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Buddhist Dynamics in Premodern and Early Modern Southeast Asia. Singapore: ISEAS, 2015, x + 440 pp. ISBN 9789814519069. Price: USD 29.90 (paperback).

This volume is a compilation of papers presented at a conference on pre- and early modern Buddhism at the Nalanda-Srivijaya Center, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, in 2011. The chapters reflect the breadth and the depth of such an expansive subject, with the topics of essays ranging from early epigraphic evidence of Buddhism in peninsular and island Southeast Asia to discussions of the role of religion in Thai-Khmer courtly relations in the nineteenth century.

Several of the essays focus on epigraphy and demonstrate the many ways inscribed texts can be used to help us learn about the early history of the region. Scholars in this volume use epigraphy for diverse purposes, yet each essay points to networks of Buddhist ideas, practices, and iconography. Peter Skilling examines a Buddhist verse with no apparent immediate South Asian origin, which was inscribed in stone, metal, and clay, and found in locations from north peninsular Malaysia to Java, all sites along ancient trade routes between India and China. The origin of this verse and the reasons for its popularity in Southeast Asia remain a mystery but point to connections and conversations within early Southeast Asian Buddhist centers.

Titi Surti Nastiti's essay focuses on inscribed clay stupas and a Buddhist sealing discovered in the foundational pit of a Majapahit-era Javanese temple, Candi Gentong. Using paleographic comparisons, she demonstrates the likelihood that these deposits predate the structure and provide the earliest evidence of Buddhist practice in East Java. An abbreviated form of the widely used *ye dharma* mantra was inscribed on these foundational deposits, and was also found on numerous clay stupas excavated near Borobudur. These lines relate to the phrase discussed in Skilling's article, but have a far wider distribution.

Hiram Woodward's penetrating essay focuses on tenth century Angkor, closely looking at a wide range of inscriptional and literary evidence of Buddhism and how it relates to sculptural remains of the period. He grapples with longstanding questions about early Cambodian Buddhism, addressing which texts were known and how iconographic traditions persisted or transformed.

Several of the essays in the volume focus on archeological finds. Stephen Murphy's contribution is perhaps the most unusual in a volume of this sort. He uses quantitative and demographic evidence to estimate the size and extent of Buddhist communities in the Khorat Plateau during the Dvaravati period. By counting and mapping the locations of stone monastic boundary markers, he hypothesizes the size and density of monastic centers, noting also the distribution of narrative art within this framework.

E. Edwards McKinnon presents images of a hoard of bronzes that was said to be found at Muara Kaman, in Kutei, East Kalimantan. The location of these fragmentary statues is unknown today. By publishing these photographs and providing comparable images, McKinnon provides evidence of Buddhist practice in Borneo, a region that has produced some isolated instances of spectacular Buddhist imagery, but is in need of much further excavation and study.

The ritual deposits found in ruins of Chedi Chula Prathon are the subject of Nicolas Revire's essay, which suggests how these bronze objects may have fit into Buddhist ritual practices in the Dvaravati period. Revire draws on comparisons to archaeological finds from Java and other regions in Asia, especially in his examination of a *khakkhara* finial. How these ritual implements related to shared religious practices is still unclear, but suggests a common vocabulary of ritual implements across large parts of Asia.

Scholars have referred to the religion of Java during the Singasari and Majapahit periods as 'syncretic'. Andrea Acri examines this notion in his essay, reassessing past analyses, as well as looking to recent studies of religion in the Indian subcontinent and Tibet for comparison. He proposes that the notion of a single syncretistic Siva-Buddha religion during this period is overstated. Claims found in written sources of an equivalence between religions may be the result of the Buddhist authors appropriating aspects of Sivaite thought, to gain royal support or bring greater appeal to their own proselytizing.

The intersections between religion and monarchy are a topic explored by several essays. John Whitmore uses literati chronicles, spirit tales, and monastic biographies to examine the relationship between rulers, Buddhism, and local spirit cults in Dai Viet in eleventh and twelfth century Vietnam. These texts describe the way rulers engaged with the Buddhist monastic community (building temples, sponsoring feasts, seeking advice) as well as with local spirit cults. Whitmore's efforts to compare of the history of Dai Viet with Buddhist monarchies in other parts of Southeast Asia are commendable, but require more than the few pages allotted.

For those used to working with inscriptional and archaeological remains from the premodern period, the presence of textual evidence found in the second millennium may seem like a surfeit of riches. But as many of the essays focusing on the early modern period make clear, Buddhist textual sources from this period can be, as Anne Blackburn notes, tendentious texts.

Blackburn's contribution is a beautifully disciplined study that stands out in its clarity of language and carefully reasoned arguments. She reexamines a topic commonly described in histories of second millennium Burma and Thailand: the cultural and religious impact of increased ties between these regions and Sri Lanka. By looking closely at the sixteenth century Chiang Mai chronicle

Jinakalamali and other monastic texts from the same period, Blackburn delves into the contacts between the monks of mainland Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka and how 'memories of affiliation' were presented in Buddhist monastic lineage histories of the period. She argues for the necessity of recognizing the 'rhetorical, performative, and locally argumentative character' of these texts (p. 317), and suggests some paths for further research on the transregional mobility of monks.

Alexey Kirichenko's paper deals with monastic mobility of a different sort, the movement of monks inside monastic networks both within the court and outside of it in seventeenth and eighteenth century Burma. His work is a preliminary study of Buddhist monasticism during this period, looking at the role of patronage, the production of religious texts, and the importance of lineage, kinship, and education.

In his paper on the use of 'Buddhicized' (p. 375) political rhetoric in the mid-eighteenth century, Jacques Leider examines the exchange of letters between two warring rulers of Burma and Pegu. His essay is a fine example of how close reading can both elucidate and challenge commonly perceived ideas. Rather than focusing on the military roles of King Alaungmintaya and King Banya Dala, Leider illustrates how the use of religious language or references to Buddhist texts within diplomatic missives bestowed status and authority. The final essay in the volume moves away from the early modern period, and provides a brief look at the movement of Buddhist teachers, texts, and ceremonies from Thailand to Cambodia during the reigns of King Mongkut and King Ang Duong.

The essays in this book encompass a wide range of topics covering a long expanse of time, and may have been profitably divided into two volumes, one focused on premodern material and the other on early modern. A persistent call in almost every essay is the need for greater research, whether it be archaeological excavation, preservation of manuscripts, or translations of monastic histories. A secondary plea is for more interdisciplinary research combining epigraphic, archaeological, art historical, and literary sources. The volume as a whole is rich and engaging and suggests many paths for further study. The contributors, ranging across generations and disciplines, give us hope for further rich explorations of Buddhism in Southeast Asia.

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