

## The Incipient Tantrism of Borobudur

Dr Udaydokras

We as human have struggled to find ways to conceptualize the relation between textuality and forms of the built environment.

Ever since its discovery by Raffles in 1814, Borobudur has been an object of mystery. Its imposing size and the magnificence of its conception and carving aside, the uniqueness both of its structural design and its iconography among religious monuments, not only in its temporal and spatial proximity, but anywhere in the Indic world, has heightened its aspect of enigma, inviting conjecture on its intention.

1. Who made Borobudur ?
2. what was it used for?
3. why was it made the way it was made?

these and similar questions arise immediately in connection with the monument. Though more than 150 years have passed since its discovery, none of these questions have been definitively answered, though some important preliminary headway has been made, in establishing the period of its construction and in conclusively identifying the textual sources of the carving.

### **Introduction:**

The are a collection of scriptures of several Hindu devotional schools. The term literally means tradition or “that which has come down”, and the Agama texts describe cosmology, epistemology, philosophical doctrines, precepts on meditation and practices, four kinds of yoga, mantras, temple construction, deity worship and ways to attain sixfold desires. These canonical texts are in Sanskrit.

The three main branches of Agama texts are those of Shaivism (Shiva), Vaishnavism (Vishnu), Shaktism (Devi). The Agamic traditions are sometimes called Tantra, although the term “Tantra” is usually used specifically to refer to Shakta Agamas and sometimes Shaiva Agamas (Bhairava tradition).

The Agama literature is voluminous, and includes 28 Saiva Agamas, 77 Shakta Agamas (also called Tantras), and 108 Vaishnava Agamas (also called Pancharatra Samhitas), and numerous Upa-Agamas.

The origin and chronology of Agamas is unclear. Some are Vedic and others non-Vedic. Agama traditions include Yoga and Self Realization concepts, some include Kundalini Yoga, asceticism, and philosophies ranging from Dvaita (dualism) to Advaita(monism). Some suggest that these are post-Vedic texts, others as pre-Vedic compositions.

Smartas recognize the Agamas, but don't necessarily adhere to them, relying mainly on the smriti texts.

Scholars note that some passages in the Hindu Agama texts appear to repudiate the authority of the Vedas, while other passages assert that their precepts reveal the true spirit of the Vedas. The Agamas literary genre may also be found in Śramaṇic traditions (i.e. Buddhist, Jaina etc.). Bali Hindu tradition is officially called Agama Hindu Dharma in Indonesia.

**Etymology:**

Agama is derived from the verb root (gam) meaning “to go” and the preposition (aa) meaning “toward” and refers to scriptures “that which has come down”.

**Significance:**

The means of worship in the Agamic religions differ from the Vedic form. While the Vedic form of yajna require no deity and shrines, the Agamic texts are based on deity worship.

**Philosophy:**

The Agama texts present a diverse range of philosophies, ranging from theistic dualism to absolute monism for different people of different qualifications and samskaras based on their mode (Goodness, Passion, Ignorance).

In Shaivism alone, there are ten dualistic (dvaita) Agama texts, eighteen qualified monism-cum-dualism (bhedabheda) Agama texts and sixty four monism (advaita) Agama texts. The Bhairava Shastras are monistic, while Shiva Shastras are dualistic.

Sakta agamas worship Devi as the Moola Prakriti and is ultimately Impersonal

Vaishnava Agamas are purely Non Advaita and talks about Personal God as the Supreme Brahman situated in his abode along with his eternal associates.

**The Shakta Agamas are commonly known as Tantras, and they are imbued with reverence for the feminine, representing goddess as the focus and treating the female as equal and essential part of the cosmic existence.** The feminine Shakti (literally, energy and power) concept is found in the Vedic literature, but it flowers into extensive textual details only in the Shakta Agamas. These texts emphasize the feminine as the creative aspect of a male divinity, cosmogonic power and all pervasive divine essence. The theosophy presents the masculine and feminine principle in a “state of primordial, transcendent, blissful unity”. The feminine is the will, the knowing and the activity, she is not only the matrix of creation, she is creation. Unified with the male principle, in these Hindu sect’s Tantra texts, the female is the Absolute.

The Shakta Agamas are related to the Shaiva Agamas, with their respective focus on Shakti with Shiva in Shakta Tantra and on Shiva in Shaiva texts. The Shakta Agamas or Shakta tantras are 64 in number. Some of the older Tantra texts in this genre are called Yamalas, which literally denotes, states Teun Goudriaan, the “primeval blissful state of non-duality of Shiva and Shakti, the ultimate goal for the Tantric Sadhaka”.

Max Nihom in a 1994 monograph *Studies in Indian and Indo-Indonesian Tantrism: The Kuñjarakarṇadharmakathana and the Yogatantra* accounted for some anomalies in the evidence from insular Southeast Asia on the history of esoteric Buddhism, moving between sources in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Old Javanese. **Indonesian Esoteric Buddhism or Esoteric Buddhism in Maritime Southeast Asia** refers

to the traditions of Esoteric Buddhism found in Maritime Southeast Asia which emerged in the 7th century along the maritime trade routes and port cities of the Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra as well as in Malaysia. These esoteric forms were spread by pilgrims and Tantric masters who received royal patronage from royal dynasties like the Sailendras and the Srivijaya. This tradition was also linked by the maritime trade routes with Indian Vajrayana, Tantric Buddhism in Sinhala, Cham and Khmer lands and in China and Japan, to the extent that it is hard to separate them completely and it is better to speak of a complex of "Esoteric Buddhism of Mediaeval Maritime Asia."<sup>[2]</sup> Many key Indian port cities saw the growth of Esoteric Buddhism, a tradition which coexisted alongside Shaivism.

Java under the Sailendras became a major center of Buddhism in the region, with monumental architecture such as Borobudur and Candi Sukuh. The capital of the Buddhist empire of Srivijaya in Palembang, Sumatra was another major center.

The decline of Buddhist states and the rise of Islamic states in the region during the 13th-16th centuries saw the steep decline of this tradition.

**The diffusion of Esoteric Buddhism** in the region began with the arrival of Indian Buddhist monks in the 7th century. Another source of this Indonesian Tantric tradition was from Sri Lanka's Abhayagiri vihāra, a well known center of Vajrayana study and practice, which even established a branch monastery in Central Java in the 8th century with Sailendra patronage.

A stronghold of Esoteric Buddhism, the empire of Srivijaya (650 CE–1377 CE) patronized Buddhist monks and institutions and thus attracted pilgrims and scholars from other parts of Asia. These included the Chinese monk Yijing, who made several lengthy visits to Sumatra on his way to study at Nalanda University in India in 671 and 695, and the Bengali Buddhist scholar Atisha (982-1054 CE) who played a major role in the development of Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet. Yijing praised the high level of Buddhist scholarship in Srivijaya and advised Chinese monks to study there prior to making the journey to the great institution of learning, Nalanda Vihara, India. He wrote:

In Java, the 8th century Shailendra dynasty promoted large scale Buddhist building projects such as Borobudur. Later central Javanese bronze and silver Buddhist images show Tantric themes such as mandalas and the Five Tathagatas.

In the 13th century Buddhism thrived in Eastern Java, the Singhasari kingdom of King Kertanegara of Singhasari patronized Vajrayana. Buddhism continued to thrive under the Hindu-Buddhist Majapahit Empire (1293–1527). Their capital Trowulan had many annual festivities for Buddhism, Shaivism, and Vaishnavism. Some of their kings were Vajrayana practitioners, such as King Adityawarman (1347–79) whose inscriptions state he was "always concentrated on Hevajra." A feature of Javanese Buddhism was the deification and worship of kings as Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. Important Buddhist deities included Prajnaparamita, Tara, Bhairava and Lokeshvara.

The process of merging Buddhism and Hinduism predated the fall of the Majapahit however, and many textual sources from the later Hindu-Buddhist kingdom state that Hinduism and Buddhism are both two paths to the same reality and also equate the five Buddhas with five forms of Shiva. Likewise, some Majapahit temples depict both Buddhist and Shaiva elements.

The oldest extant esoteric Buddhist Mantrayana literature in Old Javanese, a language significantly influenced by Sanskrit, is enshrined in the *San Hyan Kamahayanikan* (possibly 8th century). The *San Hyan Kamahayanikan* claims that its teachings come from Dignaga.

The Tibetan Buddhist canon includes translations of texts written by Javanese masters, such as the *Durbodhaloka* (a commentary on the *Abhisamayalamkara*) of Suvarnadvipa Dharmakīrti.

Various unique forms of Buddhist architecture developed in Indonesia and Malaysia the most common of which is the stone Candi which shows Indic influences as has been interpreted as a symbol of Mount Meru.

The Sailendras built many Buddhist structures in Java, including the massive stupa of Borobodur, as well as Candi Sukuh, Candi Mendut, Candi Kalasan and Candi Sewu. The Srivijayans also built Buddhist temple complexes in Sumatra, such as Muara Takus and Bahal temple and also in the Malay Peninsula, such as in their regional capital at Chaiya.<sup>1</sup> Majapahit also built Candis, such as Jabung, and Penataran.

Other architecture types include *punden*, small terraced sanctuaries built on mountains and *pertapaan*, hermitages built on mountain slopes.

### **Borobodur**

There is no mention of Borobodur in any of Majapahit sources, implies that this structure already forgotten in the last classic-period. **Buddhism** has a long history in Indonesia. Expansion of Buddhism starting in the 5th century BCE from northern India to the rest of Asia, which followed both inland and maritime trade routes of the Silk Road. Srivijaya once served as a centre of Buddhist learning and expansion. The overland and maritime "Silk Roads" were interlinked and complementary, forming what scholars have called the "great circle of Buddhism".

### **Antiquity**

Buddhism is the second oldest religion in Indonesia after Hinduism, which arrived from India around the second century. The history of Buddhism in Indonesia is closely related to the history of Hinduism, as a number of empires influenced by Indian culture were established around the same period. The arrival of Buddhism in the Indonesian archipelago began with trading activity, from the early 1st century, by way of the maritime Silk Road between Indonesia and India. The oldest Buddhist archaeological site in Indonesia is arguably the Batujaya stupas complex in Karawang, West Java. The oldest relic in Batujaya was estimated to originate from the 2nd century, while the latest dated from the 12th century. Subsequently, significant numbers of Buddhist sites were found in Jambi, Palembang, and Riau provinces in Sumatra, as well as in Central and East Java. The Indonesian archipelago has, over the centuries, witnessed the rise and fall of powerful Buddhist empires, such as the Sailendra dynasty, the Mataram, and Srivijaya empires.

According to some Chinese source, a Chinese Buddhist monk I-tsing on his pilgrim journey to India, witnessed the powerful maritime empire of Srivijaya based on Sumatra in the 7th century. The empire served as a Buddhist learning center in the region. A notable Srivijayan revered Buddhist scholar is Dharmakīrtiśrī, a Srivijayan prince of the Sailendra dynasty, born around the turn of the 7th century in Sumatra.<sup>[7]</sup> He became a revered scholar-monk in Srivijaya and moved to India to become a teacher at the famed Nalanda University, as well as

a poet. He built on and reinterpreted the work of Dignaga, the pioneer of Buddhist Logic, and was very influential among Brahman logicians as well as Buddhists. His theories became normative in Tibet and are studied to this day as a part of the basic monastic curriculum. Other Buddhist monks that visited Indonesia were Atisha, Dharmapala, a professor of Nalanda, and the South Indian Buddhist Vajrabodhi. Srivijaya was the largest Buddhist empire ever formed in Indonesian history. Indian empires such as the Pala empire helped fund Buddhism in Indonesia, specifically funding a monetary for Sumatran monks.

A number of Buddhist historical heritages can be found in Indonesia, including the 8th century Borobudur mandala monument and Sewu temple in Central Java, Batujaya in West Java, Muaro Jambi, Muara Takus and Bahal temple in Sumatra, and numerous of statues or inscriptions from the earlier history of Indonesian Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms. During the era of Kediri, Singhasari and Majapahit empire, Buddhism — identified as *Dharma ri Kasogatan* — was acknowledged as one of kingdom's official religions along with Hinduism. Although some of kings may have favored Hinduism, harmony, toleration, and even syncretism were promoted as manifested in Bhinneka Tunggal Ika national motto, coined from Kakawin Sutasoma, written by Mpu Tantular to promotes tolerance between Hindus (Shivaites) and Buddhists. The classical era of ancient Java also had produces some of the exquisite examples of Buddhist arts, such as the statue of Prajnaparamita and the statue of Buddha Vairochana and Boddhistva Padmapani and Vajrapani in Mendut temple.

The largest Buddhist stupa in the world is the 9th-century complex at Borobudur in central Java, built as a Mandala, a giant three-dimensional representation of Esoteric Buddhist cosmology. The temple shows Indian and local influences and is decorated with 2,672 relief panels and 504 Buddha statues. The reliefs depict stories from the Lalitavistara Sutra, Jataka tales and the Gandavyuha sutra.

### *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha sutra* and the Yogatantra at Borobudur

The '**Yogatantra**' (Sanskrit) 'conveyance' (Sanskrit: yana) is the most sublime of the three Outer Tantras. It includes a class of Buddhist tantric literature as well as 'praxis' (Sanskrit: sadhana) associated with this class. The Yogatantrayana is evident in both the Sarma traditions of Tibetan Buddhism as well as the Nine Yana scheme of the Nyingmapa.

JamgonKongtrul (1813-1899) defines Yoga tantra by making reference to the Two Truths doctrine and 'method' (Sanskrit: upaya) and 'wisdom' (Sanskrit: prajna) and is rendered into English from the Tibetan by Guarisco and McLeod, *et.al.* (2005: p.128) thus:

"Yoga tantra is so named because it emphasizes the inner yoga meditation of method and wisdom; or alternatively, because based on knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the profound ultimate truth and the vast relative truth, it emphasizes contemplation that inseparably unites these two truths."

The *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha sutra* (Sanskrit, *Compendium of the Reality of All Tathāgatas*), also known as the *TattvasaṃgrahaTantra*, is an important seventh century Indian Buddhist tantric text. Although the scripture refers itself as a Mahayana sutra, the content is mainly tantric in nature and thus is sometimes called a tantra. This work is an important source for the Shingon tradition.

This text was very important for the development of the Vajrayana Yoga tantra traditions in India, Tibet, China, Japan and Sumatra, amongst others. The *Tattvasaṃgraha* is extant in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese.

Weinberger (2003: p. 4) holds:

The *Compendium of Principles* marks the emergence of mature Indian Buddhist tantra at the end of the seventh century, and it immediately spawned a body of literary progeny that has played a central and enduring role in the development of tantric Buddhism in India, Tibet, China, and Japan. Consolidated over time into traditions known in some Indian circles as Yoga Tantra, they spread as widely as Śrī Lanka, Southeast Asia, Khotan, Mongolia, and Sumatra.

Tattvasaṃgraha may be parsed into 'tattva'+ 'saṃgraha'. Tattva may be parsed into 'Tat'+ 'tva' and may also be orthographically rendered in English as Tattwa and means 'thatness', 'principle', 'reality' or 'truth'. 'Saṃgraha' may be parsed into 'saṃ'+ 'graha'. 'Saṃ' may be spelled as either 'sam' or 'san' as the anusika ṃ indicates a nasalization of the preceding vowel before unpronounced "m" or "n". saṃ refers to origin, birth or dependent origination; sambodhi, sambhava. Graha means 'seizing', 'laying hold of', 'holding'.

Tucci inaugurated scholarship in a western language on the *Tattvasaṃgraha* with his exploration on the Maheśvara subjugation myth it holds. Snellgrove continued to stake a foundation of western scholarship in both his publication of the facsimile reproduction of one of the extant Sanskrit manuscripts, a publication opened by a scholarly introduction and also his presentation of tantra in volume one of *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*. Todaro has provided a translation of the first section of the tantra, accompanied by a study of the role of the *Tattvasaṃgraha* and associated texts in the tradition of Kūkai, founder of Japanese Shingon.

While similar efforts had been made earlier, this Dutch scholar brought a critical philological rigor to what had largely been a (frequently exhilarating) search for possible connections and identities from across Buddhist Asia. One of the book's central demonstrations is that of the apparent absence of the text of the *Sarvatathāgatattattvasaṃgraha Tantra* from classical Indonesia, reevaluating the claim – first made by Lokesh Chandra, and widely repeated – that this early esoteric scripture's central *vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala* was influential in the design of Borobudur and elsewhere.

. Drawing on some earlier and unpublished work of my own, I am interested in considering what 'textual archaeology' might mean, while taking both the adjective and the substantive seriously. I will suggest that attention to Mus' seminal book 'about' Borobudur along with subsequent scholarship (e.g. that of Lokesh Chandra again, Snellgrove, and Dumarçay) suggests the value of considering a text like the *Tattvasaṃgraha* as the result of a gradual and collective mode of composition, and its central *maṇḍala* a work of post facto interpretative synthesis of the overlapping worlds of early Buddhist Mantranaya.

9:45-10:15 Speaker 2 (20 minutes plus Q&A): Julie Gifford

“Borobudur Present and Past: Learning from the Contemporary Ngālo Tradition”

When he first visited Borobudur in 1989, Lama GangchenTulku Rinpoche, a reincarnate master in the Geluk school of Tibetan Buddhism, began having visions. Based on these revelations, he devised the NgalSo Tantric Self-Healing initiation, which he granted to many students during annual pilgrimages to Borobudur. The NgalSo initiation and Lama Gangchen's account of Borobudur as a Highest Yoga Tantra mandala provide rich opportunities for new research. First, a thorough study of the NgalSo initiation would make a valuable contribution to a comprehensive reception history of Borobudur. Second, studies of the NgalSo tradition would contribute to ongoing conversations about religious innovation, religious material culture, and the transnational character of contemporary Tibetan Buddhism. Third, a careful historical investigation of Lama Gangchen's account of the Borobudur mandala might shed light on the original meanings and uses of the monument, and on the nature of Javanese Buddhism in the first half of the ninth century.<sup>1</sup>

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1. **Heritage Assemblages. The Heritage Site of Borobudur (Indonesia) as a Cultural Landscape.** *La patrimonialisation comme processus d'agencement. La désignation du site de Borobudur (Indonésie) en tant que paysage culturel*  
**Adèle Esposito Andujar**  
p. 125-161  
<https://doi.org/10.4000/moussons.6643>