

*The Voyage of Buddhist Missions To South-East Asia and The Far East**

THE position of Central Asia that stretches from the North-Western boundaries of China to the northern territories of ancient India (including modern Afghanistan) was considered as the life-line of international trade and cultural exchange. It was also known as the silk-route through which silk, spice and other commodities were offered for commercial exchange with countries in the West. We are not sure of the actual date when this international route first came to be used. The earliest historical record written in Chinese indicates that as early as the second century B.C. textile and bamboo products manufactured in China were sold in the market of Bactriana in the Oxus valley. This was personally seen by Chang Ch'ien, the envoy sent by Emperor Wu-ti of the Han Dynasty in 129 B.C. to negotiate with the Yüeh Chi rulers in Bactriana in order to form a military alliance. Further he was reported to have said that these commodities were brought to Bactriana via India.¹ This presupposes the existence of this international route between China and Central Asian countries including India. Therefore it appears to be very natural that most of the Indian and Central Asian Buddhist teachers, who proceeded to China, followed the trail of this caravan route through Central Asia or modern Chinese Turkestan. This particular route served a useful purpose for over 1,000 years from the beginning of the 3rd. century B.C. In addition to the missionary zeal shown by the Indian teachers, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims like Fa-hsien and Hsüan-tsang took the same route to go to India. It is from the records of these travellers we get the impression that the land route via Central Asia was chiefly responsible for the spread of Buddhism to China. Of course we cannot deny the importance of this route. We wish, however, to add that the sea route, too, played an equally important rôle in the international, commercial and cultural interchange. As this fact is not widely known, it may not be out of place here to bring to the notice to those who are interested in the development of Buddhism in China, and the introduction of the Buddhist teaching to

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1. See the chapter on Ta-wan or Fergana in Ssü-ma-ch'ien's Shih-chi.

some of the South-East Asian countries. Naturally, this would mean the important events concerning the various Buddhist missionary activities in these regions.

The fact that Fa-hsien in the early 5th century A.C. returned to China by the sea route indicates that the sea communication between China and India was fairly popular at that time. It is beyond our knowledge to trace the date of the actual beginning of this route. Han Shu,² one of the earliest Chinese historical sources of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.—25 A.C.) gives us a list of names of countries in South-East Asia and India. Most of the countries could not be identified except Huang-chi (Kāñcī or Conjeevaram). It appears that Conjeevaram was on friendly terms with the Chinese Imperial Court, for during the reign of Emperor P'ing-ti (1—5 A.C.), the powerful minister Wang-mang presented to the king of Conjeevaram valuable gifts with the request that the latter should dispatch to China a live rhinoceros. Later the annals of the Latter Han Dynasty³ (25—220 A.C.) say that several embassies were sent to China by India in 159 and 161 A.C. It also mentions that an embassy was sent to China by King Antonius of Rome in 166 A.C. This particular mission reached China through the outskirt districts called Jih-nan and Hsiao-wai in southern China. These are the clear bits of evidence that the sea communication between the Indian Ocean and the China Sea was established at least in the beginning of the first century A.C. Moreover, this route was not used by India alone, but other countries like Rome and Parthia as well. This shows that the sea route to China has an early beginning, and it has been proved as popular as the land route via Central Asia.

It is the intention in this paper to trace and discuss the Buddhist missions which proceeded to the South Seas and the Far East through the sea route. It is also hoped to point out the extent of the contributions made by these missions towards the spread of Buddhism in these regions. Therefore, a study of the following Buddhist teachers regarding their mode of travel, missionary activities and their achievement and so forth is essential and necessary.

I. An-shih-kao (Pārthamaśīrī ?)

One of the earliest Buddhist missions to China which has been accepted as trustworthy is the one led by An-shih-kao. It is said that before taking

2. See the chapter on Geography in the Annal of the Former Han Dynasty.

3. See the chapter on India in the Hou-han-shu.

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the Buddhist vow he was the crown prince of King Pakor of Parthia.⁴ He reached China in the beginning of the reign of King Huan-ti (146-167 A.C.), and from 148 to 168 A.C. he devoted himself to the task of translating more than 30 Buddhist texts which deal with the practice of meditation and other types of early Buddhist literature. His biographer⁵ does not state precisely whether he reached China by the land or the sea route. However, there are certain indications that possibly he went there by sea. For instance, it is said in his biography that at the end of the reign of King Ling-ti (168-189 A.C.), on account of disturbance of national uprising, he left Loyang and went to southern China, when he had completed the task of translating Buddhist works. This would mean that he spent most of his time (over 20 years) in northern China. The reason for his lengthy stay at Loyang was that was the capital of the Han Dynasty. Thus he would get ample assistance from the government to facilitate his task of translation. However, there is a very significant episode presented in the form of a legend in his biography. The gist of the legend is, according to the statement made by An-shih-kao himself, that in his previous birth he had been a Buddhist monk of Parthia. Owing to the effect of karma he went to Canton in South China and was slain by a youth there. After his death his 'consciousness returned to Parthia and he was born again as the crown prince to the king of Parthia—and that was the present life of An-shih-kao.'⁶

The story itself may not carry much weight, but conjoining the places⁷ in southern China with which he was closely associated, it would appear that he came to China by the sea route and Canton was probably the port where he disembarked. If we interpret the legend in this way, it would give us some meaning which is probably closer to the truth.

II. K'ang-seng-hui

The spread of Buddhism to southern China along the lower Yangtse valley in the early part of the 3rd. century A.C. chiefly depended on the enthusiasm shown by a few foreign missionaries who had close connection with central Asia and Indo-China. Among them K'ang-seng-hui's endeavour

4. Fung-ch'eng-chün : Les moines Chinois et étrangers qui ont contribué à la formation du Tripiṭaka chinois, p. 4.

5. Kao-seng-chuan, Ch. 1. Nanjio No. 1490.

6. *Ibid.*, Ch. 1.

7. It is said he converted the deity of the Kung-ting Lake which is situated at the Lower Yangtse valley in modern Chiangsi province. Secondly he met the man who had killed him in his previous life at Canton and thirdly it is said he died an accidental death at Kuei-chi in modern Chechiang province.

was unique. His ancestors were of Sogdian origin, but for generations they had been residing in India. Later his father migrated from India to Tonkin in Indo-China (It was called Chiao-chih at that time) for the purpose of trade. During his childhood his parents died and he took the vow of a Buddhist monk in one of the monasteries there. This must have taken place many years before 247 A.C. (because he reached Nanking in the 10th year of Tz'u-wu, viz., 247 A.C. of the Wu Kingdom). No mention is made of his voyage from Indo-China to Nanking except for a sentence indicating the direction of his journey: 'Taking his monk's staff he travelled towards the East.'⁸ We presume he took the sea route from Indo-China and reached Nanking via Canton. That is the most convenient and direct route through which one could easily reach South China. Moreover, Canton is in the eastern direction judging by the standpoint of Indo-China. There is the other alternative route via Yunnan, Szechwan, Hupeh and Chiangshi provinces to reach Nanking. This is certainly circuitous and full of obstructions along the route. For instance, during the reign of the second ruler, Hou-chu (223-263 A.C.) of the Shu Kingdom (in modern Szechwan province), Kung-ming, the prime minister of this Kingdom waged war constantly⁹ against the native tribes of Yunnan. Under such circumstances, we are not quite sure whether one could pass through Yunnan at that time. It is very unlikely that K'ang-seng-hui ventured himself to take this risky and round-about route instead of the safe and comfortable sea voyage to China.

His contribution to Buddhism in southern China consists of converting Sun-ch'üan, the founder of the Wu Kingdom (222-251 A.C.), causing the miraculous power of the relics of the Buddha to be exhibited, thereby he gained a large following, the building of the First Buddhist Monastery (Chien-t'zu-ssü) and stupa and the establishment of the Buddha's Village (Fu-t'o-li). Thenceforward Buddhism was firmly established on the soil of southern China and a large number of people became Buddhists. Comparing this with the early beginning of Buddhism in that area, the contrast is rather shocking. It is said that when he arrived at Nanking in 247 A.C., the officials of the Wu Kingdom were suspicious of his strange appearance and the monk's costume. He was officially interrogated and put to inconvenience. The whole trouble lies in the fact that he was the first Buddhist śramaṇa to enter that territory in southern China. However, Buddhist works like the Dhammapada and Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa were known

8. Kao-seng-chuan, Ch. 1.

9. San-kuo-chih or the Record of the Three Kingdoms, see the chapter on Shu Kingdom.

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to a section of the people of the Wu Kingdom at that time, through the effort of Chih-ch'ien, a lay disciple of Yüeh-chi origin. He might have exercised some influence on the intelligentsia, but the credit in showing Buddhism as a popular religion should go to K'ang-seng-hui. Besides, in the existing Chinese Tripiṭaka two works are ascribed to be the translation of K'ang-seng-hui. They are :

1. *Shatparamitā-sannipāta-sūtra.* (Nanjio No. 143).
2. *Saṃyuktāvadāna-sūtra.* (Nanjio No. 1539).

III. Dharmayaśas and Buddhahadra

A. Dharmayaśas

Among the Kashmirian teachers, who went to China, Dharmayaśas and Buddhahadra may be said to have set up a record in finding a circuitous way to reach that country. Dharmayaśas was a native of Kashmir and an expert on the Vibhāśā vinaya of the Sarvāstivādin school. He arrived at Canton in southern China during the period of Lung-an (397-401 A.C.) of the Eastern Tsin Dynasty. Later he proceeded to Changan in northern China during the I-hsü period (405-418 A.C.), and together with Dharmagupta he translated two works, namely :

1. *Strīvivarta-vyākaraṇa-sūtra.* (Nanjio No. 215).
2. *Sāriputrābhidharma-śāstra.* (Nanjio No. 1268).

His biographer does not state the details of his journey but simply says : "He travelled many well-known countries and passed through a number of kingdoms and districts."¹⁰ As he disembarked at Canton, we presume he must have, first of all, travelled from Kashmir to Bengal and embarked on a ship at Tāmralipti for the South Seas and thence to southern China. This assumption may not be too far from fact if the case of Fa-hsien could be cited. Fa-hsien sailed from Tāmralipti for Ceylon, Java and China sometime in 413 or 414 A.C. If 12 years later, the voyage could be easily undertaken by Fa-hsien, it was also possible for Dharmayaśas to have travelled the same route.

It is mentioned in his biography that he returned to the Western Regions (India) during the Yüan-chia period (424-451 A.C.). This time we are at a loss as to how he returned to India.

10. Kao-seng-chuan, Ch. 1.

B. Buddhahadra

Another interesting route through which an Indian teacher found his way to China has been recorded in the life of Buddhahadra.¹¹ This teacher originally belonged to Kapilavastu. Later he went to Kashmir to study dhyāna under the guidance of Buddhasena, a renowned master of dhyāna of Kashmir. He was highly praised by his teacher (Buddhasena) for his mastery in meditation and vinaya observance. The arrival of Buddhahadra in Kashmir must have taken place sometime before 401 A.C. This is calculated on the basis that Chih-yen, one of the companions of Fa-hsien, started his journey from China for India in 399 A.C. It took him two to three years to reach Kashmir (Cr. 401-2 A.C.). As Chih-yen was very keen on inviting a renowned teacher to go to China to teach dhyāna practices in the proper way, the burden fell on the shoulders of Buddhahadra, though in the beginning he was rather hesitant to accept the offer. It is in this regard we see how he travelled to China :

“ Having crossed over the Pamirs (Ts’ong-ling, the Onion Ranges), he passed through six countries. The rulers of these kingdoms were sympathetic towards his missionary zeal in going to distant lands. They provided him with abundant requisites. Having reached Chiao-chih (Tonkin), he boarded a ship after sometime he reached the Tung-lai prefecture of Ch’ing-chow.¹² When he learnt that Kumārajīva was staying at Changan, he immediately proceeded thither to meet him.”¹³

If we examine his itinerary carefully, it gives us the impression that Buddhahadra, who was accompanied by Chih-yen, started his journey¹⁴ from Kashmir and followed the trails leading to the Pamirs. When he was on the tracks of Central Asia or Chinese Turkestan, he passed through six countries. The names of these countries are not given. It is quite likely that some of the important places like Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan, Niya and so forth situated on the southern route leading to the Chinese frontier should be the kingdoms which he passed through. Otherwise, if he took the northern route along which the ancient kingdoms such as Bharuka near Uch-Turfan, Kuçī (modern Kuchar), Karashar and Turfan were situated,¹⁵

11. *Ibid.*, Ch. 2.

12. Ch’ing-chow was one of the 9 divisions of China under Yü, the great. It was situated in the eastern part of the present Shangtung province.

13. Kao-seng-chuan, Ch. 2.

14. *Ibid.*, Ch. 3. See Life of Chih-yen.

15. P. C. Bagchi : India and China, pp. 12-14.

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he would have easily reached the north-western frontiers of China, and would not have taken the sea route to reach the Shangtung province in northern China. If our presumption be correct, it poses the problem as to how he travelled from Chinese Turkestan to Chiao-chih (Tonkin) in Indo-China. We have never heard of any Buddhist missionary or pilgrim who had taken that unusual and circuitous route before. As his biographer does not say anything about the journey from Chinese Turkestan to Indo-China, we may suggest that his journey from Central Asia might have covered the territories of Tibet, Assam, Burma, Thailand and Indo-China. This possibility is seen from the fact that the 14th Dalai Lama, who ran away from Lahsa owing to political disturbance, reached Tezpur in Assam in 1959. In the 5th century A.C. there might have existed foot-paths in the above-mentioned areas which were used by caravans for trading purposes. If that be the case, the possibility of Buddhahadra's travelling from Chinese Turkestan to Indo-China cannot be ruled out. We must admit, however, that the itinerary of Buddhahadra is the most strange and unique among the Buddhist missionaries to the Far East.

While at Changan Buddhahadra met Kumārajīva. The latter was glad to receive him, and on many an occasion consulted him on Buddhist doctrines. As Buddhahadra devoted himself to the teaching and practice of meditation as well as the observance of the vinaya rules, his way of life was quite different from that of Kumārajīva. It is said that on account of a prophecy made by Buddhahadra, the disciples of Kumārajīva took advantage of it and expelled him from living among other members of the Saṅgha at Changan.

During his stay in southern China, many Sanskrit texts were translated into Chinese by him. Amongst his translations the Avataṃsaka-sūtra (Nanjio No. 87) and the Mahāsaṅghika-vinaya (Nanjio No. 1119) are some of the important works which have influenced Buddhism in China to a large extent. He passed away in 429 A.C. at the age of 71.

IV. Guṇavarman

Among the Kashmirian teachers who took the sea route to China, Guṇavarman achieved greater success as a Buddhist missionary than most of his contemporaries. His missionary zeal took him to propagate Buddhism in South-East Asia and the Far East, although his original plan was not specifically directed towards China. If we accept the statement of his

biographer, it appears that he belonged to the ruling family of Kashmir. As he was greatly interested in the study of Buddhist literature and the practice of meditation he scorned the idea of being made the ruler of Kashmir. To avoid further trouble, he decided to leave Kashmir, and in course of time he reached Ceylon (Siṃhala country). According to the verses composed by himself before his death, we are told that he attained the Sakadāgāmin Fruition at the Ka-po-li (Kapārā or Kāpiri ^{15a}) village in Ceylon. It appears that he lived in Ceylon for a very long time, and his fame as a saint must have spread far and wide, because he said :

“ Offerings heaped up in large piles, but I regard them as fire and poison. My mind was greatly distressed, and to get rid of this disturbance I embarked on a ship I went to Java and Champa. Owing to the effect of karma, the wind sent me to the territories of the Sung Dynasty (420-479 A.C.) in China. And in these countries I propagated Buddhism according to my ability”¹⁶

The few lines quoted above indicate to us the causes and circumstances under which he was forced to carry on his missionary activities. He was essentially a dhyāna master of the Sarvāstivādin school which was still popular in Kashmir at that time. There is no record available to us now regarding his missionary activities in Ceylon and Champa, but fortunately we have details about his success in Java and China.

Before the arrival of Guṇavarman in Java, the religion in that country was chiefly Brahmanic and there was hardly any influence of Buddhism. This is clearly stated in the Travels of Fa-hsien. We know that Fa-hsien reached Java from Ceylon in 413 or 414 A.C. He was of the opinion that the Buddhist religion there was not of sufficient importance worth mentioning. Therefore, it is very likely that Guṇavarman converted P'o-to-chia (Vadhaka ?), the king of Java and his mother to Buddhism. In the beginning, both of them received the five precepts from him. However, the king went a step further expressing the wish to his ministers that he intended to renounce the throne and become a member of the Saṅgha. His subjects strongly objected to his intended departure, and entreated him to continue to be their ruler. Finally he yielded to their request, if they could agree to his following conditions :

15A. In the 8th century A.C. there was a Kapārā Parivena (next to the Twin Pond) in Anuradhapura. See Epigraphy Zeylanic, Vol. V. (part I.) Of course there is a village Kapirigama, now so called. I am indebted to Mr. D. T. Devindra for this information.

16. Kao-seng-chuan, Ch. 3.

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1. That the people throughout his kingdom should show respect to the venerable Guṇavarman.
2. That all the subjects in his kingdom should completely stop the taking of life of living beings and
3. That the accumulated wealth in government treasury should be distributed among the sick and the poor.

It is needless to say that the people in Java willingly agreed to all the conditions and received the five precepts from Guṇavarman. Later the King erected a Vihara for him. It is said that the King carried timber personally for the construction of the monastery. This indicates the tremendous success of the spread of Buddhism in Java in the early part of the 5th century A.C. Naturally the credit goes to Guṇavarman.

His journey from Java to China is also of unusual interest. The news of Guṇavarman's missionary activities in Java reached China sometime before 424 A.C. In 424 A.C. the Chinese Buddhists in Nanking headed by Hui-kuan requested Emperor Wu-ti (424-452 A.C.) of the Sung Dynasty to write to Guṇavarman and the King of Java (Vadhaka), with the intention of inviting him (Guṇavarman) to China. Later, the Emperor sent Fa-chang, and other Buddhist scholars to Java in order to extend the Emperor's invitation to him in person. However, before the arrival of these messengers in Java, Guṇavarman had already left Java by boat and was going to a small country. But fortunately the seasonal wind caused him to reach the shores of Canton in southern China. He stayed at a place called Shih-hsin for quite a long time. It was only in the 8th year of Yüan-chia (431 A.C.) that he reached Nanking at the repeated request of Emperor Wen-ti. His advice to the Emperor on benevolent government was greatly appreciated by the ruler. Among his propagation activities, he preached Sad-dharmapuṇḍarika-sūtra and the Daśabhūmi-sūtra to a large audience and translated more than ten works of which the following five are still extant :

1. Upāli-pariparicchā-sūtra. (Nanjio No. 1109)
2. Upāsaka-pañcaśīlarūpa-sūtra. (Nanjio No. 1114)
3. Dharmagupta-bhikṣuṇī-karma. (Nanjio No. 1129)
4. Śramaṇera-karmavāca. (Nanjio No. 1164)
5. Nāgārjuna-bodhisattva-suhrillekha (Nanjio No. 1464)

Another important contribution of Guṇavarman was the assistance given by him towards the conferment of higher ordination to the Bhikṣuṇīs in China in accordance with the specifications of the Vinaya. The normal

practice is that Bhikṣuṇīs should receive their Upasampadā ordination from both the Bhikṣu and the Bhikṣuṇī Saṅghas. Otherwise it is incomplete. The institution of Bhikṣuṇīs in China has an early beginning. The Chinese historical annals inform us that towards the end of the 4th century A.C. the rulers and members of the royal family showed great respect to both the Buddhist Bhikṣus and Bhikṣuṇīs. Take for instance, the Queen of Mu-ti (345-361 A.C.) who built the Yung-an-ssū¹⁷ Nunnery for Bhikṣuṇī Tan-pi, and Emperor Hsiao-wu-ti (373-395 A.C.) who was a great patron of Bhikṣuṇī Maio-yin, though the latter¹⁸ was unworthy of the honour. This shows that by the middle of the 4th century A.C. there existed a large number of Buddhist nuns. However, the earliest translation of the Bhikṣuṇī Prātimokṣa was done by Fa-hsien¹⁹ and Buddhahadra in 414 A.C. and the formal proceeding for the Bhikṣuṇīs (Dharmagupta Bhikṣuṇī Karman, Nanjio No. 1129) was translated by Guṇavarman himself in 431 A.C. This being the case, it is very doubtful that the Bhikṣuṇīs in China were properly ordained before the arrival of Guṇavarman in 431 A.C. Therefore, there arose the necessity (and a request was made to him) that he should help the Bhikṣuṇīs perform the rites for the higher ordination for the second time. At this juncture there came from Ceylon to the capital of the Sung Dynasty at Nanking, a batch of eight Sinhalese Bhikṣuṇīs, with the intention of conferring higher ordination to the Chinese nuns. As their number was less than ten and some of them had not yet completed the required age after the Upasampadā ordination,^{19a} Guṇavarman helped them to invite a fresh batch of Bhikṣuṇīs from Ceylon, the leader of this new delegation was Theri Triśaraṇa.²⁰ As Guṇavarman was in Ceylon for a long time, he was possibly the most suitable person to do it. But unfortunately he could not live to see the fruit of his labour. He passed away in 432 A.C. at the age of 65. This sad event took place just before the arrival of the second batch²¹ of Bhikṣuṇīs from Ceylon. He left behind him a verse of 36 stanzas regarding his views on meditation, his attainment and missionary career.

17. See Pi-ch'iu-ni-chuan or the Biographies of Bhikṣuṇīs, Nanjio No. 1497.

18. *Ibid.*, The life of Miao-yin ; Tsin-shu, or the Annal of the Tsin Dynasty, see the Biography of Tao-tze.

Also see T'ang-yung-t'ung's : Han-wei-liang-tsin-nan-pei-ts'ao-fu-chiao-shih, p. 349 and pp. 453-4.

19. See Bhikṣuṇī-saṅghika-vinaya-prātimokṣa-sūtra, Nanjio No. 1150.

19A. Mahāvagga, I, 31, 2-6.

20. See W. Pachow : Ancient cultural relations between Ceylon and China. University of Ceylon Review, Vol. XII, No. 3. 1954. Kao-seng-chuan, Ch. 3.

21. See the Life of Saṅghavarman. Kao-seng-chuan, Ch. 3.

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V. Guṇabhadra

Guṇabhadra was known as the Mahāyāna in China. He belonged to a Brahmin family in Central India. Before his coming to China, he, too, had spent sometime in Ceylon and other countries in the South Seas. He reached Canton²² in 435 A.C. and was accorded a warm welcome by Emperor T'ai-tsu of the Sung Dynasty (420-479) at Nanking. During the period of his voyage from Ceylon to China, he and his companions experienced great difficulty owing to the shortage of drinking water. Fortunately Nature came to their rescue, and they were lucky in getting a shower of rain. This was said to be the effect of his prayer to the merciful Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva.

He stayed in southern China for 33 years and passed away in 468 A.C. at the age of 75. He translated more than 20 works pertaining to both the Hīnayānic and Mahāyānic forms of Buddhism. Among his translations the *Srīmālā-devī-siṃhanāda* (Nanjio No. 59) and *Saṃyuktāgāma-sūtra* (Nanjio No. 544) are very popular.

VI. Saṅghapāla and Mandra

Both Saṅghapāla and Mandra (or Mandrasena) belonged to Fu-nan or modern Cambodia. They were probably the first Buddhist missionaries to go to China from that country and undertook the work of translation. Naturally they must have gone to China by sea, because it is said in the biography of Saṅghapāla that he reached the capital (Nanking) of the Ch'i Dynasty (479-502 A.C.) by ship. While at Nanking he studied the *Vaipulya Mahāyāna* texts (under Guṇabhadra :^{22a}). From 506 A.C. onwards for over 15 years he translated 11 works including the *Vimokshamarga-śāstra* (Nanjio No. 1293) which is supposed to be the counterpart of the *Visudhimagga* of Buddhaghosa²³ with slight variations. The rest of his works are concerning the Mahāyāna²⁴ doctrines, although it is stated in his biography²⁵ that earlier he specialized in the *Abhidharma-śāstras*. He passed away in 524 A.C. at the age of 65.

22. *Ibid.*

22A. As Guṇabhadra died in 468 A.C. he could not have been able to meet him (Guṇabhadra) in 479 A.C. at Nanking. It may be that Saṅghapāla was his disciple earlier.

23. P. V. Bapat : *Vimuttimaggā and Visudhimaggā, a comparative study*, 1939.

24. See Nanjio Nos. 22, 308, 353, 442 and 1103 etc.

25. See *Su-kao-seng-chuan*, Ch. 1.

Mandra went to China at the beginning of the Liang Dynasty (502-557 A.C.). He worked jointly with Saṅghapāla in translating Buddhist texts such as Ratnamegha-sūtra (Nanjio No. 152). Saptasatikā-prajñā-pāramitā (Nanjio No. 23 '46') and so forth. This indicates that Fu-nan at that time was very familiar with Mahāyānic literature. However, his translations were not satisfactory because he did not possess a good knowledge of Chinese.²⁶

VII. Paramārtha

Paramārtha or Guṇaratna was one of the well-known Indian teachers in China who contributed extensively towards the propagation of Mahāyāna Buddhism by translating many important Sanskrit texts into Chinese. However, the way of his going to China, and the several attempts made by him with the intention of returning to India, indicate that originally he had no idea of going to that country ; and apparently he was not very happy there.

He belonged to Ujjayinī (Ujjain) of western India and was very enthusiastic in travelling to distant lands to propagate the teaching of the Buddha. We are not very clear as to how he went to Fu-nan (Cambodia) from India, but we know how he went to China from Fu-nan. While he was in Fu-nan, the Emperor Wu-ti of the Liang Dynasty sent Chang-fan, his envoy to Fu-nan, to pay a return visit during the period of Ta-t'ung (535-545 A.C.). This Emperor also requested the king²⁷ of that country to collect Mahāyāna texts and invite eminent Buddhist teachers to go to China, so that his envoy would accompany them. Paramārtha was chosen by the king of Fu-nan, and 240 bundles of Buddhist texts were entrusted to him to be taken to China. He arrived at Nan-hai in southern China in 546 A.C. and two years later he reached Nanking in 548 A.C. Owing to the political upheaval in the country, he could not settle down, and had hardly any time to devote himself to the task of translating the Buddhist works into Chinese. He had to move from place to place in the regions of Kiangsi, Nanking and Canton. This upset his plan. Therefore, he was rather disappointed and wanted to seek a more fertile soil for the spread of Buddhism in the South Seas—that is he had the intention of going to Lankasuka (now the northern part of Malayan Peninsula). This happened in 558 A.C. However, he was earnestly requested by both the members of the Saṅgha

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

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and the laity to stay on in China. Again in 562 A.C. he embarked on an ocean-going ship at the port of Liangan intending to return to India. This time, he must have felt very happy that he was finally going back to his home land. But unfortunately, unfavourable winds brought his boat back to the port of Canton in southern China ! Since then he thought it was useless in trying to escape from the effect of one's karma, and decided to settle down in China for good. During his 23 years' stay (from 546 to 569 A.C.) in that country, he translated 64 works of which 29 are still extant.²⁸ Among his translations²⁹ the *Madhyānta-vibhāga-śāstra* (Nanjio No. 1428), *Mahāyāna-samparigraha-śāstra* (Nanjio No. 1183), *Mahāyāna-śradhopādā-śāstra* (Nanjio No. 1249) and so forth are very popular. It is obvious that most of the śāstras translated by him formed a nucleus of the Yogacāra doctrine of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu in China, and on the foundation of this, we see the establishment of the Dharmalakṣṇa school of Hsüan-tsang in the 7th century A.C.

He passed away in 569 A.C. at the age of 71.

VIII. Punyopāya

Punyopāya was known in China as Nadi, the master of Tripiṭaka. He was comparatively less fortunate in his missionary endeavour in that country. He came from Central India. Before his arrival in China in 655 A.C. he had been to the Lanka Mountain (The Adam's Peak) in Ceylon (the Siṃhala country), and visited the countries in the South Seas for the purpose of propagating the Buddhist teaching. While in these regions he heard of the name of China : therefore, he collected over 500 bundles of both Mahāyāna and Hinayāna texts amounting to 1,500 works. Later, he brought these texts along with him to the capital (Changan) of the T'ang Dynasty. He stayed in the Tz'u-en-ssū Monastery where Hsüan-tsang engaged in the task of translating Buddhist works at that time. As the glory and fame of Hsüan-tsang at this juncture reached dazzling heights, Punyopāya was put into shade. Moreover, they differed greatly in their learning. Hsüan-tsang laid emphasis on Dharmalakṣṇa or the doctrine of Consciousness while Punyopāya followed the traditional teaching of Nāgārjuna and his accent was on Sūnya philosophy. To add fuel to this unhappy situation, he was requested by Emperor Kao-tsung in 656 A.C. to go to the Kun-lun regions (or the Pulo Condore³⁰ Island in the China

28. *Ibid.*

29. See Nanjio's Catalogue of the Chinese Buddhist Tripitaka, Appendix II, p. 423.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 438.

Sea) to gather some rare medicinal herbs for him. This mission took him seven years to go and return. In 663 A.C. when he returned to the monastery where he used to stay, he found to his dismay that all the Sanskrit manuscripts he had brought with him were taken by Hsüan-tsang, and at that time the latter was staying in the Yü-hua Palace. Naturally he was at a loss and could not translate any work of importance except some minor texts.³¹ Sometime in 663 A.C., the king of Chen-la (Cambodia) expressed the wish to the Chinese emperor that they would like to have Punyopāya, their old spiritual teacher, to be with them, and the request was duly granted. He went to Cambodia and never returned to China.³²

IX. Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra

Vajrabodhi and his pupil Amoghavajra were chiefly responsible for the establishment of a separate Esoteric School of Buddhism in China in the early part of 8th century A.C. The former belonged to a Brahmin family of the Malay region in South India, and his father was the preceptor of the king of Conjeevaram. He studied at the Nālandā University as well as in western India. He was famed for his mastery in the Tripiṭaka and Tantric Buddhism. We have a distinct record of his itinerary. He started his journey from his home town in Malay heading towards the Lanka Mountain (the Adam's Peak) in Ceylon. Later, embarking on an ocean-going ship, he passed through the Nicobar Islands,³³ Śrīvijaya (Palembang) and other countries over 20 in number in the South Seas. Then he proceeded to China and reached Canton in 719 A.C. Through his effort many religious performances used to take place, and Tantric Maṇḍalas were made in various regions in China. There are 11 works ascribed to be his translations as found in the Catalogue of Nanjio. These texts are chiefly pertaining to the Tantric Dhāraṇīs. He passed away in 732 A.C. at the age of 71.

Amoghavajra was possibly the most successful disciple of Vajrabodhi. Not only he succeeded him in putting Tantic Buddhism on a firm footing by popularizing it among the members of the royal family and the general public, but the large number of Tantric texts translated by him, and the mission undertaken by him in search of the Buddhist texts in India and Ceylon should be regarded as an important event in the history of Chinese

31. See Nanjio Nos. 462 and 521.

32. See Su-kao-seng-chuan, Ch. 4.

33. See Sung-kao-seng-chuan, Ch. 1.

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Buddhism. According to his biographer,³⁴ he belonged to a Brahmin family in northern India, but according to Yüan-chao, author of *Chen-yüan-hsin-ting-shih-chiao-mu-lu* or a Buddhist Catalogue of the Chen-yüan period (785-804 A.C.), it is said that his native country was Ceylon (the Sinhala country) in South India. Probably the former statement is more correct, because Ceylon has never been a part of India in the sense in which we understand the expression, up to the time with which we are dealing. It is stated in his biography that after the demise of his parents, Amoghavajra went to China with his uncle on a visit, and at the age of 15, he became a disciple of Vajrabodhi. This part of his biography is rather complicated. If he were really of a Brahmin family, and had nothing to do with trade, what was the purpose of going so far on a tour to the Far East? Granted that was so, then why should he become a Buddhist novice at such an early age? These are points yet to be answered.

To carry out the wishes of his late teacher, who instructed him to go to India and Ceylon in order to collect more Tantric works, he began his journey in 741 A.C. with the assistance of Chinese government officials. The route he followed was from Canton to Ceylon via Java (Ho-lin--Kalinga), and then from Ceylon to India. On his way to Java, he and his companions encountered with a terrific storm at one stage, and their boat was tossed about in the mountain-like waves caused by a huge whale at another stage. They managed to escape from these dangers unharmed. While in Ceylon he was respected by King Silāmegha (Aggabodhi VI) to such an extent that the King himself bathed him with scented water everyday, during his stay in the King's palace.³⁵ Later, he requested the well-known Sinhalese Tantric Master Samantabhadra (P'u-hsien) Ācārya to perform the ceremony of the two Maṇḍalas, viz., the Vajradhātu and Garbhadhātu, and initiate him as well as his Chinese disciples into the profound mystery of Tantrism. It is said that he collected over 500 volumes of Śūtras, Sāstras and Tantric texts in the Island of Ceylon. When he completed his work in that country, he proceeded to India, and in 746 A.C. he returned to China.³⁶ From that time onwards till his death in 744 A.C. he engaged himself in the performance of Tantric rites and ceremonies. He was the spiritual teacher to three emperors of the Tang Dynasty, i.e.

34. *Ibid.*

35. See W. Pachow: Ancient cultural relations between Ceylon and China. *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. XII, No. 3. pp. 184-5, July, 1954.

36. Nothing has been mentioned of his return trip.

Hsüan-tsung, Shu-tsung and Tai-tsung. It was under his influence that the Tantric practices dealing with talismanic forms and the occasional exhibition of supernatural powers gained currency in China.

According to his statement³⁷ made in 771 A.C. he translated 77 works consisting of over 120 fasciculi, but according to the Catalogue of Nanjio there are 108 works ascribed to him, and they are extant in most of the editions of the Chinese Tripiṭaka. His translations chiefly deal with Tantras and Dhāraṇīs.

X. Prājña

This teacher may be regarded as one of the unhappy travellers who went to China by the sea route. He was a native of Kapiśā. He studied the Hinayāna, Mahāyāna and Tantic literature in northern and southern India and at Nālandā. While he was in South India he learnt that Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva had his abode in China, therefore he decided to embark on a ship sailing for that country. It is said that when he was almost in the vicinity of Canton, an unfavourable wind brought his boat to the east of Ceylon (Siṃhala Kingdom).³⁸ No clear indication is given with regard to the actual position of his boat. It may be very doubtful that his boat was close to the shores of Ceylon. It may be that his boat was somewhere close to Indo-China or Cambodia. This is strengthened by the fact that after sometime he collected funds and built a large boat, and then he travelled extensively all the countries in the regions of the South Seas. Later, when he was not very far from Canton for the second time, we are told, there arose a sudden storm and his boat was capsized, though he managed to save himself from drowning and salvaged his Sanskrit texts. He reached the city of Canton in 780 A.C., and six years later he arrived at Changan in 786 A.C. In 792 he was under the patronage of Emperor Teh-tsung (779-804 A.C.) who asked many Chinese Buddhist scholars to help him in his task of translating Sanskrit works.

In Nanjio's Catalogue³⁹, there are four translations ascribed to him amongst which the Mahāyānabhuddhi-śatparamitā-sūtra is well-known.

He passed away at Loyang sometime after 792 A.C.

37. See Sung-kao-seng-chuan, Ch. 1.

38. *Ibid.*, Ch. 2.

39. See Appendix II, p. 447.

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The foregoing passages show some of the more well-known cases of Indian, Central Asian and South-East Asian Buddhist teachers who undertook their journey by the sea route to the South Seas and the Far East, especially China, for the propagation of Buddhism. However, this chiefly deals with those teachers who were connected with translation. A few others like Bodhidharma, who was known as the founder⁴⁰ of Zen Buddhism, also went to China by the sea route in 480 A.C. He, first of all, reached the territories of the earlier Sung Dynasty (421-479 A.C.) in southern China, and then proceeded to Loyang and other places in northern China. Similarly, Pan-la-mi-ti (Parāmiti), a teacher from Central India went to China by the same route. He reached Canton sometime before 705 A.C. and stayed at the Chih-chih-ssū monastery in order to translate the Suraṅgama-sūtra (Nanjio No. 446) into Chinese. Later he returned to India by boat. The cases here cover a period of over 600 years from about 150 A.C. to the end of the 8th century A.C. We notice that the sea route leading to India has been very popular, so much so that more than 30 Chinese and Korean monks undertook their journey⁴¹ by this route either to India, Siam or the South Seas. I-tsing tells us that he embarked on a Persian boat from Canton in 671 A.C. He stayed for six months in Palembang for learning Sanskrit or the Śabdavidya, then he passed through Malaya (Sumatra), Kedah, Nicobar Islands and finally reached Tāmralipti in eastern India. On his return journey, he stayed for sometime in Malaya in 689 A.C.

All this shows that upto the middle of the 8th century A.C. the sea communication between India and China was chiefly monopolized by the Persians⁴² or other Western nationals, and the regions of Malaya, Sumatra and other nearby places were to a large extent influenced by Indian culture through the Indian colonists. Otherwise I-tsing would not be able to learn Sanskrit at Palembang.

40. W. Pachow : Zen Buddhism and Bodhidharma. IHQ, Vol. XXXII, 1956.

41. See 'Eminent Buddhist teachers of the T'ang Dynasty who sought the Dharma in the Western Regions.' By I-tsing. Nanjio No. 1491.

42. It is stated in the Life of Amoghavajra that in 741 A.C. before his departure for Ceylon, Liu-chu-lin, an important minister summoned I-shi-pin (Ibrahim ?) chief of the foreigners residing at Canton to give instruction to the Captain of the boat by which Amoghavajra was travelling that Amoghavajra should be well-looked after. This would indicate that a large number of foreign merchants and shipping agents, chiefly from Persia or Arabia, were in the ports of China. See Sung-kao-seng-chuan, Ch. 1.

Regarding Buddhism in Java, it was due to the effort of Guṇavarman who introduced the Hīnayānic form of Buddhism into that country in the early part of the 5th century A.C. This school of Buddhism must have existed till the end of the 7th century A.C. The observation⁴³ made by I-tsing in this regard is very valuable. He was of the opinion that most of the Islands including Java (Ho-lin), Malayu or Śrīvijaya Borneo etc. in the South Seas followed the Mūlasarvāstivādin and Saṃmitīya Schools. There was not much of Mahāyāna Buddhism there except to a certain extent in Malayu (Sumatra). However, I-tsing did not mention clearly what form of Buddhism existed in Fu-nan (Cambodia) at that time, as there were no monks in that country on account of the persecution carried out by the evil kings. From the fact that Saṅghapāla and Mandra went to China from Fu-nan in the beginning of the 6th century A.C. and translated many Mahāyāna texts into Chinese; and later in 546 A.C. when Pramārtha went to China from Fu-nan, he took with him 240 bundles of Mahāyāna works from that country, it shows that Fu-nan was a strong centre of Mahāyāna literature. Moreover, in 539 A.C. the envoy⁴⁴ from Fu-nan to the court of the Liang Dynasty (502-557) told the Emperor that in their country there were hairs of the Buddha measuring 12 feet in length. All this indicates that Buddhism in Fu-nan in the early part of the 6th century A.C. was chiefly Mahāyānic and the Buddhist texts were in Sanskrit. Till then, the influence of Pali Buddhism had not yet begun.

Thus, the voyage of Buddhist missions to South-East Asian countries and to China gives us valuable evidence of the historical development of Buddhism in those regions. Further it provides us with specific instances of the cultural relations of these countries between China on the one hand, and India on the other.

W. PACHOW

43. Cf. J. Takakusu: A record of the Buddhist religion as practised in India and Malaya Archipelago.

44. See Liang-shu or the Annal of the Liang Dynasty, the chapter on Fu-nan.