas in the 11th century, while the inverse phenomenon took place after King Vijayabāhu I (r. 1055–1110) liberated the island, whereby the exiled monks from Sri Lanka and Myanmar helped restore Buddhism in Sri Lanka.<sup>47</sup> Buddhist exchanges continued thereafter, from the 12th to the 16th centuries, when Sri Lankan rulers actively sent Buddhist monks, relics, and texts to Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia, and in their turn received monastic and diplomatic missions from Myanmar.<sup>48</sup> Sri Lanka maintained a leading role in the formation and transmission of “reformed” Buddhism during the colonial period until the 19th and 20th centuries. For example, the Sinhalese “revivalist” monk Anagarika Dharmapāla (1864–1933) journeyed to India, Japan, China, and the United States through the maritime routes.<sup>49</sup>

Long-distance Buddhist interactions between India and China had significantly decreased by the 13th century and virtually ended in the mid-15th century following the Ming ban on Chinese merchants from sailing to foreign ports. The concomitant increase of Chinese diasporic communities in Southeast Asia facilitated the transmission of Buddhist ideas, including the cult of Guanyin, through maritime networks across the South China Sea.<sup>50</sup> In the

late 19th and early 20th centuries, maritime Buddhist exchanges were restored following a Chinese diaspora to India (especially Kolkata) and Southeast Asia, most notably due to the missionary activities of the Chinese monk Taixu (太虛, 1890–1947) and his disciples.<sup>51</sup>

## Trans-Asian Maritime Networks and the Constitution of Sanskritic Buddhism(s), 5th–14th Centuries

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A maritime approach capitalizing on recent archaeological and epigraphic discoveries, as well as a more comprehensive reading of textual evidence from various cultural areas and historical periods, could rectify certain misconceptions. For instance, it could challenge the received idea that the southern regions of India and maritime Southeast Asia had a marginal role in the Buddhist Cosmopolis, combined with an overemphasis on the dominance of Theravāda/Pali Buddhism in Sri Lanka and mainland Southeast Asia. It could also contribute to reevaluate the importance of the western coast of India for the transmission of forms of Mahāyāna and Mantranaya Buddhism to Southeast Asia and beyond via the maritime routes. Western India, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia hosted important (and even predominant) Sanskritic Buddhist traditions. They also played a constitutive role in the genesis and transmission of both nascent and consolidated forms of Mahāyāna and Mantranaya Buddhism across Maritime Asia from the 5th to the 14th century. These regions constituted not only stopovers and entrepôts for traders and voyagers, but also termini in their own right. They were visited by monks and laymen alike to collect texts, relics, and icons, visit pilgrimage sites, acquire knowledge in institutionalized centers of higher learning or renowned individual masters, and receive patronage.

### Western India

Buddhist architectural vestiges in the Western Deccan go back to the first century CE, and by the 6th–7th century Buddhist caves such as Ellorā, Aurangabad, and Kānherī flourish thanks to the booming trade routes connecting them to the seaports of Sopara, Kalyan, and Baruch, as well as the mainland trade centre of Ujjain.<sup>52</sup> Those rock-cut monasteries and caves are regarded as important sites for the development of Mahāyāna and early Esoteric Buddhism. Iconographic motifs that will become widespread across Maritime Asia, such as (esoteric fashions of) Tārā, Avalokiteśvara, and the Eight Great Bodhisattvas, are attested there by the late 6th–early 7th century.<sup>53</sup> An early and seminal Buddhist Tantra such as the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* may have been composed around that time in that region.<sup>54</sup> The illustrated Nepalese manuscript of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā* (11th century) links a significant number of Buddhist sites to the Konkan coast.<sup>55</sup> Tāranātha, and earlier textual evidence, record the presence of the Singhalese monk Jayabhadra (also called Koṅkanapāda)—who was to become *vajrācārya* at Vikramaśīla—in Mahābimba in Konkan in the 9th century.<sup>56</sup> Mahābimba could be identified with the Bimbakāya mentioned by Tāranātha's teacher, Buddhaguptanātha, who visited Konkan in the 16th century on his way to Sri Lanka

and then again when he was coming back from Java.<sup>57</sup> This cumulative evidence suggests the existence of enduring maritime links between Konkan, Sri Lanka, south- and northeastern India, and Southeast Asia.

## Sri Lanka (and South India)

From the perspective of Maritime Buddhism, Sri Lanka and South India formed a geographical and cultural dyad closely linked by sea networks. Although Buddhism in the Tamil country was a minoritarian religion living in the shadow of Hinduism, increasing archaeological evidence suggests that it played a more important and resilient role than has hitherto been assumed. In the cosmopolitan port cities of Nagapattinam and Kāñcī, Buddhism received limited but nonetheless significant patronage, so much so that Hindu and Buddhist traditions thrived side by side, giving rise to possible cross-fertilizations.<sup>58</sup> Kāñcī may have acted as an incubator of early tantric fashions within the Buddhist fold, given the documented presence of proto- and mainstream tantric Śaiva traditions.<sup>59</sup> Circumstantial evidence and Buddhist hagiography suggest that foundational scriptures of the Yogatantra class such as the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṅgraha* may have been compiled in South India.<sup>60</sup> Prajña returned to South India from China to look for esoteric texts belonging to the Vidyādhara traditions (*chiming* 持明), and studied yogic techniques under consecration master Dharmayaśas [II]/ Dharmakīrti (Damoyeshe 達摩耶舍/Facheng 法稱), while Amoghavajra received initiation into the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*-system.<sup>61</sup>

Old Sinhala inscriptions in Brāhmī script attest to the fact that Buddhism was firmly established in Sri Lanka by the third century BCE, probably as the result of the activities of South Indian and local traders.<sup>62</sup> While the island was one of the early recipients and exporters of Pali Buddhism, recent studies have underlined the numerous vestiges of Mahāyāna Buddhist Tantra existing on the island—most notably the tradition of the Abhayagiri Mahāvihāra, which might have been dominant by the 6th–7th centuries.<sup>63</sup> Archaeological remains and textual evidence from the later Sinhala chronicle *Nikāyasaṅgraha* confirm the information, found in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese textual sources, that Sri Lanka (and perhaps South India, too) once hosted important lineages of Esoteric Buddhist masters and repositories of Tantras.<sup>64</sup>

By the 5th century, the island virtually became a compulsory stop for the monks traveling from India to China via the Andaman or Nicobar Islands and Southeast Asia. Faxian, Guṇavarman, and Guṇabhadra spent time there, and it has been hypothesized that their nonsectarian stance as documented by their activities of translation might have been acquired in the eclectic and cosmopolitan milieu of Abhayagiri.<sup>65</sup> Between the 7th and 8th centuries, Puṇyodaya, Vajrabuddhi, Amoghavajra, and Prajña visited Sri Lanka to obtain some rare esoteric texts in Sanskrit and receive initiation from local consecration masters, like Nāgabuddhi or Ratnabuddhi (Baojue 寶覺) and Samantabhadra (? Puxian 普賢). Maritime interactions between Sri Lanka and other centers of tantrism in the Subcontinent are well documented.<sup>66</sup>

The fame of the eclectic Abhayagirivihāra at Anurādhapura, where a variety of Buddhist texts were studied, reached Southeast Asia. An 8th-century Siddhamāṭṛkā foundation inscription reports that a branch of the Sri Lankan Abhayagirivihāra, apparently intended for the use of esoteric-minded Sinhalese Buddhist monks, was established by the Śailendras on the Ratu Boko promontory in Central Java. Furthermore, the Abhayagirivihāra-related structures of Ratu Boko share with their Sri Lankan prototypes common architectural motifs, such as the peculiar double meditation platforms.<sup>67</sup>

## The Western Indonesian Archipelago

The Western Indonesian archipelago was a strategic geographical area in the Maritime Silk Roads system. Although it has yielded significant vestiges of its glorious Hindu and Buddhist past, it is still underrepresented in contemporary scholarship. Far from being a cultural backwater that passively received Indic influences, it held an integral place in the Buddhist world as both a crossroads and a terminus of contacts since the early centuries of the Common Era. The contribution of the Austronesian-speaking region of Nusantara to the Indian Ocean trade network has been recognized in terms of providing superior shipping technology, nautical terminology, and ship crews. And yet, the creative and constitutive force of Southeast Asian agents and milieus in the transfer, transformation, and translocation of people, texts, notions, and artifacts in the Buddhist world remains to be fully appreciated. Witness the fact that a number of monks who traveled the sea routes and visited Southeast Asia—such as Guṇavarman, Paramārtha, Yijing, Vajrabuddhi, Amoghavajra, and Atiśa—stirred up new developments in China as well as Tibet and the Indian Subcontinent.<sup>68</sup> We also know about an 8th-century Javanese monk, Bianhong, who went to China to study under Huiguo and composed an Esoteric Buddhist initiation manual focusing on state protection.<sup>69</sup>

Sparse finds of Buddha images are documented across a vast area from Sumatra and Java to Kalimantan and Sulawesi. Although their dating is uncertain, with estimates spanning from the 2nd to the 9th century, they highlight the maritime mobility of Buddhism within the Archipelago.<sup>70</sup> It is, however, in Sumatra and Java that the majority of Buddhist vestiges concentrate. The two islands were strongholds of Mahāyāna Buddhist Tantra from the 7th to the 15th century. Witness such impressive Buddhist sites as the Batang Hari river sites in Muaro Jambi and Padang Lawas in Sumatra; the Central Javanese complexes of Borobudur, Candi Sewu, Plaosan, Mendut, and Ratu Boko; and the royal temples of the Keḍiri, Siṅhasāri, and Majapahit kingdoms in East Java. Vestiges of Buddhism, such as small votive *stūpas*, are also documented on the island of Bali, where communities of tantric Buddhist ritual specialists have survived down to the present.

In his account, Faxian writes that Buddhism in Java was not worth speaking of and that Brahmanism was very strong. Just a few years thereafter, the Kashmirian monk Gunavarman, immediately before reaching China, succeeded in converting the royal family and their Javanese subjects to Buddhism. This information could be matched with the nearly contemporary archaeological remains of Batu Jaya in northwestern Java, suggesting that Buddhism was adopted at the site from the 5th century, and with 7th–early 9th century

epigraphic evidence featuring Buddhist formulas traceable to a 5th-century Sarvāstivāda milieu.<sup>71</sup> Another report by Yijing indicates that by the middle of the 7th century the Sarvāstivāda school was prevalent in Southeast Asia and that the Chinese monk Huining 會寧 in 665 CE visited “Kaliṅga” (Java) to study and translate *Āgama* scripture with a certain Jñānabhadra for three years. Huining’s pupil, Yunqi 運期, after going back to China to present a Chinese translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, returned to Southeast Asia, spending more than ten years in Java and living in Śrīvijaya up to the time of Yijing.<sup>72</sup>

Textual and art historical remains suggest that the early esoteric developments that were emerging from the Western Deccan promptly reached Nusantara via the maritime routes. These became the basis of, and were preserved in, later religious configurations, as it may be inferred from the somewhat “archaic” character of 8th- to 9th-century Mantranaya Buddhism in Java and Sumatra. Iconographical influence stemming from the later “esoteric” phase of Ellorā and other Western Indian caves is detectable on the sculpted triptych of Mendut in Central Java, as well as in the depictions of the “courtly” 8th-century Eight Bodhisattvas known from the same temple, as well as Candi Plaosan and votive tablets from the Malay Peninsula, where they are part of a mandala arranged around a wheel-turning Śākyamuni-Vairocana.<sup>73</sup> Significantly, this mandalic formation is described in the “proto-Tantric” *Aṣṭamaṇḍalaka*, translated into Chinese by Amoghavajra (*T* 1167) and, a century earlier, by Puṇyodaya (*T* 486). Amoghavajra traveled to China via Java, and Puṇyodaya was active in Mainland Southeast Asia.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, echoes between the iconography of the Eight Bodhisattvas in Java, Shingon Buddhism, and 8th-century Chinese translations have been discerned.<sup>75</sup>

The 8th- to 9th-century major architectural undertakings of the Śailendra dynasty, most notably the majestic and exquisitely crafted Buddhist monuments of Borobudur, Candi Sewu, Plaosan, and Mendut, must have ranked among the great sacred centers of the Buddhist cosmopolis, and attracted to the island a steady traffic of monks and pilgrims to the island. For instance, a 9th-century Siddhamātrkā inscription unearthed at Candi Plaosan in the Prambanan area describes the worship of a Buddha temple (*jinamandira*) by pilgrims continuously arriving from Gurjaradeśa in North India.<sup>76</sup> An account by Yuanzhao compiled into the *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu*, as well as the Japanese master Kūkai (空海, 774–835), record that Vajrabuddhi first met Amoghavajra in Java.<sup>77</sup> An early 11th-century illustrated manuscript of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā* (CUL Add. 1643) dedicates one of its first vignettes to (an image of the Buddha) Dīpaṅkara in Java (f. 2r), and Java figures in the early “Tantric geography” exposed by the *Manjuśrīyamūlakalpa* (51.636–640).

Lastly, links between masters from the Pāla domains in Eastern India and Śailendra-sponsored Buddhism may be inferred from late 8th-century epigraphic evidence recording a certain Kumāraghoṣa, the royal preceptor from Gauḍīdvīpa who installed an image of Mañjuḥoṣa (Mañjuśrī) in Central Java at the request of Śailendra King Śrī Saṅgrāmadhanañjaya.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, a *mahāyānika-golapaṇḍitā* (= *gauḍapaṇḍitā*, a Mahāyāna scholar from Bengal?) features in the undated short rock inscription engraved on a cliff overlooking the sea at Pasir Panjang in Karimun Besar island (Riau archipelago).<sup>79</sup> The fact that the latter inscription was written in Sanskrit in a nonlocal script (Nāgarī), as well as that it displays a graffiti-like

character, lends credit to the hypothesis that it could have been engraved by a South Asian scholar who spent some time there en route to mainland Sumatra or Java, or to commemorate the visit of an important religious personality.<sup>80</sup>

Sumatra hosted renowned centers of Buddhist activity and learning. Yijing praised the high level of Buddhist scholarship he found there, where he stopped en-route from Guangzhou to Nālandā and from there back to China to read Sanskrit Sūtras. It was from there that he procured the shipment of numerous Buddhist texts.<sup>81</sup> Yijing reports that Śākyakīrti, one of the five most distinguished Buddhist teachers of his time, traveled far and large across the “Five Indias” and finally settled in Śrīvijaya (Śrībhoja).<sup>82</sup> The continued existence of a high level of Buddhist scholarship and royal sponsorship of the religion is also suggested by the later figure of Shihu (施護, Dānapāla, d. 1018). In the late 10th century, this exceptionally prolific South Asian monk-translator who in the late 10th century reached China with a good knowledge of the languages of Sanfochi (Śrīvijaya) and Shepo (Java).<sup>83</sup>

The archaeological remains and scant epigraphic documents spread over disparate locales of the island have yielded remains of Buddhist monuments and inscriptions mostly dating back to the 10th to 13th century.<sup>84</sup> The *Intan* and *Cirebon* shipwrecks, discovered beneath the sea lanes linking Sumatra to Java, have yielded precious data on the 10th-century traffic of Buddhist bronze paraphernalia (e.g., *vajras*, spear-shaped sceptres, bells, statuettes, and inscribed foils), along with other commonly traded merchandise among regional entrepôts and the larger Indian Ocean and Chinese markets.<sup>85</sup>

A case for the possible influence of Sumatran and Javanese Buddhism on subsequent developments in India has been made with respect to the invocation of *Bhadracarī-praṇidhāna*—the text depicted in the uppermost series of reliefs on Borobudur—on the memorial *stūpa* found at the Nālandā monastery established by the Sumatran monarch Bālaputradeva for the use of pilgrims from Śrīvijaya.<sup>86</sup> The contribution of insular Southeast Asian masters to Vajrayāna Buddhism in Tibet, also through the handful of texts composed in Suvarṇadvīpa that were introduced into the Tibetan canon, is acknowledged by the Tibetan tradition from the 11th century. The famous master Atiśa, originary of Bengal, is said to have transmitted to Tibet the *Durbodhāloka* (a Sanskrit commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*) composed in Southeast Asia by his teacher Dharmakīrti. Both were fervent devotees of Tārā, whose cult was widespread in insular Southeast Asia, and which may have influenced the form of cult that Atiśa reintroduced or popularized in Tibet after his stay in Suvarṇadvīpa.<sup>87</sup>

Contemporary transmission of Buddhist ideas from Sumatra and/or Java to the Himalayan region has been suggested on the basis of artistic and architectural similarities between the Tabo monastery in Himachal Pradesh, which Atiśa visited in 1042, and Borobudur.<sup>88</sup> Dharmakīrti also imparted to Atiśa the teachings of the *Kālacakratantra* and has been identified as the author of the *Netravibhaṅga*, a commentary to the *Hevajratantra*.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, from the 11th to the 12th century, Sumatra appears to have been a major center of the Hevajra cult. Witness the epigraphic evidence of mantra portions directly quoted from the *Hevajratantra* (which, significantly, mentions Suvarṇadvīpa), as well as the 14th-century inscription of Saruaso II, issued by Crown Prince Anaṅgavarman, son of Ādityavarman, which mentions his “daily meditation on Hevajra” (*Hevajra-nityāsmṛtiḥ*).<sup>90</sup> Images found at the

Sumatran sites of Padang Lawas are integrated in a network that connects them to East Java, northeastern India, and mainland Southeast Asia in the 11th and 13th centuries. Overall, the sites show a kind of Buddhism that belongs to the same “Phase III” of Vajrayāna as what was present in Khmer and Cham domains between the 12th and 13th century, and in East Java and China in the 13th century.<sup>91</sup>

## The Malay Peninsula

Given its strategic geographical location, the Malay Peninsula, which was included in the domains of Śailendra/Śrīvijayan Buddhist rulers from the 7th to the 13th century, acted as an important intersection in the traffic of merchants, monks, and pilgrims plying the maritime routes. The earliest inscription associated with Buddhism in Southeast Asia, dated to the 5th century, has been found in Kedah. Having been commissioned by “sea captain” (? *mahānāvika*) Buddhagupta from Raktamṛttikā (i.e., either Raktamṛttikā Mahāvihāra in what is now Rajbadidanga in West Bengal, or another location in the Malay Peninsula), it highlights the link between Buddhism and trade in the Peninsula prior to the establishment of monastic centers and the rise of institutional support in the Śrīvijayan period.

Also testifying to the local and translocal nature of Buddhism in the area are the many votive tablets found at multiple sites in the period from the 6th to the 12th century. Two of these tablets, recovered from sites in Kedah and tentatively dated to the 7th century, contain a passage from the Mahāyāna Sūtra *Sāgaramatiparipṛcchā*, whose Sanskrit original has survived through fragmentary quotations but has been integrally transmitted in Chinese and Tibetan translations.<sup>92</sup> Other specimens, such as those inscribed in northeastern Indian scripts and displaying the Eight Bodhisattvas, as well as those displaying a twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara from the Perlis caves, could have belonged to pilgrims transiting from the Subcontinent (unlike the tablets recovered from difficult-to-reach caves, which rather suggest a local context of religious practice).<sup>93</sup> One *apramāda* gold seal bearing a short Prakrit inscription, recovered at Bang Kluay Nok in Ranong along the western coast of the central Malay Peninsula, mentions a “mariner Brahaspati” and could be compared to analogous epigraphic remains donated by mariners across the Indic world.<sup>94</sup> The exquisitely crafted late 8th-century bronze Avalokiteśvaras found in the Chaiya district of modern Thailand and in Bidor (Perak, Malaysia) show close similarities with the Avalokiteśvara found at Wonogiri in Central Java. This fact suggests a link between the Malay Peninsula and Java under the Śailendra, perhaps initiated by the master Vajrabuddhi himself.<sup>95</sup>

At its height, the Śrīvijaya kingdom extended over Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, and Java. Besides controlling the trade routes, this polity was actively engaged in Buddhist diplomacy with India and China. In addition to the donation by Bālaputradeva at Nālandā, other gifts and diplomatic exchanges with South India and Sri Lanka are documented in inscriptions dating from the 11th to the 12th century.<sup>96</sup> The existence of links with the Subcontinent can also be evinced from 1015 CE Nepalese Manuscript CUL Add. 1643 (f. 120r) of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, which mentions a Lokanātha on Mount Balavatī in Kaṭahadvīpa (Kedah).<sup>97</sup>



## The Khmer and Cam Domains

The early polities of Funan and Panpan in Mainland Southeast Asia sourced relics, texts, and monks well versed in Mahāyāna teachings for China. The Indian monk Paramārtha (fl. 6th century), who became a famous and prolific translator of Mahāyāna texts in China, stayed in Funan and played an instrumental role in this traffic. Three recorded monks hailing from Funan—Naḡasena, Saṅghapāla, and Mandrasena—visited China between the 5th and 6th centuries, carrying Sanskrit texts with them. Some of the texts translated by Paramārtha formed the core of the Yogācāra doctrine of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu in China, which in turn led to the establishment of the Dharmalakṣaṇa school of Xuanzang in the 7th century.<sup>98</sup>

The maritime links of Mainland Southeast Asia extended eastward to the Indian Subcontinent, if Tāranātha's claim. Tāranātha stated that, from the time of King Dharmapāla (late 8th–early 9th centuries) on, there were many students from Southeast Asian kingdoms in north and eastern India and that during the time of the four Senas, about half of the monks of Magadha were from the so-called Eastern Koki countries (including Pegu, Campā, and Kamboja in mainland Southeast Asia).<sup>99</sup> Although this is an apparent exaggeration, this information is not to be discounted as entirely unrealistic, for there is evidence of a steady traffic of monks across the Bay of Bengal: witness the Buddhist master Puṇyodaya, who traveled from India to China via Sri Lanka and then back to mainland Southeast Asia, and Kīrtipaṇḍita and Vāgīśvarakīrti, who were active in Khmer domains by the 10th and 11th century, respectively.

Epigraphic and archaeological evidence confirms that the Cam and Khmer realms were fully integrated in the web of intraregional Southeast Asian networks connecting the mainland and the Malay Peninsula to Java, Sumatra, and China between the 7th and 10th century. The Nham Biền stele of 908 CE relates that the courtier Rājadvāra made two trips (*siddhayātra*) to Java.<sup>100</sup> Possible links between Javanese and Cam Buddhism are suggested by doctrinal elements shared by the An Thái inscription and the Sanskrit-Old Javanese Esoteric Buddhist manual *San Hyaṇ Kamahāyānikan*, as well as by the importance of the “proto-tantric” *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* in the iconography of Đông Dương in Campa.<sup>101</sup> A *khakkhara* finial and several other bronze ritual objects from Dvāravatī have close parallels with Esoteric Buddhist material found in Central Java and beyond.<sup>102</sup>

## The Philippines

Recent scholarship has reevaluated the pre-Christian, Indic heritage of what are now called the Philippine Islands. In spite of the quantitatively scant evidence, qualitatively important archaeological and inscriptional finds suggest that the archipelago played a not irrelevant role in the Maritime Asian Buddhist networks. Butuan in Mindanao was visited by ships traveling the Java–China route, thanks to its important reserves of gold, as evinced by the presence of 9th-century Tang ware. Buddhist statuary, artifacts, and epigraphic documents include a clay Avalokiteśvara tablet from Luzon and an inscription from the Agusan region in Mindanao

featuring a variant of a mantra contained in the *Mahāpratisarāmahāvidyārājñī*, which implies that the cult of Mahāpratisarā could have reached the Philippines from Java around the same time as Amoghavajra's missions.<sup>103</sup>

The gold statuette of the goddess Vajralāsyā from the Agusan region is a remarkable artifact. This icon bears stylistic and iconographical resemblances to the group of bronze statues from Nganjuk in East Java, and it probably dates to the 9th–10th centuries. Since Vajralāsyā is one of the four deities associated with providing offerings to the Buddha Vairocana and located in the southeastern corner of the Vajradhātu mandala, one may argue that a tridimensional arrangement of this mandala, or a related variant revolving around the figure of Vajrasattva, was known in the Philippines by the 10th century.<sup>104</sup>

## Review of Literature

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The importance of seafaring and the maritime routes in the eastward expansion of Buddhism was highlighted long ago by influential scholars such as Édouard Chavannes, Sylvain Lévi, and George Coëdès.<sup>105</sup> Yet, secondary literature treating the topic of Maritime Buddhism as an integral phenomenon is scant. A small number of studies—notably those by Himanshu Ray, Tansen Sen, and Lewis Lancaster—exploring the long-distance maritime transfer of Buddhism across Asia in its religious, diplomatic, and economic ramifications has appeared in recent years on the wake of a growing interest in Maritime History/Indian Ocean Studies and Intra-Asian connections.<sup>106</sup> While those studies have helped popularize the idea of “Maritime Buddhism,” a comprehensive, monograph-length study that synthesizes and links together the abundant and multifarious historical evidence available to us from across Asia remains to be written.

A popular way to approach Maritime Buddhism has been to focus on the lives and voyages of monks traveling by sea between the Indian Subcontinent and China.<sup>107</sup> A recent study by Jeffrey Sundberg and Rolf Giebel has taken into account textual evidence in Chinese on the life and travels of Vajrabuddhi and Amoghavajra, and matched it with historical data from South, Southeast, and East Asia.<sup>108</sup> The shipwreck motif as illuminated by Buddhist texts as well as art and archaeological remains has been discussed by Andrea Acri and Himanshu Ray, respectively.<sup>109</sup> Nautical technology and seafaring in the Indian Ocean in light of the Ajanta Buddhist cave paintings, as well as Sanskrit and Pali texts, have been surveyed by Dieter Schlingloff.<sup>110</sup> Texts in East Asian languages are a particularly valuable source of information; although many have long been accessible in edited form, scholars have tended to focus on a few “classics,” and the majority of them are still waiting to be translated and studied. Tibetan sources, as well as vernacular literature in, for example, Tamil, Classical Malay, and Old Javanese, would also seem to offer a promising and little-explored avenue for further research.

Although much of the existing literature bearing on Maritime Buddhism seems to be grounded on, and confined within, the boundaries of Area Studies, recent studies focusing on Buddhism in specific regional contexts have occasionally touched on the phenomenon of Buddhist

contacts via wider trans-Asian maritime networks. See, for instance, works reevaluating Buddhism in the Tamil country or uncovering Esoteric Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.<sup>111</sup> A handful of studies have upheld a transregional and geographically wider perspective, such as Andrea Acri's edited volume *Esoteric Buddhism in Mediaeval Maritime Asia*, the articles by Max Deeg and Tansen Sen focusing on the maritime routes, and Kimiaki Tanaka's article comparing the mainland and maritime transmission of Esoteric Buddhism.<sup>112</sup> Insightful accounts of the intricacies of Buddhism and diplomacy across South, Southeast Asia, and East Asia have been produced by Upinder Singh, Gokul Seshadri, and Jonathan Silk.<sup>113</sup> Recent work by Tilman Frasch and Anne Blackburn has unraveled the networks of Pali Buddhism across Sri Lanka and Mainland Southeast Asia.<sup>114</sup> The study of maritime Buddhist contacts from the perspective of trade, as well as archaeology, has also been popular.<sup>115</sup>

Over the past decade, increasing attention has been paid to epigraphic and manuscript evidence from both mainland and insular Southeast Asia. The series of studies recently published by Arlo Griffiths on epigraphic remains and by Hudaya Kandahjaya on Old Javanese texts and inscriptions related to Borobudur are valuable to fully appreciate the important place of Insular Southeast Asia in the premodern Buddhist world and in tracing the maritime connections that once linked it to other centers of Buddhism.<sup>116</sup> Kenneth Hall has published an article describing aspects of the Bay of Bengal–South China Sea trade networks in light of recent findings of shipwrecks in Indonesian waters. His work integrates this newly discovered evidence of Buddhist artifacts into the mainstream historical narrative.<sup>117</sup>

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