



THE SEVEN PAGODAS

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WILLIAM CHAMBERS

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[This essay by William Chambers entitled "Some Account of the Sculptures and Runs at Mavalipuram, a place a few miles north of Sadras and known to seamen by the name of the Seven Pagodas," first appeared in the Asiatic Researches Vol I, in 1788. It marked the beginning of considerable Mamallapuram studies. Subsequently it was republished in a collection of Mamallapuram papers, edited by Captain M. W. Carr for the Govt. of Madras in 1869. In view of its interest it was republished in the issues of the monthly news letter of this department. The same is now issued in a booklet form.]

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Some account of the Sculptures and Ruins at Mavalipuram, a place a few miles north of Sadras, and known to seamen by the name of the Seven Pagodas. By WILLIAM CHAMBERS, Esq. (From the Asiatic Researches, Vol. I. 1788)

As amidst inquiries after the histories and antiquities of Asia at large, those of that division of it in which this society resides, may seem on many accounts to lay claim to a particular share of its attention, a few hints put down from recollection, concerning some monuments of Hindu antiquity, which, though situated in the neighbourhood of European settlements on the Coromandel Coast, have hitherto been little observed, may it is conceived, be acceptable, at least as they may possibly give rise hereafter to more accurate observations, and more complete discoveries on the same subject. The writer of this account went first to view them in the year 1772, and curiosity led him thither again in 1776; but as he neither measured the distances nor size of the objects, nor committed to writing at the time the observations he made on them, he hopes to be excused if, after the lapse of so many years, his recollection should fail him in some respects, and his account fall far short of that precision and exactness, which might have been expected, had there then existed in India so powerful an incentive to diligent inquiry, and accurate communication, as the establishment of this society must now prove.

The monuments he means to describe, appear to be the remains of some great city, that has been ruined many centuries ago; they are situated close to the sea, between Covelong and Sadra somewhat remote from the high road that leads to the different European settlements. And when he visited them in 1776, there was still a native village adjoining to them, which retained the ancient name, and in which a number of Brahmans

resided, that seemed perfectly well acquainted with the subjects of most of the sculptures to be seen there.

The rock, or rather hill of stone, on which great part of these works are executed, is one of the principal marks for mariners as they approach the coast, and to them the place is known by the name of the SEVEN PAGODAS, possibly because the summits of the rock have presented them with that idea as they passed: but it must be confessed, that no aspect which the hill assumes, as viewed on the shore, seems at all to authorize this notion; and there are circumstances, which will be mentioned in the sequel, that would lead one to suspect, that this name has arisen from some such number of Pagodas that formerly stood here, and in time have been buried in the waves. But, be that as it may, the appellation by which the natives distinguish it, is of a quite different origin. In their language, which is the Tamil, (improperly termed MALABAR) the place is called Mavalipuram, which, in Sanscrit, and the languages of the more northern Hindus, would be Mahabalipura, or the City of the great Bali. For the Tamulians, (or Malabars) having no h in their alphabet, are under a necessity of shortening the Sanscrit word *maha* great and write it *ma*. They are obliged also, for a similar reason, to substitute *av* for *ab*, in words of Sanscrit, or other foreign original that begin with that letter, and the syllable *am*, at the end, is merely a termination, which, like *um* in Latin, is generally annexed to neuter substances. To this etymology of the name of this place is may be proper to add, that Bali is the name of a hero very famous in Hindu romance;

and that the river Mavaliganga, which waters the eastern side of Ceylon, where the Tamil language also prevails, has probably taken its name from him, as, according to that orthography, it apparently signifies the Ganges of the great Bali.

* The rock, or hill of stone, above mentioned, is that which first engrosses the attention on approaching the place; for as it rises abruptly out of a level plain of great extent, consists chiefly of one single stone, and is situated very near to the sea-beach, it is such a kind of object as an inquisitive traveller would naturally turn aside to examine. Its shape is also singular and romantic, and, from a distant view, has an appearance like some antique and lofty edifice. On coming near to the foot of the rock from the north, works of imagery¹ and sculpture crowd so thick upon the eye, as might seem to favour the idea of a petrified town, like those that have been fabled in different parts of the world by too credulous travellers.² Proceeding on by the foot of the hill, on the side facing the sea, there is a pagoda rising out of the ground, of one solid stone, about sixteen or eighteen feet high, which seems to have been cut upon the spot out of a detached rock, that has been found of a proper size for that purpose.³ The top is arched, and the style of architecture, according to which it is formed, different from any now used in those parts. A little further on, there appears upon an huge surface of stone, that juts out a little from the side of the hill, a numerous group of human figures in bas relief, considerably larger than life representing the most remarkable persons, whose actions are celebrated in the Mahabharata, each of them in an attitude, or with weapons or other insignia, expressive of his character, or of some one of his most famous exploits.⁴ All these figures are, doubtless much less distinct than they were at first; for upon comparing these and the rest of the sculptures that are exposed to the sea air, with others at the same place, whose situation has afforded them protection from that element, the difference is striking; the former being every where much defaced, while the others are fresh as recently finished. This defacement is no where more observable, than in the piece of sculpture which occurs next in the order of description. This is an

excavation in another part of the east side of the great rock, which appears to have been made on the same plan, and for the same purpose that choultries are usually built in that country; that is to say, for the accommodation of travellers. The rock is hollowed out to the size of a spacious room, and two or three rows of pillars are left, as a seeming support to the mountainous mass of stone which forms the roof. Of what pattern these pillars have originally been, it is not easy now to conjecture; for the air of the sea has greatly corroded them, as well as all the other parts of the cave. And this circumstance renders it difficult to discover at first sight, that there is a scene of sculpture on the side fronting the entrance. The natives, however, point it out, and the subject of it is manifestly that of Krishna attending the herds of Nanda Ghosha⁵ the Admetus of the Hindus; from which circumstance, Krishna is also called Gopala, or the cowherd, as Apollo was entitled Nomus.

The objects which seem next to claim regard, are those upon the hill itself, the ascent of which, on the north, is, from its natural shape, gradual and easy at first, and is in other parts rendered more so, by very excellent steps cut out in several places, where the communication would be difficult or impracticable without them. A winding stair of this sort leads to a kind of temple cut out of the solid rock, with some figures of idols in high relief upon its walls, very well finished and perfectly fresh, as it faces the west, and is therefore sheltered from the sea air.⁶ From this temple again there are flights of steps, that seem to have led to some edifice, formerly standing upon the hill; nor does it seem absurd to suppose, that this may have been a palace, to which this temple, as a place of worship may have appertained. For, besides the small detached ranges of stairs that are here and there cut in the rock, and seem as if they had once led to different parts of one great building, there appear in many places small water-channels cut also in the rock, as if for drains to an house; and the whole top of the hill is strewed with small round pieces of brick, which may be supposed, from their appearance, to have been worn down to their present form, during the lapse of many ages. On ascending the hill by its slope on the north, a very singular piece of sculpture

ages. On ascending the hill by its slope on the north, a very singular piece of sculpture presents itself to view. On a plain surface of the rock, which may once have served as the floor of some apartment, there is a platform of stone, about eight or nine feet long, by three or four wide, in a situation rather elevated, with two or three steps leading up to it, perfectly resembling a couch or bed, and a lion very well executed at the upper end of it by way of pillow, the whole of one piece, being part of the hill itself. This the Brahmans, inhabitants of the place, called the bed of Dharmaraja, or Yudhishthira, the eldest of the five brothers, whose fortunes and exploits are the leading subject in the Mahabharata. And at a considerable distance from this, at such a distance, indeed, as the apartment of the women might be supposed to be from that of the men, is a bath excavated also from the solid rock, with steps in the inside, which the Brahmans call the bath of Draupadi, the wife of Yudhishthira and his brothers. How much credit is due to this tradition, and whether this stone couch may not have been anciently used as a kind of throne rather than a bed, is matter for future inquiry. A circumstance, however, which may seem to favour this idea is, that a throne in the Sanscrit, and other Hindu languages, is called SIMHASANA, which is composed of the words SIMHA, a lion, and ASANA, a seat.

These are all that appear on that part of the upper surface of the hill, the ascent to which is on the north; but, on descending from thence, you are led round the hill to the opposite side, in which there are steps cut from the bottom to a place near the summit, where is an excavation that seems to have been intended for a place of worship, and contains various sculptures of Hindu Deities. The most remarkable of these, is a gigantic figure of Vishnu, asleep on a kind of bed, with a huge snake wound about in many coils by way of pillow for his head;⁷ and these figures, according to the manner of this place, are all of one piece, hewn from the body of the rock.

But though these works may be deemed stupendous, they are surpassed by others that are to be seen at the distance of about a mile, or a mile and an half, to the southward of the hill. They consist of two⁸ Pagodas, of about thirty feet long by twenty feet wide, and about as many in height, cut out of the solid rock and each consisting originally of one single stone. Near these also stand an elephant full as big as life, and a lion much larger than the natural size, but very well executed, each hewn also out of one stone. None of the pieces that have fallen off in cutting these extraordinary sculptures are now to be found near or any where in the neighbourhood of them, so that there is no means of ascertaining the degree of labour and time that has been spent upon them, nor the size of the rock or rocks from which they have been hewn a circumstance which renders their appearance the more striking and singular. And though their situation is very near the seabeach, they have not suffered at all by the corrosive air of that element, which has provided them with a defence against itself, by throwing up before them a high bank, that completely shelters them. There is also great symmetry in their form; though that of the Pagodas is different from the style of architecture, according to which idol temples are now built in that country. The latter resembles the Egyptian; for the towers are always pyramidal, and the gates and roofs flat, and without arches; but these sculptures approach nearer to the Gothic taste, being surmounted by arched roofs or domes, that are not semi-circular, but composed of two segments of circles meeting in a point at top. It is also observable that the lion in this group of sculptures, as that upon the stone couch above mentioned, are perfectly just representations of the true lion; and the natives there give them the name, which is always understood to mean a lion in the Hindu language, to wit, SIMHA but the figure, which they have made to represent that animal in their idol temples for centuries past, though it bears the same appellation, is a distorted monster, totally unlike the original inasmuch that it has from hence been supposed that the lion

was not anciently known in this country, and that SIMHA was a name given to a monster that existed only in Hindu romance. But it is plain that that animal was well known to the authors of these works, who, in manners as well as arts, seem to have differed much from the modern Hindus.

There are two circumstances attending these monuments, which cannot but excite great curiosity, and on which future inquiries may possibly throw some light. One is, that on one of the Pagodas last mentioned, there is an inscription of a single line, in a character at present unknown to the Hindus.⁹ It resembles neither the DEVANAGARI, nor any of the various characters connected with or derived from it, which have come to the writer's knowledge from any part of Hindostan. Nor did it, at the time he viewed it, appear to correspond with any character, Asiatic or European, that is commonly known. He had not then, however, seen the alphabet of the Pali, the learned language of the Siamese, a sight of which has since raised in his mind a suspicion, that there is a near affinity between them, if the character be not identically the same. But as these conjectures, after such a lapse of time, are somewhat vague, and the subject of them is perhaps yet within the reach of our researches, it is to be hoped that some method may be fallen upon of procuring an exact copy of this inscription.

The other circumstance is, that though the outward form of the Pagodas is complete, the ultimate design of them has manifestly not been accomplished, but seems to have been defeated by some extraordinary convulsion of nature. For the western side of the most northerly one is excavated to the depth of four or five feet, and a row of pillars left on the outside to support the roof; but here the work has been stopped and an uniform rent of about four inches breadth has been made throughout the solid rock, and appears to extend to its foundations, which are probably at a prodigious depth below the surface of the ground. That this rent has happened since the work began, or while it was carrying on, cannot be doubted; for the

marks of the mason's tools are perfectly visible in the excavated part on both sides of the rent, in such a manner as to show plainly that they have been divided by it. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that such a work would ever have been designed, or begun, upon a rock that had previously been rent in two.

Nothing less than an earthquake, and that a violent one, could apparently have produced such a fissure in the solid rock: and that this has been the case in point of fact, may be gathered from other circumstances, which it is necessary to mention in an account of this curious place.

The great rock above described is at some small distance from the sea, perhaps fifty or an hundred yards,¹⁰ and in that space the Hindu village before mentioned stood in 1776.

But close to the sea are the remains of a Pagoda, built of brick,¹¹ and dedicated to Siva, the greatest part of which has evidently been swallowed up by that element; for the door of the innermost apartment, in which the idol is placed, and before which there are always two or three spacious courts surrounded with walls, is now washed by the waves: and the pillar used to discover the meridian at the time of founding the Pagoda¹² is seen standing at some distance in the sea. In the neighbourhood of this building there are some detached rocks, washed also by the waves, on which there appear sculptures, though now much worn and defaced. And the natives of the place declared to the writer of this account, that the more aged people among them remembered to have seen the tops of several Pagodas far out in the sea, which being covered with copper (probably gilt) were particularly visible at sunrise, as their shining surface used then to reflect the sun's rays, but that now that effect was no longer produced, as the copper had since become incrustured with mould and verdigris.

These circumstances look much like the effects of a sudden inundation; and the rent in the rock above described makes it reasonable to conjecture that an earthquake may have

caused the sea to overflow its boundaries, and that these two formidable enemies may have joined to destroy this once magnificent city. The account which the Brahmans, natives of the place, gave of its origin and downfall, partly, it should seem, on the authority of the Mahabharata, and partly on that of later records, at the same time that it countenances this idea, contains some other curious particulars, which may seem to render it worthy of attention. Nor ought it to be rejected on account of that fabulous garb, in which all nations, but especially those of the East, have always clad the events of early ages.

'Hiranyaksha (said they) was a gigantic prince, that rolled up the earth into a shapeless mass, and carried it down to the abyss, whither Vishnu followed him in the shape of an hog, killed him with his tusks, and replaced the earth in its original situation. The younger brother of Hiranyaksha was Hiranyakasipu, who succeeded him in his kingdom, and refused to do homage to Vishnu. He had a son named Prahlada, who at an early age openly disapproved this part of his father's conduct, being under the tuition of Sukracharya. His father persecuted him on this account, banished him, and even sought to kill him, but was prevented by the interposition of heaven, which appeared on the side of Prahlada. At length, Hiranyakasipu was softened, and recalled his son to his court, where, as he sat in full assembly, he began again to argue with him against the supremacy of Vishnu, boasted that he himself was lord of all the visible world, and asked what Vishnu could pretend to more. Prahlada replied, that Vishnu had no fixed abode, but was present everywhere. Is he, said his father, in that pillar? Yes, returned Prahlada. Then let him come forth, said Hiranyakasipu; and rising from his seat, struck the pillar with his foot; upon which Vishnu, in the Narasimha Avatara, that is to say, with a body like a man, but an head like a lion, came out of the pillar and tore Hiranyakasipu in pieces. Vishnu then fixed Prahlada on his father's throne; and his reign was a mild and virtuous one, and as such was a contrast to that of his father. He left a son named Namuchi¹³ who inherited his power and his virtues, and was the father of Bali, the founder of the once magnificent city of Maha-

balipura, the situation of which is said to be described in the following verse, taken from the Mahabharata:—

*"South of the Ganges two hundred yojanas,
Five yojanas¹⁴ westward from the eastern seas"*

Such is the Brahman account of the origin of this place. The sequel of its history, according to them, is as follows:—

"The son of Bali was Banasura, who is represented as a giant with a thousand hands. Aniruddha, the son¹⁵ of Krishna, came to his court in disguise, and seduced his daughter; which produced a war, in the course of which Aniruddha was taken prisoner, and brought to Mahabalipura,¹⁶ upon which Krishna came in person from his capital Dvaraka, and laid siege to the place. Siva guarded the gates, and fought for Banasura, who worshipped him with his thousand hands; but Krishna found means to overthrow Siva and having taken the city, cut off, all Banasura's hands, except two with which he obliged him to do him homage. He continued in subjection to Krishna till his death; after which a long period ensued, in which no mention is any where made of this place, till a prince arose, whose name was Malecheren, who restored the kingdom to great splendour, and enlarged and beautified the capital. But in his time the calamity is said to have happened by which the city was entirely destroyed; and the cause and manner of it have been wrapped up by the Brahmans in the following fabulous narration. Malecheren, (say they,) in an excursion which he made one day alone, and in disguise, came to a garden in the environs of the city, where was a fountain so inviting, that two celestial nymphs had come down to bathe there. The Raja became enamoured of one of them, who condescended to allow of his attachment to her; and she and her sister-nymph used thenceforward to have frequent interviews with him in that garden. On one of those occasions, they brought with them a male inhabitant of the heavenly regions, to whom they introduced the Raja; and between him and Malecheren a strict friendship ensued; in consequence of which he agreed, at the Raja's earnest request, to carry him in disguise to see the court of the divine Indra, a favour never before granted to any mortal. The Raja

returned from thence with new ideas of splendour and magnificence, which he immediately adopted in regulating his court, and his retinue and in beautifying his seat of Government. By this means Mahabalipura became soon celebrated beyond all the cities of the earth; and an account of its magnificence having been brought to the gods assembled at the court of Indra, their jealousy was so much excited at it, that they sent orders to the God of the Sea to let loose his billows, and overflow a place which impiously pretended to vie in splendour with their celestial mansions. This command he obeyed, and the city was at once overflowed by that furious element, nor has it ever since been able to rear its head.

Such is the mode in which the Brahmans choose to account for the signal overthrow of a place devoted to their wretched superstitions.

It is not, however, improbable, that the rest of this history may contain, like the mythology of Greece and Rome, a great deal of real matter of fact, though enveloped in dark and figurative representations. Through the disguise of these we may discern some imperfect records of great events, and of revolutions that have happened in remote times; and they perhaps merit our attention the more, as it is not likely that any records of ancient Hindu history exist but in this obscure and fantastic dress. Their poets seem to have been their only historians, as well as divines; and whatever they relate, is wrapped up in this burlesque garb, set off, by way of ornament, with circumstances hugely incredible and absurd, and all this without any date, and in no other order or method, than such as the poet's fancy suggested, and found most convenient. Nevertheless, by comparing names and grand events, recorded by them, with those interspersed in the histories of other nations, and by calling in the assistance of ancient monuments, coins, and inscriptions, as occasion shall offer, some probable conjectures, at least, if not important discoveries, may, it is hoped, be made on these interesting subjects. It is much to be regretted, that a blind zeal, attended with a total want of curiosity, in the Muhammadan governors of this country, has been so hostile to the preservation of Hindu monuments and coins. But a spirit of inquiry among

Europeans may yet perhaps be successful; and an instance, which relates to the place above described, though in itself a subject of regret, leaves room to hope that futurity may yet have in store some useful discoveries. The Kazi of Madras who had often occasion to go to a place in the neighbourhood of Mahabalipura, assured the writer of this account, that within his remembrance a ryot of those parts had found, in ploughing his ground, a pot of gold and silver coins, with characters on them which no one in those parts, Hindu or Muhammadan, was able to decipher. He added however, that all search for them would now be vain, for they had doubtless been long ago devoted to the crucible, as, in their original form, no one there thought them of any value.

The inscription on the Pagoda mentioned above, is an object which, in this point of view, appears to merit great attention. That the conjecture, however, which places it among the languages of Siam, may not seem in itself chimerical, the following passages from some authors of repute are here inserted, to show that the idea of a communication having formerly subsisted between that country and the coast of Coromandel, is by no means without foundation; nay, that there is some affinity, even at this day, between the Pali and some of the Hindu languages: and that the same mode of worship seems formerly to have prevailed in the Deccan, which is now used by the Siamese.

Monsieur de la Loubere, in his excellent account of Siam, speaks thus of the origin of the Pali language:—

"The Siamese, says he, do not mention any country where the Pali Language, which is that of their laws and their religion, is at present in use. They suppose, indeed, on the report of some among them who have been on the coast of Coromandel, that it bears some resemblance to some of the dialects of that country; but they at the same time allow, that the character in which it is written is not known but among themselves. The secular Missionaries settled at Siam believe that this language is not entirely a dead one; because they have seen in their hospital a man from the neighbourhood of Cape Comorin, who mixed

several Pali words in his discourse, declaring that they were in use in his country, and that he himself had never studied nor knew any other than his mother-tongue. They at the same time mention, as matter of certainty, that the religion of the Siamese comes from those parts; as they have read in a Pali book that Samana Kodam¹⁴, the idol of the Siamese, was the son of a king of Ceylon."¹⁵

The language of the man mentioned in this passage, who came from the neighbourhood of Cape Comorin, could be no other than the Tamil; but the words here alluded to may very possibly have been derivatives from the Sanscrit, common to both that and the Pali.

In another part of the same work, where the author treats of the history of Samana Kodam at large, on the authority of the Pali books, he says:—

"The father of Samana Kodam, according to the same Pali book, was a king of Teve Lanka, that is to say, of the famous Ceylon."

Here it is observable, that, while the country of Siam seems to be utterly unknown, both to the natives of Ceylon and Hindostan, Ceylon should nevertheless be so well known to the Siamese, and under the same appellation it bears in the Sanscrit. An epithet is also here prefixed to it which seems to be the same as that used by the Hindus in speaking of that island; for they also call it, in Sanscrit, Deva Lanka, or the Sacred Lanka. From Several passages in the same work it also appears, that the Sanscrit word MAHA, which signifies "great" is constantly used in the Pali language in the same sense. And the names of the days of the week are most of them the same in Sanscrit and in Pali, as may be seen in the following comparison of them:—

SANSKRIT.	PALI.	¹⁶
Aditya-vara,	Van Athit,	Sunday.
Soma-vara,	Van ¹⁷ Tchan,	Monday.
Mangala-vara,	Van Angkaan,	Tuesday.
Budha-vara,	Van Pout,	Wednesday.
Brihaspati-vara,	Van Prahout,	Thursday.
Sukra-vara,	Van souc,	Friday.
Sanivara,	Van Socoa,	Saturday.

The same author gives, in another place, an account of a pretended print of a foot on a rock, which is an object of worship to the Siamese, and is called Prabat, or the venerable foot. For prā, in Pali he says, signifies "venerable", which agrees with *parāpara* and *parameshtha* in Sanscrit; and *bat* in the same tongue is a foot, as *pāda* in Sanscrit. After which he goes on to say:—

"We know that in the island of Ceylon, there is a pretended print of a human foot, which has long been held in great veneration. It represents, doubtless, the left foot; for the Siamese say that Samana Kodam set his right foot on their Prābāt and his left foot at lankā."^{18, 19}

From Knox's History of Ceylon it appears, that the impression on here spoken of is upon the hill called, by the Singhalese, "Hamalell"; by Europeans, "Adam's Peak"; and that the natives believe it to be the footstep of their great idol Buddou, between the worship of whom, as described by Knox, and that of Samana Kodam, as related by M. de la Loubere, there is a striking resemblance in many particulars, which it may be proper here to enumerate.

1st—Besides the footsteps above mentioned, there is a kind of tree (which, from description, appears to be the Pipal tree ²⁰ so well known in India) which the Singhalese hold sacred to Buddou, and the Siamese to Samana Kodam; insomuch that the later deem it meritorious to hang themselves upon it. The Singhalese call it Bogahah; ²¹ for gahah, in their language, signifies a tree; and *bo* seems to be an abbreviation of Bod or Buddou; ²² and the Siamese call it, in Pali, Pra si Maha Pout, which, according to La Loubere's interpretation, signifies the tree of the great Pout. ²³ This he suppose to mean Mercury; for he observes that Pout, or Poot, is the name of that planet in the Pali term for Wednesday; and in another place, he says, Pout is one of the names of Samana Kodam. It is certain that Wednesday is called the name of Bod, or Budd, in all the Hindu languages, among which the Tamil, having no *b*, begins the word with a *p*, which brings it very near the Pali mode of writing it. It is equally certain that the days of the week, in all these languages, are called after the planets in the

the sect of the Gymnosophists, in like manner as the Brahmans were used to attribute their institution to Brahma." ³⁸

The authority of Clemens Alexandrinus is also cited on the same subject by Relandus in his 11th Dissertation, where, treating of the language of Ceylon, he explains the word Vihara, above spoken of, in these terms:—

"Vihara signifies a temple of their principal god Buddou, who, as Clemens Alexandrinus has long ago observed, was worshipped as a god by the Hindus". ³⁹

After the above quotations, the following extract from the voyage of that inquisitive and ingenious traveller M. Gentil, published in 1779, is given as a further and very remarkable illustration of this subject:—

"This system is also that of the Brahmans of our time; it forms the basis of that religion, which they have brought with them into the southern parts of the Peninsula of Hindustan into Madura, Tanjore, and mysore.

There was then in those parts of India, and principally on the Coast of Coromandel and Ceylon, a sort of worship, the precepts of which we are quite unacquainted with. The god, Baouth, of whom at present they know no more in India than the name, was the object of this worship, but it is now totally abolished, except that there may possibly yet be found some families of Indians who have remained faithful to Baouth and do not acknowledge the religion of the Brahmans, and who are on that account separated from and despised by the other castes.

I have not, indeed, heard that there are any such families in the neighbourhood of Pondicherry; but there is a circumstance well

worthy of remark, which none of the travellers that have treated of the Coast of Coromandel and Pondicherry seem to have noticed. It is this, that at a short league's distance to the south of this town, in the plain of Virapatnam, and pretty near the river, we find a statue of granite very hard and beautiful. This statue, which is from three feet to three and a half in height, is sunk in the sand to the waist, and weighs doubtless many thousand weight; it is, as it were, abandoned in the midst of this extensive plain. I cannot give a better idea of it, than by saying, that it exactly agrees with, and resembles the Samana Kodam of the Siamese; its head is of the same form, it has the same features, its arms are in the same attitude, and its ears are exactly similar. The form of this divinity, which has certainly been made in the country, and which in no respect resembles the present idols of the Gentoos, struck me as I passed this plain. I made various inquiries concerning this singular figure, and the Tamilians, one and all, assured me that this was the God Baouth, who was now no longer regarded, for that his worship and his festivals had been abolished ever since the Brahmans had made themselves masters of the people's faith." ⁴⁰

M. Gentil then goes on to say a good deal more upon this subject, in the course of which he supposes that this deity is the Fo of the Chinese, whose worship by their own accounts, was brought from India. And, indeed, the abridgement of the name Pout, mentioned in a note of this paper, which the vulgar Siamese reduce to the single syllable Po, seems to countenance this opinion. But as this is foreign to our present purpose, and the above passages, it is hoped, are sufficient to establish what was proposed, it seems high time to take leave of this subject, with an apology for that prolixity which is inseparable from this kind of discussion.

17th June, 1784.

1. Among these, one object, though a mean one, attracts the attention, on account of the grotesque and ridiculous nature of the design; it consists of two monkeys cut out of one stone, one of them in a stooping posture, while the other is taking the insects out of his head.

2. See Shaw's Travels, p. 155, et seq.

3. The Ganesa temple appears to be referred to.

4. Arjuna's penance-cp. Braddock, *infra*.

5. The cowherd Nanda, the foster and putative father of Krishna.

6. Cp. Braddock, No. 9.

7. Cp. Braddock, No. 19, *infra*.

8. There are five, the five Rathas.

9. Since deciphered by Dr. Babington, see *infra*.

10. Would be more correctly estimated at half a mile.

11. A mistake: it is built of stone.

12. See Voyage du M. Gentil, Vol. I., page 158.

12-a. More probably a flag-staff, dhvajastambha. It has been taken by some for a *lingam*, which is manifestly an error-cp. Bp. Heber's Journal and Bruce's Scenes and Sights in the East.

13. An error: Virochana was the son of Prahlaḍa, and father of Bali; Namuchi was the son of Viprachitti by Simhikā, sister of Hiranyakasipu—See the Vishnupurāṇa.

14. The *yojana* is a measure often mentioned in the Sanskrit books, and, according to some accounts, is equal to nine, according to others twelve English miles. But at that rate the distance here mentioned, between this place and the Ganges, is prodigiously exaggerated, and will carry us far south of Ceylon. This, however, is not surprising in an Hindu poem; but,

from the second line it seems pretty clear that this city, at the time this verse was composed, must have stood at a great distance from the sea.

15. Aniruddha was the grandson, not the son, of Krishna.

16. Sonitapura, according to the Vishnupurāṇa-cp. Wilson's trans., Book V. Chap. 33.

16-a. The Siamese form of Sramana Gautama, a name applied to Buddha, signifying 'Gautama the ascetic'.

16-b. Buddha, according to tradition, was the son of Suddhodana, the king of Kapilavastu, a city and State on the borders of Nepal.

"Les Siamois ne nomment aucun Pais, ou la langue Bali quiest celle de leurs loix et de leur religion, soit aujourd'hui en usage. Ils soupçonnent à la vérité, sur le rapport de quelques-uns d'entre eux, qui ont été à la côte de Coromandel, que la langue Balic a quelque ressemblance avec quelqu'un des dialectes de ce pais là: mais ils conviennent en même temps que les lettres de la langue Balic ne sont connues que chez eux. Les Missionnaires séculiers à Siam croyent que cette langue n'est pas entièrement morte; parce qu'ils ont vu dans leur hôpital un homme des environs du Cap de Comorin, qui mettoit plusieurs mots Balis dans son langage, assurant qu'ils étoient en usage en son pais, et que luy n'avoit jamais étudié, et ne savoit que sa langue maternelle. Ils donnent d'ailleurs pour certain que la religion des Siamois vient de ces quartiers là, parce qu'ils ont lu dans un livre Balic que Sommonacodom que les Siamois adorent, étoit fils d'un Roy de l'isle de Ceylone".

16-c. The names given are Siamese.

17. Here one Hindu word is substituted for another; for *Chānd* in Hindustani, and *Chandra* in Sanscrit, signify the moon as well as *Soma*.

18. "On sait qec dans l'isle de Ceylan, il y a un prétendu vestige de pié humain, que depuis long temps y est en grande vénération. Il représente sans doute le pié gauche; car les

Siamois disent que Sômmônacodom posa le pié droit à leur *prabat*, et le pié gauche à *Lancā*".

19. Cp. Spence Hardy's *Manual of Buddhism*, p. 212.

20. *Ficus religiosa*, called by Buddhists the Bodhi tree, "the tree of wisdom", because under it Gautama became Buddha "the Enlightened"—Cp. Bigandet's *life of Gaudama*, p. 85.

21. The 'bo-tree'.

22. *Fo*, *Bod*, *Buddou*, *Budd*, *Baoth*, *Pood*, & c., are some of the numerous modes in which Gautama's appellative, *Buddha*, has been spelt—See *Manual of Buddhism*, p. 354.

23. In vulgar Siamese they call it *Ton-pô*.

24. *Mahāmāyā*, *Mahāmāyādevī*, *Māyā*, or *Māyādevī*.

25. "Much erroneous speculation has originated in confounding Budha, the son of soma, and regent of the planet Mercury, 'he who knows,' the intelligent, with Buddha, any deified mortal, or 'he by whom the truth is known'—Wilson's *Vishnu Purāna*". Spence Hardy, *Manual of Buddhism*, p. 354 n.

26. *Vihāra*.

27. *Tālapāt*, "Palm-leaf".

28. "Pour se garantir du soleil ils ont le *Tālapat*, qui est leur petit "parasol en forme diécran".

29. The same persons: *Samana Kodam* (*Sramana Gautama*) was the Buddha, i.e. the "Enlightened". (Max Mullen.) See note at p. 17.

30. *Yaksha*.

31. *Singhalese*.

32. *Kandy*.

33. *Anuradhapura*.

34. *Anciennes Relations des Indes et de la Chine*, de deux voyageurs Mohametans.

qui y allèrent dans le neuvième siècle. Paris, 1718-8vo.

35. "Il y a dans les Indes des femmes publiques, appellées femmes del'idôle; l'origine de cette coutume est telle: Lorsqu'une femme a fait un vœu pour avoir des enfans, si elle met au monde une belle fille, elle l'apporte au *Bod*, c'est ainsi qu'ils appellent l'idole qu'ils adorent, auprès duquel elle la laisse, & c. *Anc. Rel.* p. 109.

36. The word is Sanscrit, and common to the vernacular languages.

37. Cp. Sir H.M. Elliot's *History of India*, as told by its own Historians, pp. 85-89.

38. "L'Edrisi nous instruit sur la religion que professoit ce Prince, en disant que son culte s'adressoit à *Bodda*, que selon St. Jerome and St. Clement d' Alexandrie, avoit été l'instituteur des Gymnosophistes comme les Brachmanes rapportoient à *Brahma* leur institut". *Ant. Geog. de L'Inde*, p. 94.

39. "*Vehar*, templum dei primarii Buddoe *Bovtta* quem Indos ut Deum venerari jam olim notavit Clemens Alexandrinus. Strom lib. I. p. 223. *Rel. Diss.* pars tertia, p. 85.

40. "Ce systeme est aussi celui des Brames de nos jours; il fait la base de la religion qu'ils ont apportée dans le sud de la presqu'isle de l'Indostan, le *Madure*, le *Tanjaour*, et le *Maissour*.

"Il y avoit alors dans ces parties de l'Inde, & principalement à la Côte de *Coromandel* & à *Ceylan*, un culte dont on ignore absolument les dogmes: le Dieu *Baouth*, dont on ne connoit aujourd'hui, dans l'Inde, que le nom, étoit l'objet de ce culte; mais il est tout-à-fait aboli, si ce n'est qu'il se trouve encore quelques familles d'Indiens séparées & méprisées des autres castes, qui sont restées fidèles à *Baouth*, & qui ne reconnoissent point la religion des Brames.

"Je n'ai pas entendu dire qu'il y ait de ces familles aux environs de *Pondichéry*; cependant, une chose très digne de remarque, & à laquelle aucun des voyageurs qui

parlent de la Cote de Coromandel & de Pondichery, n'ont fait attention, est que l'on trouve à une petite lieue au sud de cette Ville, dans la plaine de Virapatnam, assez près de la rivière, une statue de Granit très dur & tres beau: cette statue, d'environ trois pieds a trois pieds & demi de hauteur, est enfoncée dans le sable jusqu'à la ceinture, & pese sans doute plusieurs milliers; elle est comme abandonnée au milieu de cette vaste plaine: je ne peux mieux en donner une idee, qu'en disant qu'elle est exactement conforme & ressemblante a Sommonacodôm des Siamois; c'est la même forme de tête, ce

sont les mêmes traits dans le visage, c'est la même attitude dans les bras, & les oreilles sont absolument semblables. La forme de cette divinité, qui certainement, a été faite dans le pays, & qui ne ressemble en rien aux divinités actuelles des Gentils, m'avoit frappe lorsque je passai dans cette plaine; je fis diverses informations sur cette figure singulière, les Tamouls m'assurèrent tous que c'étoit Baouth qu' on ne regardoit plus; que son culte & ses fetes etoient cessées depuis que les Brame S'étoient rendus les maîtres de la croyance du peuple."

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