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The Creative South: Buddhist and Hindu Art in Mediaeval Maritime Asia, edited by Andrea Acri and Peter Sharrock. ISEAS Publishing, 2022. 2 Volumes. Pb. Vol. 1, 375pp., SGD 49.90, ISBN-13: 9789814951487; Vol. 2, 257pp., SGD 49.90, ISBN-13: 9789814951517.

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This recently launched anthology, skillfully curated by Andrea Acri (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris) with the support of Peter Sharrock (SOAS–University of London), is presented in two distinct volumes, each available for individual purchase. The collection comprises a general introduction and nine essays in each volume, contributed by different authors. The majority of these chapters originated as conference or workshop papers in 2016 and 2017, examining multidisciplinary aspects of religious art in medieval maritime Asia, exploring diverse trends and influences from South, East, and Southeast Asia. The editors' thematic approach and the selection of contributions are noteworthy, contributing to a comprehensive and informative reading experience.

The organizational structure of the two volumes is well-executed, encompassing both regional and chronological perspectives. While some chapters may present certain challenges (discussed below), the majority are relatively readable and accessible to both experts in the field and a broader non-specialist audience. A significant portion of the contributions, specifically four in the first volume (Chapters 2 to 5) and six in the second volume (Chapters 2 to 7), directly engages with the field of Buddhist Studies. It is essential to note, however, that the remaining collected work (Vol 1, Chapters 6–10; Vol. 2, Chapters 8–10) focuses on Hindu (mostly Śaiva) material originating from the Khmer, Cham, and Javanese worlds, which falls outside the scope of this book review.

The majority of the Buddhist essays revolve around the realm of what is termed "esoteric" or "tantric Buddhism." However, the key question is whether these terms share an exact equivalence, and do they hold uniform applicability across the diverse landscape of Buddhist Asia? Unfortunately, the general introduction neglects to furnish explicit definitions for these pivotal terms and expressions. Consequently, one is compelled to infer that the editors, and potentially the various authors, consider them more or less synonymous, a presumption that can prove problematic on occasion.

A noteworthy perspective, articulated by the late Yury Khokhlov (Vol. 1, p. 66, n. 4), and possibly influenced by Geoffrey Goble's thesis on Tang China,[1] posits

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[1] See Goble 2019. This publication is a refined and enhanced edition of the author's doctoral dis-

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that "Esoteric Buddhism" (capitalized and distinct from an ambiguous "esoteric Buddhism" in lowercase) should be construed as a novel form of institutional teaching. This conceptualization involves the integration of recently acquired Buddhist texts and training in ritual practices. In the case of China, it was ostensibly instituted by Amoghavajra, the renowned monk who operated in the eighth century. It is crucial to acknowledge, however, that alternative interpretations abound in this nuanced discourse.[2]

The first volume of this anthology is split into two parts. The first section examines "Influences from the South" through three chapters. It opens with Chapter 2, "The Transmigration of the Eight-Armed Amoghapāśa" by Iain Sinclair (Vol. 1, pp. 9–65). The study stands as a comprehensive and robust contribution that meticulously retraces the intriguing journey of transmission for a specific iconographic manifestation of Avalokiteśvara, known as Amoghapāśa with eight arms. This distinctive form is notably prevalent in maritime Southeast Asia and the Himalayas up to the present day. Despite the absence of textual sources to date explaining the sudden emergence of this tantric figure in the eighth–ninth century, the author provocatively yet convincingly posits its likely origin in the ancient Buddhist realm of Melayu, centered around Jambi, Sumatra. Remarkably, the maritime region of Southeast Asia lacks early inscriptions related to the cult of Amoghapāśa, adding to the mystery. However, more recently, an intriguing revelation came from a recently deciphered epigraph at Bargaon, near Nalanda in India, which represents the sole identified occurrence in Sanskrit epigraphy of the *Amoghapāśahr-dayadhāraṇī*. The text on this significant inscription, unknown to Sinclair at the time of writing, was probably originally composed in South Asia and subsequently transmitted to East Asia, but not Southeast Asia, in the mid-to-late first millennium (Revire, Sanyal, and Giebel 2021).

Chapter 3, "In the Footsteps of Amoghavajra" by the aforementioned Yury Khokhlov (Vol. 1, pp. 66–125), is an extensive examination of the southern Indian artistic mode in Tang China and its subsequent transmission to Tibet. The chapter, notable for its substantial length and having been previously published, might have benefited from significant condensation here. A crucial consideration arises when attempting to systematically trace "southern influences" in Tang Chinese art, particularly within the section dedicated to the Longmen Buddha sculptures of "King Udayana" (Vol. 1, p. 102). It is essential to underscore the absence of early sculptures of the Buddha enthroned in *bhadrāsana*, akin to the "King Udayana" type from Longmen, in southern India or Sri Lanka. Instead, this iconographic type prevails in northern and western India during the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. Given this information, we can thus conclude that this specific iconographic type likely entered China, particularly in the early Tang Period (seventh century), through the land Silk Road, rather than maritime routes. This assertion gains prominence before the eighth century, preceding the ascent of Tibetan forces and the growing Arab

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sertation, originally presented in 2012 at Indiana University, which holds significant relevance throughout Chapter 3 (Vol. 1) of the current anthology.

[2] See Kotyk 2020 for a substantial critique of Goble's thesis.

threat, which effectively disrupted the land Silk Road for Buddhist pilgrims. Readers can express similar reservations regarding the "southern influences" identified by the author in the Nara embroidery and the Hōryūji murals in Japan (Vol. 1, pp. 104ff). Once again, these Chinese and Japanese materials, previously considered to a limited extent (e.g., Woodward 1988), and further explored by myself (published source in 2012 listed by the author but not appropriately cited), exhibit notable iconographic similarities with Southeast Asian art, particularly from Thailand and Indonesia. Another recent article further contends a similar transmission from China to Southeast Asia and the Japanese archipelago, rather than the reverse (Shirai and Revire 2023).

Chapter 4, "Heruka-Maṇḍalas across Maritime Asia" (Vol. 1, pp. 126–164), penned by co-editor Peter Sharrock, delves into the dissemination of a distinct category of fierce Buddhist deities, also known as Hevajra, beyond the borders of India, namely in ancient Cambodia, Vietnam, Java, and Sumatra during the eleventh–fifteenth centuries. Throughout the chapter, the terms Heruka(s) and Hevajra are apparently used interchangeably, creating potential confusion. This lack of clarity could have been rectified with consistent usage stated by the author. Moreover, instances occur where the author neglects to cite or acknowledge specific sources, such as on p. 137, where reference is made to Banteay Samrae in Angkor and its unique Khmer tantric iconography.[3] Additionally, the assertion that Heruka or, more accurately, Hevajra, manifested in the state temple of the Bayon in Angkor under the so-called "Esoteric King" Jayavarman VII (r. 1181–1218) lacks substantiation and appears speculative. French architect Olivier Cunin, a prominent authority on the Bayon, now contends that this Hevajra statue and cult, along with the so-called Vajrayāna phase of Buddhism in Angkor, likely developed significantly during the reign of Jayavarman VII's successor, Indravarman II (r. 1218–1243?). Cunin's perspective, shared at a conference in May 2018, should have been acknowledged and considered especially given his status as a co-author in the volume (Vol. 1, Chapter 7). It is noteworthy that Sharrock seemingly had access to Cunin's unpublished paper and even incorporated his remarkable 3D reconstruction; regrettably, this was executed without appropriate contextual alignment (e.g., Vol. 1, p. 153, fig. 4.17).

Chapter 5, "Goddess Prajñapāramitā and Esoteric Buddhism in Jayavarman's VII Angkor" by Jinah Kim (Vol. 1, pp. 167–191), initiates the second part of the first volume, focused on "transfers and innovations in mainland Southeast Asia." The chapter undertakes a reevaluation of the goddess' role in the esoteric Buddhist context of the period, spanning India and ancient Cambodia. In Angkor, Prajñapāramitā frequently appears as part of triads, flanking the Buddha with Lokeśvara, forming what the author terms the ABP triadic conception, where A stands for Avalokiteśvara, B for Buddha, and P for Prajñapāramitā. Kim accepts the hypothesis that some human queens, such as Jayarājadevī, the second wife of Jayavarman VII, might have been portrayed in the mold of Prajñapāramitā. Notably, Kim observes an apparent paradox in the depiction of Hevajra's complex and fierce iconography, seemingly conflicting with standard and gentle images of Prajñapāramitā (p. 183). This incongruity might be explained by the fact that a significant tantric cult of Hevajra may not have emerged prominently in Angkor until the reign of Indravarman II, presumed son of Jayavarman VII (referring back to my concerns outlined earlier in Chapter 4).

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[3] Louise Roche (2023) has recently defended her doctoral dissertation in Paris, delving into this particular subject.

The second volume of *The Creative South* explores sites and iconography in Odisha, eastern India, and Java in maritime Southeast Asia. In Part 1, Chapter 2, Sonali Dhingra revisits the savior figure of "Amoghapāśa's cultic role in late first millennium Odhishan Buddhist sites" (Vol. 2, pp. 7–26). Typically depicted on a large scale with four arms, the Bodhisattva is frequently associated with mortuary remains, such as miniature stone stupas at sites like Ratnagiri. This prompts the author to propose the hypothesis that Amoghapāśa played a prominent role in funerary rituals as a savior at the time of death. In connection with this notion, it is worth noting that other Buddhist sites in Odisha like Udayagiri houses long *dhāraṇī* inscriptions, including the *Karaṇḍamudrā* or "Casket seal" *dhāraṇī*, which equally carries a pronounced funerary character given its association with the cult of stupas.

Chapter 3, authored by Umakanta Mishra, examines the "Circulation of Buddhist *Maṇḍala*s in Maritime Asia" (Vol. 2, pp. 27–51) through both an epigraphic and iconographic lens. The author's assertion that "the *Bodhigarbhālaṅkāralakṣadhāraṇī* was in widespread use in Odisha, Nālandā, Paharpur, Abhayagiri, and other places in Maritime Asia" (Vol. 2, p. 47) holds true. However, it is crucial to highlight that the *Karaṇḍamudrā* or "Casket seal" *dhāraṇī*, already mentioned above, and also discovered in Kurkihar and Odisha, has yet to be found in Southeast Asia. The known occurrences are limited to India, Sri Lanka, China, and Japan to date (Lee 2021). Consequently, it is possible to partially challenge the author's statement that "Odisha appears to have played a role as one of the major nodes for the circulation of the Esoteric *dhāraṇī*s and *maṇḍala*s that flourished in other areas of Maritime Asia, including Java" (Vol. 2, p. 48).

In Part 2, Chapter 4, author Hudaya Kandahjaya delves into the intricacies of the "Scheme of Borobudur" (Vol. 2, pp. 55–73), a topic he has extensively covered in previous publications. The chapter conducts a thorough review of existing literature, elucidating aspects such as the concealment of the lower level, subsequent modifications, the symbolic significance of the varying numbers of miniature stupas, and Buddha statues in niches spanning from the lower to the upper storeys. Additionally, it explores why Borobudur should be perceived as a *maṇḍala*, a *stūpaprāsāda*, and, above all, a manifestation of the "excellent Buddha image," shedding light on the potential origins of the name Borobudur (Skt., **varabuddharūpa*).

Saran Suebsantiwongse's Chapter 5 ventures into the enigmatic structure of Candi Pembakaran at Ratu Boko in Central Java (Vol. 2, pp. 74–93). Traditionally labeled as a crematorium ground, the author undertakes the task of unraveling the potential purpose of this two-terraced square platform featuring a central hole. Drawing connections, the hypothesis posits a link to the *bodhighara* of the medieval Abhayagirivihāra at Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, designed to shelter a Bodhi tree. The viability of this intriguing proposition awaits validation through further research and excavations at the site.

Chapter 6, penned by Michel Gauvain, explores the "Cult of Trailokyavijaya in Java" (Vol. 2, pp. 94–133), delving into epigraphic and sculptural remnants. The initial pages of this chapter navigate through the figure of Trailokyavijaya, a wrathful manifestation of Vajrapāṇi, across Asia before finally focusing on Java. However, the assertion in the introduction that the cult had "achieved considerable prominence in Java in the 8th–11th centuries" (Vol. 2, p. 94) may be a slight exaggeration. Additionally, the author's claim that "just five sculptures have been identified as Trailokyavijaya in India" (p. 96) leaves room for the possibility of more discoveries.

In Chapter 7 (Vol. 2, pp. 134–144), Mimi Savitri focuses on the Central Javanese temples of Kalasan (Buddhist, dedicated to Tārā) and Prambanan (Hindu, also known as Lara Jonggrang). Utilizing epigraphic evidence, the author seeks to unravel questions regarding the social life and context surrounding the construction of these temples—their initiation, construction, and maintenance. However, much to her surprise, the Kalasan inscription offers scant information about the social life of the temple, emphasizing more the king's power and his relationship with his teachers.

In conclusion, the chapters vary widely in quality, with some being overly long and verbose, needing substantial reduction, while others are brief and could have been expanded for more depth. Many chapters suffer from unnecessary verbiage and repetitions, which can be burdensome for readers, both casual and academic. Several discussions could have been condensed to fit into a single-volume book. Besides, the two volumes feature a wide array of illustrations, a commendable effort dedicated to Hindu-Buddhist Art in Southeast Asia, generously supported by the Alphawood Foundation in Chicago. However, the quality of the illustrations and maps varies significantly. While many images are well-selected, some are of poor quality, and others, previously published extensively, may not be essential to the arguments. Amateur photographs, particularly those taken in public museums or with inadequate lighting, could have been improved with better editing. Future publications from the Singapore publisher are anticipated to demonstrate improvements in this area of art and design. Another drawback from the publisher is the inconsistent production quality. The decision to use different formats for each volume is perplexing and has the potential to disrupt the reader's holistic experience.

Despite these shortcomings, *The Creative South* remains a valuable contribution to the study of Buddhist art and ideas in Southeast Asia. The dedication of international specialists and the thorough exploration of maritime Southeast Asia as a creative hub during this historic period make this publication a significant resource for scholars and enthusiasts alike. The scholarly community awaits future endeavors with the hope that lessons learned from this publication will enhance the quality of upcoming contributions in the field.

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