Eszter Jakab

REMEMBERING ENLIGHTENMENT:

BODH GAYĀ IN THE CULTURAL MEMORY OF THAILAND

MA Thesis in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management.

Central European University

Budapest

June 2020

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by

Eszter Jakab

(Hungary)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts degree in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Chair, Examination Committee

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Thesis Supervisor

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Examiner

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I, the undersigned, **Eszter Jakab**, candidate for the MA degree in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Signature

Abstract

The site of the Buddha's enlightenment was once the most flourishing pilgrimage center of Buddhism in India. Yet, by the twelfth century, Buddhism weakened for many reasons and Bodh Gayā became nearly abandoned. The main bulwarks of Buddhism were placed outside the former Indian Buddhist region, and the Buddhist memory of the Mahābodhi in India started to fade away. However, in the nineteenth century, revivalist movements turned the history of the site into a different direction, and Buddhists from abroad declared their intentions to reclaim their Buddhist heritage.

By the twentieth-century independence of India, with the work of Burmese rulers and devotees, Sri Lankan activists, and British archaeologists, Bodh Gayā tended to become the center of the Buddhist map again. On the one hand, this meant the change of the religious, social, and economic scenery of the site, which with the intervention of secular bodies into religious matters, and Bodh Gayā's designation as a World Heritage Site, also brought growing tensions and contestation. On the other hand, the reconnection provided a tool for the players of the pan-Buddhist world, to incorporate the memory and heritage of Bodh Gayā into their current national narratives.

One of the most peculiar examples of these is the case of Thailand, a country entering the "revivalist" picture quite late compared to its Burmese and Sri Lankan peers. Yet, it happened at a time when the monarch needed all the legitimation and support possible. We may observe, that from 1956, Thailand established many connections with Bodh Gayā through means of 'soft power' and this process has also lead to the emergence of new practices in the homeland, such as erecting replicas of the Mahābodhi. In my thesis, I analyze these points of connection and compare them with the possible political aims behind them. Additionally, I scrutinize the means of commemorating Bodh Gayā in Thailand focusing on the changing motives and practices.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Zsuzsanna Renner, for introducing me to the world of Buddhist art with her exciting lectures years ago. She has nurtured my professional development ever since. I am immensely grateful to my outstanding Religious Studies Program supervisor, Carsten Wilke, who, with his keen insights, supportive attitude, and constant availability, took my master's study experience to a whole different level and made me see my topic from angles I would never think of.

At the same time, I would like to express my gratitude to all the members of the Center for Religious Studies, especially Esther Holbrook, for their hard work in enabling the many intriguing lectures that inspired my research in further directions. Special thanks to Ute Falasch for organizing last year's cutting edge conference on mysticism, where I had the opportunity to discuss the lectures of leading scholars of my field in person. I am grateful to all the staff and faculty of Cultural Heritage Studies Program, who have worked tirelessly and supported me for the last two years, especially Eszter Tímár, József Laszlovszky, Dóra Mérai, Eszter Spät, Alice Choyke, and Ágnes Drosztmér. Their guidance has always helped to progress further.

Thanks to the whole SEAMEO SPAFA staff, especially my supervisor, Victoria Scott, and my colleagues, John Paul Itao and Ean Lee for making my internship in Bangkok magical and instructive. I would like to thank my dear friends from CEU, Viswesh Rammohan, Hafiz Muhammad Bilal, and Dinara Satbayeva for all the conversations that have further expanded my intellectual horizon and for all the support they have given over the years. I am especially grateful to my friend Panit Pawaranggoon for answering all my questions about Thailand and Thai texts immediately and tirelessly, and my friend Adam Havas, for always encouraging and helping me. Last but not least, special thanks goes to Kristóf Szitár for relentlessly supporting me throughout the whole thesis writing process in every possible way.

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Chapter 1. Bodh Gayā, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Sacred Geography of Buddhism.... 7

1.1. *Dhammarāja*: The Righteous Ruler of the Buddhist World 7

1.2. Historical Development and Political Leadership in the Buddhist World 9

1.3. The Topography of the Buddha's Life 15

1.4. Revival of Bodh Gayā 19

1.5. Bodh Gayā as an Ideal Image "*en miniature*" of the Buddhist World..... 25

Chapter 2. Thailand in Bodh Gayā: Local Layers of Cultural Memory 29

2.1. Pilgrimage of Thai Leaders to Bodh Gayā 30

2.2. Theravāda Chronology and *Buddha Jayantī* 31

2.3. Thai Buildings at Bodh Gayā 34

2.3.1. Royal Wat Thai 34

2.3.2. Wat Pa Buddhagaya Vanaram..... 37

2.3.3. Metta Buddharam..... 38

2.4. Donations from *Suvaṇṇabhūmi*, the Land of Gold..... 39

Chapter 3. Bodh Gayā in Thailand: Virtual Evocations of the Mahābodhi 42

3.1. Extension and Recreation of the Sacred Space of Buddhism..... 42

3.2. Why Make Sacred Copies?..... 46

3.3. Replica Temples 48

3.3.1. Before the Twentieth Century 48

3.3.2. After the Twentieth Century 51

Conclusion 57

Bibliography 60

Glossary 68

List of Figures

Figure 1. Chart showing the presence, dominance and residual survivor of Buddhism in different lands 12

Figure 2. *Aṣṭāmahāpratihārya* – Eight major sites of Buddhist pilgrimage 16

Figure 3. Bodh Gayā before restoration 20

Figure 4. Mahābodhi Temple in 2017 24

Figure 5. Wat Benchamabophit Dusitvanaram in Bangkok, Thailand. Photo by Peak Hora. . 36

Figure 6. Royal Wat Thai, Bodh Gayā, India. 36

Figure 7. The top of the Mahābodhi Temple covered in gold, photo by Kiroki Ogawa, 2015. 39

Figure 8. Mural depicting the Mahābodhi at Doi Suthep. Photo by the author, 2019. 44

Figure 9. Miniature model of the Mahābodhi, Tibet, 12th century, British Museum, London 45

Figure 10. Wat Chet Yot in Chiang Mai. Photo by the author, 2019. 49

Figure 11. *Bodhi*-tree on the right, *nāga*-statues in front of the Wat Chet Yot from pilgrims born in the year of the snake. Photo by the author, 2019. 50

Figure 12. Map of the new replica-temples, Google Maps. List saved by the author. 51

Figure 13. Wat Wang Pra Do 53

Figure 14.Wat Pa Siriwattanawisuth 54

Note on Transliteration

The thesis cites a myriad of personal names, toponyms, and notions stemming from a variety of topographical, cultural, or temporal strata. These words form part of ancient and contemporary languages of South-, Southeast-, and East Asia. Taking my undergraduate training in Indian Studies into consideration, I shall only use the fully-fledged version of the scientific transliteration when I cite words of Indic provenance. Therefore, in the cases of Sanskrit, Pāli, or Hindi, I use the "International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration" scheme. If a concept exists in all the above languages, preference shall be given to the most contextually fitting. Therefore, Indian toponyms of the major pilgrimage sites shall be transcribed in their standard Hindi forms as I discuss contemporary issues pertaining to these locales, whereas Theravāda Buddhist technical terms shall be rendered in their Pāli forms. As far as the latter group of notions is concerned, it ought to be mentioned that, whenever possible I shall also provide their respective Sanskrit or Thai variants as well.

In the case of country names, I uniformly use their fixed forms in English. I act along these lines regarding the Southeast Asian languages too, to avoid the hazard of misusing any scientific transliteration scheme. An exception is the occurrence of proper or geographical names that sign persons or places from a historical period, which justify the choice of Sanskrit or Pāli. For the transcription of Chinese names, I follow the Hanyu Pinyin writing system without using any tonal or diacritic signs. Therefore, instead of Fǎxiǎn or Xuánzàng one shall read Faxian and Xuanzang.

Introduction

The Mahābodhi Temple is one of the four most sacred sites of Buddhism situated in Bodh Gayā, India. According to tradition, it was here that the Buddha obtained enlightenment. Since the third century BCE, when the first sanctuary was built by Emperor Aśoka, it developed into a major pilgrimage center. However, Bodh Gayā had been partially abandoned and neglected from the twelfth century and was revived in the nineteenth century by Buddhist pilgrims and British archaeologists. Simultaneously nascent nation-states were competing for more auspicious geo- and cultural political positions, and in this intense and fierce competition, the notion of cultural and national heritage played a particularly significant role.

Unlike in the context of the mostly secularized Europe, religion was a key-element in the emerging national identities of South- and Southeast Asian states. This has also shaped the history of Bodh Gayā. The pan-Asian reconnection with the site of enlightenment to its historically and culturally shared heritage also contributed to the national and transnational narratives of the region. At the same time, the revival and the accessibility of this major pilgrimage site gave way to new religious practices both at the original site and in the believers' homelands.

Many works have been published recently on the involvement of different actors in the "re-invention" of Bodh Gayā. These publications underscore how this revival is constantly constructing the cultural memory of the place through utilizing the sacred geography that connects Buddhists around the world to this pilgrimage site. However, I have noticed that most of the publications focus on how the different acts of re-invention affect the perception and situation of the site itself, but not of the countries involved in this process and the underlying rationales.

To list the most influential examples, Alan Trevithick carried out an insightful research on the history of the Mahābodhi Temple's revitalization, and covered the acts of the British archaeologists, the Burmese rulers and devotees, as well as of the Sri Lankan monk, Anagārika Dharmapāla, founder of the Maha Bodhi Society.[1] Jacob N. Kinnard also elaborated extensively the Hindu/Buddhist conflict of the site with a focus on the activities of Anagārika Dharmapāla.[2]

A great collection of studies, the *Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on a Contested Buddhist Site: Bodh Gaya Jataka*, edited by David Geary, Matthew R. Sayers, and Abhishek Singh Amar, published in 2012, enumerates engaging and perspicacious studies on the history, reinvention and afterlife of the site. In his monograph that deals with the "Rebirth of Bodh Gayā", David Geary elucidates how the revival is being used to reinforce a pan-Asian Buddhist identity, and how the designation of the temple complex as a UNESCO World Heritage Site has lead to rapid—and sometimes harmful—development projects and tensions among the stakeholders of the site.[3] Taking a slightly different analytical vantage point, although also presenting the Buddhist reinvention, Toni Huber's seminal monograph examines the significance of Bodh Gayā for Tibetans. An important object of the study is how Tibetan Buddhist religious practices on the ground have affected the cultural and social lives of the refugees since 1959 and were used in the maintenance of exiled Tibetan leadership.[4] In this respect, this work is probably the closest to the approach I use in my thesis.

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[1] See for example Alan Trevithick, "British Archaeologists, Hindu Mahants, and Burmese Buddhists: The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya, 1811-1877," *Modern Asian Studies*, 33, 3 (1999): 635-656, or *id.*, *The Revival of Buddhist Pilgrimage at Bodh Gaya (1811-1949): Anagarika Dharmapala and the Mahabodhi Temple* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2016)

[2] Jacob N. Kinnard, "When Is The Buddha Not the Buddha? The Hindu/Buddhist Battle over Bodhgayā and Its Buddha Image," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 66, no. 4 (1998): 817-39.

[3] David Geary, *The Rebirth of Bodh Gaya: Buddhism and the Making of a World Heritage Site*,(London, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017)

[4] Toni Huber, *The Holy Land Reborn: Pilgrimage and the Tibetan Reinvention of Buddhist India* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008)

Thailand is a very active contributor to the maintenance of the Mahābodhi Temple and its surroundings. Both idiosyncratic elements of Thai culture may be observed at the original site of enlightenment, as well as in visual representations of the temple that are found in Thailand. The latter are mainly miniature replicas such as pilgrim souvenirs, but in this respect, we may also refer to murals in prominent Thai temples, or a plethora of large-scale replicas. I propose that it is worth to explore the various occurrences of Bodh Gayā in Thai cultural practice, thereby distinguishing as memory layers, and to scrutinize the possible causes and effects of representing and establishing ownership over the tangible and intangible heritage of Bodh Gayā.

In light of the problems outlined above, in my thesis I intend to reveal what the local and spatially distributed Thai cultural memory layers of Bodh Gayā are, and the reasons and consequences of creating them. My aim is to answer:

(1) What are these memory layers, and how may they be categorized and hierarchized considering their tangible and intangible heritage aspects?

(2) Through what symbolism does Thailand legitimize its political position with these memory layers?

(3) How does the production of these layers and the twentieth-century Thai connection to the Indian site influences the current religious practices of Thailand?

In my analysis, I build largely on the notion of "cultural memory" coined by Aleida and Jan Assmann. As Assmann states: "Cultural memory has its fixed point; its horizon does not change with the passing of time. These fixed points are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional

communication (recitation, practice, observance)."[5] In my understanding, these fixed points are the belief that the Buddha obtained enlightenment here, and the construction efforts of the rulers of ancient India, especially Emperor Aśoka as *dhammarāja*. As to the cultural formation and institutional communication performed by Thailand, I interpret and analyze them as the Thai cultural memory layers. For the study of the layers' tangible and intangible aspects, I also use the three-dimension memory culture model of Astrid Erll, equating the tangible with the material dimension, and the intangible with the social and mental dimensions.[6]

The first chapter introduces the development of the Buddhist world's sacred geography, the changing structure of Buddhist political leadership, the notion of the *dhammarāja*, and the evolution of Bodh Gayā into a World Heritage Site and a pan-Buddhist pilgrimage center. In the second chapter, I deal specifically with the Thai cultural memory layers at the original site of Bodh Gayā in India. This includes the activities of Thailand on-site, uniquely Theravāda Buddhist concepts and Thai visual elements. An important connection made at this part is how these efforts express symbolical power claims both for the outside world and for the country's citizens.

In the third chapter, I analyze how the memory of Bodh Gayā was distributed spatially in Thailand either expanding or replacing the sacred space of the Mahābodhi. Expansion of sacred space is not new to Buddhism, as one of the earliest example of doing so was the distribution of the bodily remains of the Buddha among the eight kings.[7] The relics play a vital role in sacralizing certain places even today.[8] Another way of sacralizing is the reproduction of an image, the means of which will be introduced with an emphasis on the life-size replicas.

[5] Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, 65 (1995): 125-133, 129.
[6] Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 103.
[7] *Dīgha Nikāya* 16.
[8] See Torkel Brekke, "Bones of Contention: Buddhist Relics, Nationalism and the Politics of Archaeology," *Numen*, Vol. 54. No. 3, 2007. 270-303.

Hypothesis

In my opinion, in the acts connected to Bodh Gayā on behalf of Thailand since the modern era the theory of *dhammarāja* (righteous king) appears as a means of political legitimization. This is due to its form of government as a constitutional monarchy in which the sacred kingship theory of Buddhism is an important element. Their unique non-colonial history in the region enabled them to maintain the royal lineage more powerfully than their peers, and as the most powerful Buddhist-majority country and the second biggest economy of Southeast Asia, it is a necessity to demonstrate their ownership of the physically evoked heritage of the Buddha's life.

I would propose that the most powerful symbolic act to claim ownership of the site was the donation of 289 kg gold on behalf of the Kingdom of Thailand and covering the very top of the Mahābodhi Temple with it. In addition, as Geary also claimed, the construction of the Royal Wat Thai on the premises of the Mahābodhi is a reverse act of replicating the Mahābodhi in Thailand, and therefore symbolically placing the Thai nation in the "sacred power center of the Buddhist world".[9]

However, we may not ignore the role of religious sentiments either, and how they take part in recreating the local and disseminated images of Bodh Gayā. By examining the dates of the replicas, we might notice the gap in the timeline between the fifteenth and the twentieth century. There is a clear proliferation of newly built Mahābodhi-replicas in the second half of the twentieth century, which suggests that this activity is influenced by the re-establishment of symbolic ownership over the original site. However, not the act of replication is new, but the fact that Mahābodhi enters the repertoire of sacred objects.

[9] Geary, *The Rebirth of Bodh Gaya*, 54.

To conclude, I argue that the restoration and revival of Bodh Gayā resulted in two things for Thailand. One, it provided tools for the maintenance of the monarchy and its legitimation as a righteous ruler, and for the demonstration of Thailand as the paramount contemporary Buddhist center of the world. Two, the reconnection to the original site has revived and made the practice of constructing real-size replications quite popular, thereby enriching and changing previous habits of pilgrimage. Thus, we may say that the re-invention of the site created re-invented traditions.

My ultimate hope is to facilitate the better understanding of how establishing ownership over and reconnection with ancient – in this case Buddhist – religious heritage through different means may serve as a vehicle to shape modern national narratives and contemporary religious practices.

Chapter 1. Bodh Gayā, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Sacred Geography of Buddhism

In this chapter, I provide an overview on the notion of *dhammarāja*, which is a key-concept in understanding the efforts of Thailand in Bodh Gayā. Additionally, a separate subchapter deals with the development of Buddhism and its political leadership structure. In order to facilitate contextualization I also present the topography of the Buddha's life and pinpoint the site of enlightenment in it. Subsequently, the process of revival is elaborated, paving the way for the demonstration of the contemporary situation at Bodh Gayā.

1.1.*Dhammarāja*: The Righteous Ruler of the Buddhist World

While in the representation of Catholicism and Islam the frameworks of political power is emphasized, in East Asian Buddhism and in the Western reception, Buddhism has often been seen as a religion aspiring to the spiritual perfection of the individual and the monastic community. Nevertheless, in the development of the Southeast Asian Buddhist world and its polities, the legitimation of rulers through religious concepts was at least as central as in the other world religions – and continues to be until this day.

The idea of *dhammarāja* comes mainly from the *Vessantara Jātaka*.[10] In this story, the king accumulates merits by giving away all his possessions and thus brings endless welfare to his subjects. The main object for the *dhammarāja* is to possess perfections (P. *pāramī*, S. *pāramitā*, T. *barami*), such as generosity or virtue. The other main notion connected to Buddhist kingship

[10] *Jātaka*s are stories about the Buddha's previous lives.

is the *cakkavatti* (S. *cakravartin*) that is the "wheel-turning monarch", whose duties are enumerated in the *Cakkavatti-Sīhanāda Sutta* (The Lion's Roar on the Turning of the Wheel).[11]

The first Buddhist ruler to set the standards for "righteous rulers" and Buddhist kingship was Emperor Aśoka in the third century BCE. This concept was embraced in Southeast Asia and still provides the basis for sacred kingship in Thailand. In the dichotomy of divinized and righteous kings, the *dhammarāja* model shall represent the latter as the Buddhist king should maintain a moral status above all, and he is an instrument in providing the ideal environment for its subordinates to engage with the *dhamma*, not a godlike person with either superior human capability or intermediary roles.[12] However, as Strathern points out, the synthesis between divinization and righteousness is inevitable.[13]

In the Thai kingship model, we may find features alluding to the divinization of kings. Until the mid-nineteenth century, the monarchs were seen as *bodhisattva*s.[14] Additionally, Thai kingship is also based on Hindu views, as they perceive the king as an incarnation of the god Viṣṇu. Hence the name "Rama" for the monarchs of the Chakri-lineage, and the involvement of *brāhmaṇa*s in the coronation process. The 1932 change from absolute to constitutional monarchy and the division of political power provided the terrain to develop diarchic logic in the political life that prevails in the country's monarch–prime minister model. This means that the ceremonial and executive functions tend to become separated, and the heroic and cosmic forms of divinized kingship is divided between the two leaders.[15] The nation-building ideas of

[11] *Dīgha Nikāya* 26: *Cakkavatti-Sīhanāda Sutta: The Lion's Roar on the Turning of the Wheel*, Pali Canon Online, accessed 1 June 2020, http://www.palicanon.org/en/sutta-pitaka/transcribed-suttas/majjhima-nikaya/141-mn-87-piyajtika-sutta-born-from-those-who-are-dear.html

[12] Fort he dichotomy outlined I rely on the chapter about sacred kingship from Alan Strathern, *Unearthly Powers: Religious and Political Change in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019)

[13] Strathern, *Unearthly Powers*, 204.

[14] Patrick Jory, *Thailand's Theory of Monarchy : The Vessantara Jataka and the Idea of the Perfect Man*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016), 90.

[15] Strathern, *Unearthly Powers*, 188.

the leader of the 1932 *coup d'état* and Thailand's longest-running prime minister fit well into this model. Plaek Phibunsongkhram sought to make the government the chief patron of Buddhism, thus he supported temple restorations and constructions, and donated Buddha statues to them. [16] It seems that he intended to appropriate the "righteous ruler" designation and keep the monarch in a kind of completely symbolic status.

Through the Buddhist kingship model, the Thai monarch does not only associates himself with a "righteous ruler" depicted in the *Jātaka* tales. He also identifies with the ancient kings of Thai history, who did not let their people be oppressed. This is a recurring theme in the modern historiography of Thailand, in which the country is portrayed as an anti-colonial nationalistic enterprise bearing royalist features. This ideological blend is referred to as royal-nationalism.[17]

1.2. Historical Development and Political Leadership in the Buddhist World

Although the borders of nation-states currently divide South and Southeast Asia's religious cultural heritage, these regions are connected through their histories, current beliefs, rituals, and practices. India as a country exists only since 1947, before that the borders of former states and empires had been constantly changing, and religion crossed these frontiers too through trade and foreign policies. David Geary in his book points out, that the space of Asia has long been connected via the spread of Buddhist teachings, pilgrimage, and the circulation of religious ideas, texts, and images.[18]

[16] Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 146.
[17] Tongchai Winichakul, "Modern Historiography in Southeast Asia: The Case of Thailand's Royal-Nationalist History," in *A Companion to Global Historical Thought*, eds. Prasenjit Duara, Viren Murthy, and Andrew Sartori (Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 257-268, 266.
[18] Geary, *The Rebirth of Bodh Gaya*, 4.

Today, Mahāyāna Buddhism is widespread in China, Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam, whereas different manifestations of Theravāda Buddhism are more common in Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka and Laos, and Vajrayāna Buddhism is prevailing in Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan and Mongolia. However, there is a considerable number of followers outside the Asia-Pacific too with almost one percent living there. Although half of the Buddhist population lives in China, it is not a Buddhist majority country. Actually, most Buddhists (72%) live in minority, and the countries where according to official censuses, they form a majority are Bhutan, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, Sri Lanka and Thailand.[19] In Japan, Buddhism is also dominant, but people frequently practice it together with Shintoism. Thailand has the most Buddhists, yet if considering percentage of population, Cambodia has the highest figure with 97 percent.[20]

The development and spread of Buddhism can be divided into four major periods according to Edward Conze. In the first phase of fifth to first century BCE, the religion flourished mainly in India, especially in its oldest non-Mahāyāna forms.[21] Following that, it began to spread elsewhere in the first half of the first millennium CE, already establishing the Mahāyāna doctrines, and in the third phase from the sixth to tenth century, centers of Buddhism were established outside of India, and Vajrayāna Buddhism had developed. In the fourth phase, after the tenth century, Conze argues that there was no great doctrinal renewal, Buddhism only endured, yet this might not be entirely the case outside of India.[22] However, it is important to note, that not doctrine-wise, plentiful happened to the authority and geographical structure of the religion, as it had gone extinct from India almost entirely but had been adapted as main religion by many polities outside. In the following, the chapter provides an overview of the

[19] "The Global Religious Landscape," Pew Research Center, accessed 1 June 2020, https://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/
[20] "Buddhists," Pew Research Center, accessed 1 June 2020, https://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-buddhist/
[21] These are sometime called *hīnayāna* (small vehicle), however, due to its pejorative use on behalf of the Mahāyāna stream, I restrain myself from using it.
[22] Edward Conze, *Buddhism: A Short History* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1993), ix.

development of Buddhism from this latter angle without going into detail about the doctrinal and sectarian changes.

The sacred geography of Buddhism has been formed primarily via two means, the missionaries of Buddhist rulers in Northern India, and trade routes. The first emperor to embrace Buddhism as 'state religion' and spread it to foreign kingdoms was Emperor Aśoka. Aśoka sent embassies to the west such as to Greek kingdoms, Kaśmīr, and Gandhāra, to the east that was called *Suvaṇṇabhūmi* in Pāli (S. *Suvarnabhūmi*) which consisted of predecessors of today's central Thailand, and south to Sri Lanka.[23] His activity turned out to be mostly successful in Sri Lanka, which became the center of the Theravāda tradition—the only still remaining sect of the non-Mahāyāna streams.[24] The son of Emperor Aśoka, Mahinda was sent here, who bestowed a sacred *bodhi*-tree upon the ruler Devānaṃpiya Tissa, therefore symbolically spreading the sacred space of Buddhism to foreign lands.[25]

The next great contributors to the expansion of Buddhism were the Sātavāhana- and the Kuṣāṇa-dynasty from Gandhāra, especially King Kaṇiṣka in the first and second century CE.[26] During this period, the trading networks evolved into more comprehensive and broader ones and facilitated the spread of Buddhism to East Asia.[27] By the sixth century, at the end of the Gupta-age of India, the expansion had reached broader parts of South Asia, Central Asia, East Asia, and Java and Sumatra as well. This was an important phase regarding the links between South

[23] Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History, and Practices* (CUP, 2012), 102.
[24] Conze, *Buddhism*, 28-29.
[25] Tansen Sen, "The Spread of Buddhism," chapter in *The Cambridge World History*, ed. by Benjamin Z. Kedar and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 447-80, 450.
[26] The dating of Kaṇiṣka is still unsure, see "Kanishka," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed 1 June 2020, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kaniska
[27] Sen, "The Spread of Buddhism," 451.

and Southeast Asia, as it was under the Guptas that the classical Buddha images developed in Sārnāth, which then spread to and shaped the art of Burma or Thailand.[28]

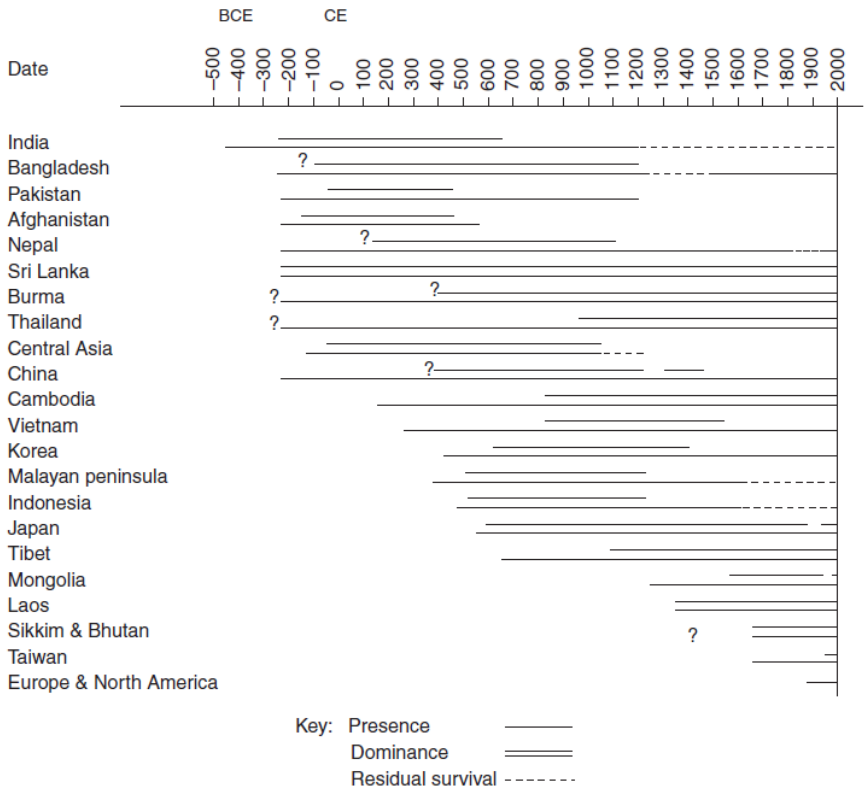

Figure 1. Chart showing the presence, dominance and residual survivor of Buddhism in different lands

In the eighth-ninth centuries, the Pālas were the most significant dynasty and their impact on Buddhism lies in the fact that while in other kingdoms of the region support for the Buddhist religion has fallen sharply, the Pālas have continued the tradition of royal patronage of institutions and have declared themselves Buddhists.[29] Subsequently, the religion disappeared from India almost entirely, yet new polities had already emerged outside of it that embraced Buddhism as 'state religion', however not all of them maintained it until today. As Peter Harvey's excellent illustration shows, after the first millennium CE the centers of Buddhism gravitated from South Asia mainly to East and Southeast Asia, and remained only sporadically present in South Asia.[30]

[28] Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 148.
[29] Kulke and Rothermund, *A History of India*, 113.
[30] Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism*, 236.

In the "Indianized" states of Southeast Asia, three main regions may be distinguished that were influenced by Buddhism: Malaysia/Indonesia, the Burma, Lao, Thailand, and Cambodia parts of mainland Southeast Asia, and Vietnam.[31] To the former two groups the religion had been brought primarily via trade routes with India and Sri Lanka, and to the latter via networks with China. In Malaysia, and Indonesia, however, the Indic religions were taken over by Islam in the second millennium.[32]

In mainland Southeast Asia, the Sarvāstivāda school was present from the time of Aśoka – thanks to the missions to *Suvaṇṇabhūmi*, however, Theravāda became promoted from the eleventh century by the Pagan-dynasty, especially Anawrahta and Kyanzittha. It is King Kyanzittha to whom the first record of official interaction between Southeast Asia and Bodh Gayā is related, as he sent a mission to renovate the Mahābodhi Temple.[33]

After the thirteenth century, the formerly Hindu and Mahāyāna Buddhist Khmer Empire also adopted Theravāda Buddhism as dominant religion, and in the region that is today's Thailand, after the fall of the Mons, the Tai people introduced a fused version of Brahmanical cults and Theravāda Buddhism.[34] From then on, Theravāda Buddhism was the main religion of the proceeding kingdoms of Siam (former name of Thailand), such as Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, Thonburi, and the present Rattanakosin Kingdom, as well as in the former Siamese Lan Na kingdom.[35]

[31] I borrow the term "Indianized" from George Coedes referring to the "expansion of Indian culture" in the region. See George Coedes, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia,* trans. by Susan Brown Cowing (Canberrea, Australian National University Press, 1975)
[32] Joseph M. Kitagawa, Giuseppe Tucci, et al., "Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia," Encyclopædia Britannica, accessed 1 June 2020, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Buddhism/Southeast-Asia
[33] Robert L. Brown, "Bodhgaya and Southeast Asia," in *Bodhgaya: the site of enlightenment*, ed. Janice Leoshko (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1988), 101-124, 106.
[34] Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism*, 199-200.
[35] The Lan Na kingdom was conquered for a while from the sixteenth century by Burma, but returned under Siamese control from the end of the eighteenth century.

From the Buddhist majority countries, only three are left with Buddhist monarchs, namely the Kingdom of Bhutan, Kingdom of Cambodia, and Kingdom of Thailand. Currently, Thailand is the main keeper of Aśoka's legacy due to being the foremost monarchy that builds on the concept of *dhammarāja* and the *cakkavatti* ruler. Cambodia and Bhutan have Buddhist rulers too in their respective constitutional monarchies. Nevertheless, Bhutan does not pursue the concept of *dhammarāja,* being followers of the Vajrayāna tradition. In Cambodia, the king has less significance due to the weakened position of royalty as a result of the Khmer Rouge, the powerless return of Sihanouk and then his son, and the increased power of the Prime Minister – who, on the other hand, tries to shape his image accordingly.[36]

The *dhammarāja* concept of Thailand had been strengthened for many reasons. First of all, Thailand is the only country of Southeast Asia that had not been colonized, therefore the power of the monarch could remain in its original status and even be enhanced as it proved to protect its subordinates – however, the uncolonized narrative has also been criticized recently.[37] Second of all, the twentieth century brought many changes in the political life of the country. In 1932, as the aftermath of a *coup d'état*, the role and image of the ruler weakened and in 1946, the then king, King Ananda, fell victim to an armed assassination. His younger brother thus took the throne during a turbulent period and it was not until 1951 that he returned from Lausanne, Switzerland to the country that by then had already been renamed from Siam to Thailand.[38]

[36] Jeong Yeonsik, "The Idea of Kingship in Buddhist Cambodia," Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia Issue 11 (March 2011): Southeast Asian Studies in Korea, accessed 1 June 2020, https://kyotoreview.org/issue-11/the-idea-of-kingship-in-buddhist-cambodia/

[37] See for example Thongchai Winichakul, "Siam's Colonial Conditions and the Birth of Thai History," in *Unraveling Myths in Southeast Asian Historiography*, ed. Volker Grabowsky, the volume in honor of Bass Terwiel (Bangkok: Rivers Books, 2011), 23-45.

[38] Maurizio Peleggi, "Thai Kingdom," in *The Encyclopedia of Empire*, eds. N. Dalziel and J.M. MacKenzie (New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc, 2016), 8.

King Bhumibol needed a 'refashioning' which was based on being 'sacred, popular and democratic'.[39]

1.3. The Topography of the Buddha's Life

The distribution of historical monuments and places of worship also creates transnational pilgrimage routes and sacred geographies throughout the region. What is common in them is the belief that the journey to a certain place would provide some benefit for the believer; therefore, belief fosters activity, and together they create these sacred webs between sites and followers. This resonates with Clifford Geertz's definition of religion, and how system of symbols lead to current moods and motivations.[40]

As Jill Dubisch sets forth, pilgrimage consists of: "(1) the association created within a particular religious tradition of certain events and/or sacred figures with a particular field of space, and (2) the notion that the material world can make manifest the invisible spiritual world at such places".[41] From another perspective, pilgrimages to these sites are sensational forms, in the sense of being one of the relatively fixed, authorized modes of invoking and organizing access to the transcendental, thereby creating and sustaining links between religious practitioners in the context of particular religious organizations.[42]

[39] Thongchai Winichakul, "Toppling Democracy," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (November 2008), 11-37, 15.
[40] Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a cultural system," in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York: Basic Books, 1993) 87-125; 90.
[41] Jill Dubisch, *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender, and Politics at a Greek Island Shrine,* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995) 38.
[42] Brigit Meyer, "Religious Sensations: Why Media, Aesthetics, and Power Matter in the Study of Contemporary Religion," in *Religion: Beyond a Concept,* ed. Hent de Vries, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008) 704-23, 707.

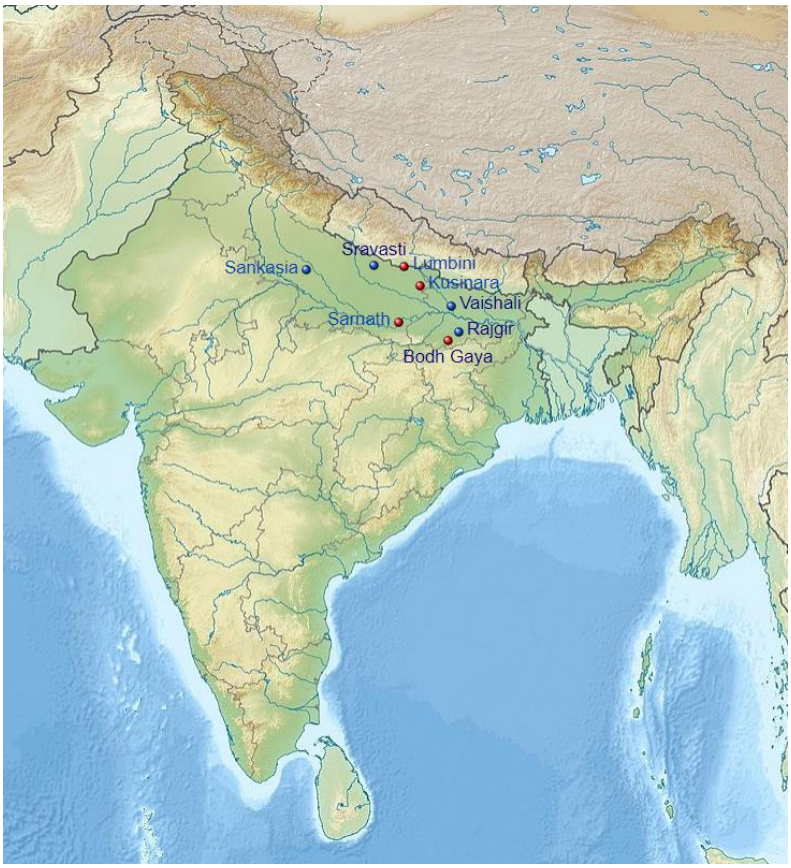

Figure 2. Aṣṭāmahāpratihārya – Eight *major sites of Buddhist pilgrimage*[43]

Although there are now eight major Buddhist pilgrimage sites, those related to the four main stages of Buddha's life are those in which all three branches of Buddhism, Theravāda, Mahayāna, and Vajrayāna, agree.[44] These are Lumbinī in Nepal, where the Buddha was born, the Indian Bodh Gayā, the site of Enlightenment, Sārnāth, the scene of the first sermon, and Kuśīnagar, where the Buddha died. The roots of the pilgrimage can be found in the earliest Buddhist canonized literature, the Pāli Canon - exactly in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*.[45] According to this, the Buddha said before his death in his last teachings (at one of the four spots, in Kuśīnagar) that the true believer should visit the four sites discussed above, and what is more,

[43] Work of Uwe Dedering, accessed 1 June 2020, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cd/India_relief_location_map.jpg
[44] Robert H. Stoddart, "The Geography of Buddhist Pilgrimage in Asia," in *Pilgrimage and Buddhist Art,* ed. Adriana Proser (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2010), 2-4.
[45] *Dīgha Nikāya* 16

if a true-hearted comes and then dies here, he would go to heaven right after his death. However, as Swearer points out, there is a tension in the imperatives of the Buddha before his death told in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* and the imperative to follow only the *dhamma*.[46]

Yet indeed, all of the four sites have turned into pilgrimage centers. Active use of the places is corroborated mainly between the third century BCE and thirteenth century CE. The building history of the site starts in the Maurya period. The first ruler to pay visits to these places in the form of *dharmayātrā* was Aśoka, who erected the first monuments, thereby setting the tradition of commemoration through built structures, which need to be preserved. We are informed about his visits from his inscriptions that mention Lumbinī and Bodh Gayā.[47] By the act of establishing sanctuaries and assisting the maintenance of Buddhism by providing the necessary institutional support, Emperor Aśoka completed his responsibilities as righteous ruler under whom the *dhamma* should flourish.

At Bodh Gayā, the first monument was the diamond throne (*vajrāsana*) erected by Emperor Aśoka, together with a two-storey open pavilion surrounding the *bodhi*-tree under which the Buddha was said to have attained enlightenment. This complex is called the *bodhighara* (house of the *bodhi*-tree). However, this locus became fixed only with this very act, an issue to which I shall come back later in the second chapter.

The currently visible temple structure may be dated to the Gupta-age around the sixth century, under which dynasty Buddhist art flourished. According to a late sixth-century inscription, a Sri Lankan monk, Mahānāma, who is sometimes claimed to be the author of the *Mahāvaṃsa*,

[46] Donald K. Swearer, *Becoming the Buddha: The Ritual of Image Consecration in Thailand* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007), 237.
[47] Abhishek Singh Amar, "Pilgrimage and Ritual at Bodhgaya," *Prāgdhārā*, No. 19. (2008-2009), 37-46, 41.

yet it is a controversial matter, had erected the Mahābodhi.[48] Besides inscriptions, we are informed about the flourishing afterlife and different edifices of Bodh Gayā from the travelogues of Chinese pilgrims in the fifth and seventh centuries.[49] In his report, Cunningham also alludes to the experiences of Faxian's journey that had taken place in the fourth and fifth centuries. According to these, during the time of his travel there was a temple at each of the four most important places of the Buddha's life. Cunningham also mentions Xuanzang's seventh-century journey, which depicts the same temple structure as we see today.

The members of the Pāla-dynasty were the last great patrons of Buddhism and therefore the sites connected to the Buddha's life, the Buddhist art of which greatly influenced the art of Southeast Asia. During this period, Bodh Gayā became the most important Buddhist center. Some corrective maintenance work in the twelfth century also had taken place on the orders of Aśokaballa, but after the Ghurid Bakhtiyār Khaljī's campaign at the cusp of the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, Cunningham could not garner more data.[50]

In the eleventh century, King Kyanzittha of Burma helped to restore the Mahābodhi and in the thirteenth century, a replica temple was built in Pagan, which shows the great significance of the temple among Burmese Buddhists.[51] After the twelfth century there is a gap in the documentation of the site, but as scholarship starts to discover, Burmese monks also visited it well afterwards it was believed to have become fully abandoned and forgotten, before being

[48] Abhishek Singh Amar, "Sacred Bodh Gaya: The *Buddhakṣetra* of Gotama Buddha," in *Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on a Contested Buddhist Site: Bodh Gaya Jataka*, eds. David Geary, Matthew R. Sayers, and Abhishek Singh Amar (London; New York, Routledge, 2012), 29-42, 38.
[49] Faxian, *Records of the Buddhistic Kingdoms*, translated by Herbert A. Giles, (London, Trübner & Co., 1977) and Xuanzang, Si-yu-ki, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol. 2, translated by Samuel Beal, (London: Trübner & Co., 1884)
[50] A. Cunningham, *Mahâbodhi, or the great Buddhist temple under the Bodhi tree at Buddha-Gaya*, (London, W. H. Allen Press, 1892) vi – viii.
[51] Susan L. Huntington and John C. Huntington, "Leaves from the *Bodhi* Tree: The Art of Pāla India (8th-12th Centuries) and Its International Legacy," *Orientations* Vol 20. No. 10. (1989), 26-46, 12.

discovered by the British again.[52] In the thirteenth century, the Tibetan monk Dharmasvāmin also visited Bodh Gayā.[53] Yet, from the sixteenth century onwards, the place became the residence of a Śaiva sect and from then on had ownership over the site for more than four hundred years.[54]

However, as Buddhism had been established and localized in Southeast Asia to the extent that it appears disconnected from its Indian origins, the sites of sacred geography were re-centered on local sites. In this process, the Indian sites became irrelevant. The sacred geography of Buddhism that was based on the Buddha's biography was extended to much farther places. When Maurizio Peleggi discusses the legendary topography of Buddhism with an explicit allusion to Halbwachs's work on the legendary topography of the Gospels, he also points out that contrary to Christianity, Buddhism has its legendary localities in Sri Lanka, East Asia, as well as in Southeast Asia. Yet, at these sites, quotes Peleggi the Orientalist Paul Mus, people take the locality itself as god.[55] To give an example, one vehicle to enlarge this space is Sri Lanka's epic poem, the *Mahāvaṃsa* (Great Chronicle), which discusses the Buddha's visit to the island state.[56]

1.4.Revival of Bodh Gayā

As it is clear from the widespread historical and contemporary network of Buddhism, many polities would have an interest in the revival of the site of enlightenment. In South and Southeast Asia, where the national identities are often built around religious fault-lines, it is worthwhile

[52] Geary, *The Rebirth of Bodh Gaya*, 5.
[53] Nikhil Joshi, *The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhgaya: Constructing Sacred Placeness, Deconstructing the 'Great Case' of 1895* (New York: Routledge, 2019), accessed 1 June 2020, https://books.google.hu/books?id=55axDwAAQBAJ&printsec
[54] Geary, *The Rebirth of Bodh Gaya*, 19.
[55] Maurizio Peleggi, *Monastery, Monument, Museum: Sites and Artifacts of Thai Cultural Memory* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017) 11-13.
[56] Oskar Von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature* (1st Indian ed.) (New Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1997), 87–93.

to analyze the actions of the modern states regarding their material heritage of religious interest. These objects and monuments may serve as symbols of both religious and national identities, and as important cornerstones in narrating the past of these – sometimes imagined– communities.[57] With the emergence and fall of empires and nation-states during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Mahābodhi Temple has become a *lieu de mémoire* and an identity-marker. Therefore, it may be argued that the past of Bodh Gayā has been used, and sometimes abused within these new dynamics of political powers, setting in motion the connected histories and meta-geographies of South and Southeast Asia through the appraisal of its memory.

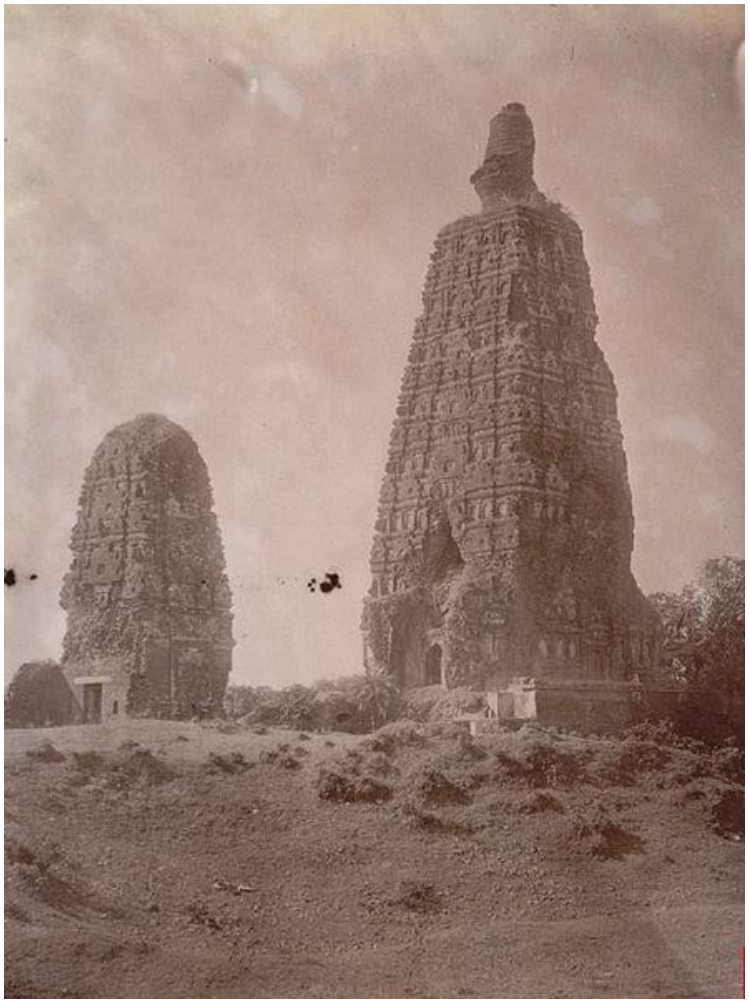

Figure 3. Bodh Gayā before restoration[58]

[57] See Benedict Anderson's concept in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991)
[58] Accessed 1 June 2020, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/92/Bodh_gaya_before_restoration.jpg

There were three main actors of revival before the twentieth century: Burma and Sri Lanka, with an explicit religious goal, and Britain, with a markedly secular and archaeological interest. Needless to say, all the three were politically fraught too. In 1874, King Mindon, the ruler of Upper Burma sent a mission to Bodh Gayā in order to restore the temple.[59] According to their plans, this would have consisted of work done on the *bodhi*-tree, the throne, building a monastery and erecting a structure for royal gifts.[60] Besides the merit-making activity, this may also be interpreted as an act of recapturing the site from the Hindus.

The British declared the Mahābodhi worth preserving due to its association with significant events, its 'beauty and grandeur', and being a 'historical specimen'.[61] Therefore, they followed the restoration work of the Burmese with great concern and found out that they had worked without any systematic and traditional plan, damaged the site and greatly limited the possibilities to further explore and identify historical layers. Rajendralal Mitra, the first Indian origin Indologist described that they used foundations of ancient structures as building materials, damaged hemispherical domes of votive stupas, demolished the remains of a vaulted gateway in front of the temple, and plastered hitherto carved out surfaces with images.[62] This has absolutely countered the British apprehension of impeccable monument protection.

Following this indignation, the restoration work of the British began between 1880 and 1884. It was based on Mitra's earlier drawings, reproduction of existing forms, and a stone model of the temple found among the ruins – although these models also served as a basis for criticizing the fact that the four auxiliary shrines seen today were not part of the temple structure. Parts

[59] It is important to point out the then complex colonial relationship between Britain and Burma, namely that during this period Burma became a Province of British India. However, until 1885 Upper Burma remained independent, from where King Mindon sent missionary to restore the Mahabodhi.
[60] Alan Trevithick, "British Archaeologists, Hindu Abbots, and Burmese Buddhists: The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya, 1811-1877." *Modern Asian Studies* 33, no. 3 (1999): 635-56, 650.
[61] A. Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India Report,* Vol. III. (Delhi: Indological Book House, 1966) cited in Trevtithick, "British Archaeologists" 650.
[62] Joshi, *The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhgaya*

added by the Burmese have been removed. As Nikhil Joshi points out, it is an interesting question as to what principles may have guided Cunningham in his works, given that he did not restore the monument to its earliest state, that is, the open pavilion erected by Aśoka.[63]

In 1891, Sri Lanka had entered the picture with the leadership of the Sinhalese Anagārika Dharmapāla. After having read the account of Sir Edwin Arnold's pilgrimage to Bodh Gayā and being informed of the state of the Mahābodhi, he established the Maha Bodhi Society with the aim to restore the temple to its former glory and to restitute it to Buddhist owners. As he put it: "The idea of restoring the Buddhist Jerusalem into Buddhist hands originated with Sir Edwin Arnold after having visited the sacred spot in 1886."[64] Ever since, the society has moved its headquarters from Colombo to Calcutta. In the twentieth century, Anagārika Dharmapāla's efforts had proved partially successful.

After India's independence of 1947, the Indian state declared the site to be owned by the State Government of Bihar and to be managed by both Buddhists (internationals) and Hindus with the Bodh Gaya Temple Act in 1949.[65] This aimed to settle the dispute between the Hindu and Buddhist owners and users of the site. The next phase of restoration works took place from 1953 to 1956, after India's independence and the setting up of the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee. The year of 1956 was also the date of the 2500th *Buddha Jayantī*, celebration of the life of the Buddha, which was an important event in the Buddhist reinvention of the site. During this, the inner and outer circumambulatory pathways were reconstructed, a lotus pond was excavated, and parts of the Aśokan railing (third century BCE) were renovated.

[63] Joshi, *The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhgaya*
[64] Ananda Guruge, *Return to Righteousness: A Collection of Speeches, Essays, and Letters of the Anagarika Dharmapala* (Colombo: Government Press, 1965), 336, cited in Kinnard, "When Is The Buddha Not the Buddha"821.
[65] Bodh Gaya Temple Act, 1949, accessed 1 June 2020, http://www.bareactslive.com/JH/JHR036.HTM

Additionally, there were works carried out with the help of Thai devotees in 1968 and 1974, when the boundary wall was constructed, and lower parts of the temple were repaired.

The latest survey at the site was done by the Archeological Survey of India, Patna Circle in 1999, which again criticized the reparation done between 1953 and 1956 for not using original materials, namely lime and mortar plaster, but cement plaster. Moreover, they advised for the removal of acrylic emulsion paint as it altered the original character of the figures. The realization of the directives was launched in 2002, the year of World Heritage Site inscription of UNESCO, declaring it the first living Buddhist monument as such, also the "Mecca of Buddhism".[66] It is noteworthy how by this time Bodh Gayā has been identified with both Jerusalem and Mecca, influencing its perception even more towards the most important pilgrimage site of Buddhism and a mono-religious scape.

[66] "Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya," UNESCO, accessed 1 June 2020, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1056/

Figure 4. Mahābodhi Temple in 2017[67]

Between 2004 and 2006, the main spire of the temple was renovated, and inner stone sculptures were fixed, depicting the life events of the Buddha. Ever since, the inner railings have started to be restored by the ASI, the parts of which sometimes date back to the third century BCE, however, certain elements were taken to museums for better protection and replaced with replicas at the original site.

[67] Accessed 1 June 2020, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c8/Mahabodhi_temple_and_around_IRCTC_2017_%28109%29.jpg

1.5. Bodh Gayā as an Ideal Image "*en miniature*" of the Buddhist World

With the shift of the Buddhist dominance from its origin region and early centers, the ancient Buddhist sites are usually located in countries where the religion is not practiced anymore, such as India, Afghanistan, or Pakistan. Yet, these places that were at one point only important to a certain circle of Buddhists are now considered sacred universally as they might evoke the sense of a common Buddhist heritage. Consequently, the home countries of the ancient sites do everything to assist the revival and maintenance of the sites and promote it to the Buddhist world – attracting both investment and tourism.[68]

In the promotion of Bodh Gayā, a big step was its designation as a World Heritage Site in 2002, declaring it the "first living Buddhist monument".[69] In addition, the International Buddhist Conclave is being set up by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, developing and strengthening multilateral ties with 29 countries.[70] This again, sets Bodh Gayā to the center of the map of Buddhist pilgrims and pilgrimage sites, by improving international relations and advancing spiritual tourism. According to the statistics of the Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee, more than 1.8 million tourists have visited Bodh Gayā in 2014 and a steady growth is projected.[71]

[68] Pakistan currently also harbors serious aspirations to reconnect with this sacred geography via its ancient Buddhist heritage sites. The country's Prime Minister Imran Khan has recently expressed his ambitions to strengthen Buddhist tourism in the region – which is understandable in light of the growth in spiritual tourism.
[69] David Geary, "Destination enlightenment: Branding Buddhism and spiritual tourism in Bodhgaya, Bihar," *Anthropology Today*, 24, (2008): 11-14, 13.
[70] These are: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mangolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Norway, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, UK, USA and Vietnam "President to inaugurate "International Buddhist Conclave 2018" on 23rd August, 2018," Ministry of Tourism, India, accessed 1 June 2020, https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1543509
[71] Binod Dubey, "Serial blasts fail to deter tourist inflow in Bodh Gaya," Hindustan Times, accessed 1 June 2020, https://www.hindustantimes.com/patna/serial-blasts-fail-to-deter-tourist-inflow-in-bodh-gaya/story-2cKN1ckuBnZwdgIobsRGDK.html

Throughout the twentieth century, Bodh Gayā had developed into a small-scale version of the pan-Buddhist world. As a result, the pilgrimage site is now utilized by pilgrims as a reconnection to the pan-Asian sacred geography of Buddhism and their ancient Buddhist heritage, which helps to shape the cultural memory of the religion. Therefore, currently we may find the monastery of every country with a notable number of Buddhists.[72] When taking a look at the website of "Bodhgaya Rooms", fifty-three different temples and monasteries are listed from Asian countries with Buddhist followers.[73] Lands are constantly purchased, new monasteries are being added, and restaurants of all cuisines are found near the site. This development might resemble how Christian communities of Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Protestants reshaped the urban landscape of the Holy City, influencing its outlook even today.[74]

As Geary explains, a Mucalinda-statue from the Burmese in the lotus-pond and the Tibetan prayer-flags near the circumambulatory path are all indicators of a new kind of narrative for Bodh Gayā, especially because of the influence of Theravāda monks in partly arbitrarily designating the spots of the seven weeks where the Buddha had spent this time after gaining enlightenment.[75] Additionally, direct flights from foreign countries and organized Buddhist circuits in India facilitate the movement and visits of pilgrims from around the globe.[76] Therefore, the pilgrimage that was once a difficult undertaking in order to earn merits can be done among the most luxurious ways as any other touristic journey.

[72] These are Bhutan, China, Japan, Korea, Myanmar, Nepal, Sikkim, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Tibet and Vietnam.
[73] "Monasteries," Bodhgaya Rooms, accessed 1 June 2020, http://www.bodhgayarooms.com/monasteries/
[74] Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, "Patterns of Christian Activity and Dispersion in Nineteenth-Century Jerusalem," *Journal of Historical Geography* 2 (1976): 49-69.
[75] Geary, *The Rebirth of Bodh Gaya*, 186.
[76] See for example "Direct flight between Bodhgaya and Bangkok," Outlook Traveller, accessed 1 June 2020, https://www.outlookindia.com/outlooktraveller/explore/story/46859/direct-flight-between-bodhgaya-and-bangkok

The practices carried out at the site resemble the ones described by Xuanzang in the seventh century: the *bodhi*-tree is venerated with scented water and perfumed milk, and pilgrims collect leaves from it.[77] On the prominent events, candles are lit around the temple. One may also see pilgrims circumambulating the main shrine and listen to the teachings of the monks. Additionally, people are seen in meditation posture or doing prostrations from around the globe.

Yet, however much the revival and reconnection may forge both pan-Buddhist identity and cultural memory, it is important to see that Bodh Gayā is also a contested site and has many faces. As Amit Kumar puts it: "Sociologically, what become even more important is that this kind of historical trajectory opened up the possibility for various groups to become selective in their memory and to interpret history in such a way that it suits their interests and aspirations."[78]

First of all, it is not just an important pilgrimage site for Buddhists, but also a place for doing ancestral rites (S. *śrāddha*) of the Hindus.[79] There is a tension stemming from the desire to control the space, to which one solution was the Bodh Gaya Temple Act of 1949. Still, Neo-Buddhists (or Ambedkarite-Buddhists, that are mainly Indian Dalits who converted to Buddhism) foster the full retrieval of Bodh Gayā – both from the state and Hindus.[80]

Second of all, there is a heterogeneity among the Buddhists too. Followers of different streams of Buddhism hold both festivities of their own and pan-Buddhist ones. The *Buddha Jayantī* has been celebrated in Bodh Gayā since 1956, commemorating the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha, which is not a unified tradition among all the branches of Buddhism, and reflects calendrical differences between the different traditions. From the Tibetan Buddhist tradition,

[77] Huber, *The Holy Land Reborn*, 312.
[78] Amit Kumar, "Mapping Multiplicity: The Complex Landscape of Bodh Gaya," *Sociological Bulletin* 64, no. 1 (2015): 36-54, 49.
[79] Geary, *The Rebirth of Bodh Gaya*, 92.
[80] "Supreme Court admits Buddhists' plea to manage Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya," The Times of India, accessed 1 June 2020, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Supreme-Court-admits-Buddhists-plea-to-manage-Mahabodhi-Temple-at-Bodh-Gaya/articleshow/16497830.cms

the *Kālacakra* ceremony has been practiced since 1974.[81] Moreover, as Kumar points out, even the "soundscape" of Bodh Gayā is diverse. He brings up as examples the Pāli recitation of the *triratna* doctrine (taking refuge in the Buddha, *dhamma*, and *saṅgha*) compounds with the Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist recitation of "*om mani padme hum*" or "*nam myoho renge kyo*" of the Nichiren sect dominant among Japanese. There is also an amalgamation between different practices even between Hindus and Buddhists.[82]

The first chapter outlined how Buddhism set out and the important centers moved outside of its homeland, meanwhile passing on concepts such as *dhammarāja*, beyond religious doctrines and artistic traditions. Within this, it was shown how the new centers were connected to the ancient pilgrimage sites and, in light of this, how they played a role in the revival of Bodh Gayā in parallel with the secular forces. It also became clear that the predecessors of today's Thailand have played only minor role in the ancient history as well as the revival of the site. Yet today, the country is connected to this diverse image of pan-Buddhist mergers, while also armed with its own ideas, traditions and visual manifestations brought from home.

[81] Geary, *The Rebirth of Bodh Gaya*, 43-82.
[82] Kumar, "Mapping Multiplicity," 43.

Chapter 2. Thailand in Bodh Gayā: Local Layers of Cultural Memory

As introduced in the previous chapter, Thailand became involved in the modern revival of Bodh Gayā quite late compared to the Burmese or the Sri Lankan actors. The first major milestone was the passing of The Bodh Gayā Temple Act in 1949, which established an Advisory Body that should consist of foreign Buddhist representatives too.[83] In 1955, one year before the *Buddha Jayantī* celebrations, the Royal Thai Embassy initiated and agreed with the government of Bihar on building a temple at Bodh Gayā.[84] In 1967, a golden Buddha-statue was placed in the temple, a donation of the then Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn – which we might also explain as an appearance of diarchic logic.

Not so long after that, the Royal Wat Thai had been remodeled after the Wat Benchamabophit Dusitvanaram, a temple built in 1899 in Bangkok by King Rama V.[85] Since then, especially with the introduction of direct flights from Bangkok to Gayā, many new centers have been built or are currently under construction by different Thai Buddhist communities. In terms of restoration, Thai pilgrims or the Abbot of the Thai temple at Bodh Gayā donated for renovation work both in 1968 and 1974, as well as in 1977. A peak of Thai investment was reached in 2013, when the late Thai king, Bhumibol Adulyadej together with devotees donated nearly 300 kg gold to cover the top of the Mahābodhi Temple.[86]

[83] Bodh Gaya Temple Act, 1949
[84] *Buddha Jayanti* celebrates the birth, the enlightenment and death of the Buddha.
[85] Geary, *The Rebirth of Bodh Gaya*, 54-55.
[86] Terry Frederickson, "HM the King donates gold for Mahabodhi temple," Bangkok Post, accessed 1 June 2020, https://www.bangkokpost.com/learning/advanced/379989/hmk-donates-gold-for-mahabodhi-temple

In the following parts of this chapter, I go over the different layers one by one. Such distinguishing elements, or layers of cultural memory are the visits paid to the site by high officials, distinct chronology and the *Buddha Jayantī* that follows this dating, the Thai buildings at the site, and the restoration efforts and donations to the original temple.

2.1.Pilgrimage of Thai Leaders to Bodh Gayā

Paying a visit to the most sacred sites of Buddhism as a ruler may be connected historically to Emperor Aśoka, who strengthened his righteous ruler label by making pilgrimage to these places. There he established the first still-standing sanctuaries, and commissioned pillar- and rock edicts to commemorate his acts and the memory of the 'legendary topography' of the Buddha. The connection to the notion of *dhammarāja* is thus strengthened by the visits of today's leaders and a symbolic connection is made with Aśoka's *dhammayātrā* (religious journeys) to the sacred sites of Buddhism.

It was not just King Bhumibol to whom visiting Bodh Gayā had a demonstrative aspect, but also the then Crown Prince. In 2010, then crown prince, now king of Thailand, Maha Vajiralongkorn, came to Bodh Gayā and piloted a "Special Buddhist Pilgrimage Flight" from Bangkok to the place of enlightenment of the Buddha. The journey was organized on the occasion of Thai Airways International PCL's 50th Anniversary, in the company of leading business men.[87] He also visited the Royal Wat Thai. This act also shows the amalgamation of kingship, religion and secular-national matters, especially the strengthening of potentially lucrative business relations and investments. Besides royalty, the secular leaders also paid visits to the site of enlightenment. In 2012, Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra offered prayers at

[87] "HRH Crown Prince of Thailand visited Bodhgaya," Royal Thai Embassy, New Delhi, India, accessed 1 June 2020, http://newdelhi.thaiembassy.org/en/1990/01/hrh-crown-prince-of-thailand-visited-bodhgaya/

the Mahābodhi, and in 2016, the then Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-Cha also went to Bodh Gayā, circumambulated the temple, and visited the Royal Wat Thai.[88]

2.2. Theravāda Chronology and *Buddha Jayantī*

Another cultural memory layer is the chronology used for the Buddha's life. The dating of the historical Buddha is a question on which neither the Buddhist community nor academia agrees.[89] There are many chronologies proposed today, and scholars keep investigating the issue up until this day. The date from which the Buddhist Era (S. *buddhavarṣa*, P. *buddhavassa*) is counted from is the Buddha's death (S. *parinirvāṇa*, P. *parinibbāna*) which happened at the age of eighty – a fact on which all Buddhists agree. However, the opinion on the exact time ranges from 2420 BCE to 290 BCE.[90] The two most commonly known chronologies are the "long chronology" and the "short chronology" which sets the date of death either 218, or approximately 100 years before the inauguration of Aśoka, respectively.[91] With the use of the long chronology (that is setting the death of the Buddha 218 years earlier than Aśoka), scholarly investigations assessed this date to 486 BCE. Yet, more recent studies argue that this event took place more close to c. 404 BCE.[92]

However, Theravāda Buddhist tradition sets the date of the Buddha's death to 543/544 BCE due to misdating Emperor Aśoka, and uses it as a starting point for calculating the Buddhist Era. This chronology is not unique to Thailand, as even many East-Asian Buddhist communities

[88] "Thai PM Prayut Chan-o-Cha Offers Prayers At Bodh Gaya," NDTV, accessed 1 June 2020, https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/thai-pm-prayut-chan-o-cha-offers-prayers-at-bodh-gaya-1420556
[89] This is an important difference from the consensus that reigns in the three Abrahamic religions concerning the chronology Anno Mundi, Anno Domini and the Hijra.
[90] Robert E. Buswell Jr.,and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 156.
[91] Peter Harvey, "Buddha, Dates of," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, eds. Damien Keown and Charles S. Prebish (Routledge, 2013), 105.
[92] Richard F. Gombrich, "Dating the Buddha: a red herring revealed," in *The Dating of the Historical Buddha/Die Datierung des historischen Buddha*, Part 2. (Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung, IV,2) edited by Heinz Bechert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 237–259.

adopted this dating system.[93] Nevertheless, Thailand is the only country using the Buddhist Era for their official national calendar. This system was introduced by King Vajiravudh in 1912.[94] However, this is also the chronology that has been adapted by the World Fellowship of Buddhists, the headquarter of which has been also moved to Bangkok, Thailand permanently. One shall therefore argue that the event and date of the enlightenment is unique to Thai cultural memory in terms of being the only polity that uses a calendar suiting this event without the need to convert the dates.

The chronology used at Bodh Gayā is very relevant for the *Buddha Jayantī* ceremony in 1956 which marked the 2500 years of Buddhism – many believing it being a turning point of religious revival – the celebration of which happened in Bodh Gayā, as the date is calculated with this Theravāda version of the "long chronology". This was an important milestone as it was half way to the inevitable disappearance of Buddhism that was said to last for five thousand years. Then the next *buddha*, Metteyya (S. Maitreya) would appear on earth to teach the *dhamma* again.[95] There were acts, however, to prevent this decline or at least slow it down, and as Rila Mukherjee suggests, one way was to preserve the Theravāda common history through chronicles and calendars.[96]

On this occasion, the secular government of the newly independent India invited players of the international Buddhist community to reconnect with and celebrate the heritage of the Buddha's life, thus strengthening the time-perception in question. Therefore, even today, the yearly celebration is officially calculated with this calendar. The event is paramount due to other reasons as well. The 1950's were a tense period in Thai history as in the Cold War the country

[93] Prin Robert E. Buswell Jr.,and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 156.
[94] Patit Paban Mishra, *The History of Thailand* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood, 2010), 97.
[95] This figure had been disseminated by the fifth-century Theravāda Buddhist commentator, Buddhaghosa.
[96] Rila Mukherjee, *Pelagic Passageways: The Northern Bay of Bengal Before Colonialism* (Delhi: Primus Books,2011), 387.

was used as an American fortress against the Buddhist countries that had turned to Communist secularism. The prime minister was Plaek Phibunsongkhram who tried to "limit the expansion of royalism" and therefore banned the king from leaving the capital, and also organized a celebration for the 2500th *Buddha Jayantī*.[97] Thus, the establishment of relations with India on this event by the Thai king could also be understood as a political move to outrank the *dhammarāja* image Phibun endeavored to maintain. In the same year, Phibun's government was overtaken with a coup by Sarit Thanarat and Thanom Kittikachirn, under whom the personification of King Bhumibol as an ideal monarch begun.[98]

What is striking is that in the UNESCO Nomination file of the Mahābodhi, one may not find any allusions to the these chronologies, and the discussion on the event of the Buddha's enlightenment is quite vague. However, in 1956, a special issue was published by UNESCO in their periodical issue, The UNESCO Courier, with the title "Twenty-five centuries of Buddhist art and culture.[99] In 2000, the event was recognized by the organization as the International Day of Vesak, and is yearly commemorated ever since at the United Nations Headquarters and other offices. In addition, in 2012, Katalin Bogyai as president of the General Conference of UNESCO in that year addressed the World Fellowship of Buddhists to congratulate on the occasion of the 2600th *Buddha Jayantī*, the eighty-fifth birthday of the then Thai king, Bhumibol Adulyadej, the eightieth birthday of Queen Sirikit, and the sixtieth birthday of the then Crown Prince, Maha Vajiralongkorn.[100] All these acts and expressions tie the connection of Bodh Gayā, the Theravāda tradition, and Thailand even closer.

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[97] Baker and Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand,* 145-146.
[98] Thongchai Winichakul, "Thailand's Royal Democracy in Crisis," in *After the Coup: The National Council for Peace and Order Era and the Future of Thailand*, eds. Michael J. Montesano, Terence Chong, and Mark Shu Xun Heng (ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2019), 282-307, 285.
[99] "Twenty-five centuries of Buddhist art and culture," *The UNESCO Courier* No. 6. ed. Sandy Kofler, (June 1956), accessed 1 June 2020, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000068910/PDF/068910engo.pdf.multi
[100] Katalin Bogyai, "Buddha Jayanti: Celebration of the 2,600 years of the Buddha's Enlightenment, Bangkok, Thailand, 21st May 2012, address by H.E. Ms Katalin Bogyay, President of the General Conference," UNESCO, accessed 1 June 2020, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000216475

Overall, using Theravāda chronology at Bodh Gayā is connected to Thailand on three levels. First, as the only country carrying out its official matters with the official use of the Buddhist Era as calendar-system, using the same interpretation as Bodh Gayā fits to Thai political and cultural context to a great extent. Second, this anchors the event of the 2500th *Buddha Jayantī* to 1956 which again blends with the officially used time perception of Thailand, and also marks an important milestone in the political affairs of the country. On the third level, these understandings are reinforced through the secular means of heritagization by UNESCO facilitating the recognition of religion in the public sphere.

2.3. Thai Buildings at Bodh Gayā

Thailand's connection to Buddhism and its holiest site is accentuated by the Thai-style and Thai-built buildings that surround the Mahābodhi Temple. Today, although several temples and monasteries have been erected or are under construction, very little information and visual material is available about them due to their novelty. Therefore, the subject of the study are the earliest erected Royal Wat Thai, the Wat Pa Buddhagaya and the Metta Buddharam.

2.3.1. Royal Wat Thai

The very first Thai temple in Bodh Gayā, Royal Wat Thai (Fig. 6), built on the occasion of the *Buddha Jayantī*, gained its present form in the 1970s thanks to donations from the Thai government. The new looks are modeled on Wat Benchamabophit Dusitvanaram in Bangkok (Fig. 5), which was built at the end of the nineteenth century, and is also known as "The Marble Temple". In the back of the *ubosot*, there is a *bodhi*-tree too brought from Bodh Gayā. As Geary suggests, the construction of the copy of Wat Benchamabophit at Bodh Gayā may be understood as the inverse act of erecting replica temples of the Mahābodhi in Thailand.[101] With

[101] Geary, *The Rebirth of Bodh Gaya*, 54.

the plant of the *bodhi*-tree at the original temple in Bangkok, this recreation of sacred space is multiplied *vice versa*.

The Golden Buddha statue inside was placed there on May 3, 1967, donated by the then prime minister, Thanom Kittikachorn (1911–2004), with the message of the Thai king, Bhumibol, that this should symbolize the friendship of India and Thailand.[102] This donation might also be understood as reinforcement of the diarchic logic of Thailand. King Bhumibol gave the statue the name: "Phra Buddha Dharmishra Jambudipaniwat Sukhodaya" which means "Buddha, Lord of Dharma, who returns to the Continent of Jambudvipa for the happiness to occur".[103]

The Buddha-statue depicts the Buddha in *bhūmisparśamudrā* (touching the earth gesture) or *māravijaya* posture (T. *mara vichai*, defeating Māra), symbolizing the episode of enlightenment. It is an exact replica of the statue of Wat Benchamabophit Dusitvanaram, which is also a replica of the statue situated in the Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat, called Phra Phuttha Chinnarat. The original sculpture is held one of the finest masterpiece of Thailand.[104] It was made in the Sukhothai era, and is a piece of a triple ensemble, all depicting the *māravijaya* (T. *mara vichai*) posture. Interestingly, Phra Phuttha Chinnassi, one of this trio, serves to store the ashes of the late Thai king, Adulyadej Bhumibol, as he had spent his monkhood at the temple enshrining the image in 1956 – the exact year of the 2500th *Buddha Jayantī*.[105]

[102] Maha Bodhi Society, "Notes and News: Golden Buddha Installed at Buddha Gaya," *Journal of the Mahabodhi Society* 75, 7 (1967) 273, cited in Geary, *The Rebirth of Bodh Gaya*, 54.
[103] Marwah Reena, *Reimagining India-thailand Relations: A Multilateral And Bilateral Perspective* (USA: World Scientific, 2020), 58.
[104] "Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat," Temples in Thailand, accessed 1 June 2020, http://templesinthailand.com/wat-phra-si-rattana-mahathat/
[105] Pichaya Svasti, "The final resting place," Bangkok Post, accessed 1 June 2020, https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/special-reports/1365419/the-final-resting-place

Figure 5. Wat Benchamabophit Dusitvanaram in Bangkok, Thailand. Photo by Peak Hora.[106]

Figure 6. Royal Wat Thai, Bodh Gayā, India.[107]

Another reason why it is significant that a copy of this particular statue was placed in Bodh Gayā is the style and epoch of the original statue. Sukhothai art is considered one of the most

[106] Accessed 1 June 2020, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Wat_Benchamabophit#/media/File:Benchamabophit_Dusitwanaram_Temple_Photographs_by_Peak_Hora_(2).jpg
[107] Accessed 1 June 2020, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Wat_Thai,_Bodh_Gaya#/media/File:Thai_Templ_-_panoramio.jpg

outstanding heritage of the Thai nation in Thailand and is used with preference in Thai nation-building. However, some argue that its importance is exaggerated and moreover, it is only a product of nineteenth-century national narratives.[108] Yet, one may assert that the choice on the image installed in India is an indication of the glory of Thai national heritage.

Another replicated element near the Thai temple is the lion pillar of Emperor Aśoka, which originates from Sārnāth, the place where the Buddha preached his first sermon, therefore again relocating a sacred spot of Buddhism via means of virtual recreation. Additionally, there are smaller replicas of the Mahābodhi both inside the temple and next to the passage leading to it, and photographs of it as well as of Thai buildings are to be found all around.

More explicit allusions to the "Thainess" of the building are the Thai decorative elements – mainly Bangkok-style, the paintings, and the gate guardians (*dvārapāla*s). On the upper front façade of the temple one may see the Garuda holding the Mahābodhi Temple. To indicate the continuous presence of the Thai monarchy, photographs of the members of the royal family are found both inside and outside the temple.

2.3.2. Wat Pa Buddhagaya Vanaram

The Wat Pa Buddhagaya Vanaram was inaugurated in 2018 by the Dalai Lama which strengthens the pan-Buddhist vocation of Bodh Gayā.[109] The edifice itself has typical Thai features with *nāga*s on the sides of the stairways – though these serpents flanking the entrance stairs are frequent in other parts of Southeast Asia too, such as Cambodia or Laos. Inside the building, there is a Buddha-statue in *bhūmisparśamudrā*, and another crowned Buddha too. The depiction of the crowned Buddha had been developed during the Pāla period, therefore its

[108] Chatri Prakitnonthakan, "The origins of Sukhothai art as the Thai golden age: the relocation of Buddha images, early Ratanakosin literature and nationalism," *South East Asia Research*, Vol 27 (2019), 254-270, 255.
[109] "His Holiness the Dalai Lama Inaugurates New Thai Buddhist Temple in Bodhgaya," Central Tibetan Administration, accessed 1 June 2020, https://tibet.net/his-holiness-the-dalai-lama-inaugurates-new-thai-buddhist-temple-in-bodhgaya/

placement here is an explicit mode of commemorating the East-Indian influence to Thai art, how it had developed there on its own, and then returned to the place of its origins. To recreate the sacred space of the Mahābodhi, in front of the crowned Buddha there is a photo of the Buddha-statue of the original temple. In another room, other Buddha-statues are found in *bhūmisparśamudrā*. Outside it seems that a statue of Lokeśvara is standing – in other names *bodhisattva* Padmapāṇi or Avalokiteśvara.

2.3.3. Metta Buddharam

The Metta Buddharam is a typically Lan Na-style building, resembling the Wat Rong Khun – also known as the "White Temple" of Chiang Rai. In front of the building, a white Buddha-statue is located in *vitarkamudrā* (hand gesture of teaching). Inside, there is also a walking Buddha-statue, emphasizing its status in Thai art.[110] In front of the building, Phra Mae Thorani is depicted in form of a fountain with a *nāga* statue, the body of which is coiled and the head spread to provide both a seat and shelter for the Buddha.

Phra Mae Thorani, a depicition of the earth goddess wringing her hair and flooding the *māra*s, is only found in Southeast Asia, and is a very popular image in Thailand not just as the helper of the Buddha but as fertility goddess too. Moreover, its iconography was standardized based on the *Paṭhamasambodhi*, which is a Northern Thai biography of the Buddha that was endorsed greatly by the currently ruling Chakri dynasty.[111] Her representation is also intertwined with nationalistic aspirations of mainland Southeast Asia.[112] Additionally, the earth goddess is the

[110] For a detailed analysis of the 'walking Buddha' see: Robert L. Brown, "God on Earth: The Walking Buddha in the Art of South and Southeast Asia." *Artibus Asiae* 50, no. 1/2 (1990): 73-107.
[111] Elizabeth Guthrie, "A study of the history and cult of the Buddhist Earth Deity in mainland Southeast Asia - Volume 1" (PhD diss., University of Canterbury, 2004), 58.
[112] Elizabeth Guthrie, "In Defence of the Nation: The Cult of Nang Thoranee in Northeast Thailand," in *Buddhism, Power, and Political Order*, ed. Ian Harris (London: Routledge, 2007), 168-181, 169.

official emblem of the pro-monarchy Democrat Party to refer to the significance of water and earth.

2.4.Donations from *Suvaṇṇabhūmi,* the Land of Gold

The donations and restorations are important because in this case actual physical layers are added to the original building, which is both a demonstration of piety, ownership, and as I argue, sacred kingship. The donation of nearly 300 kg gold on behalf of the Thai monarch and covering the very top of it has many symbolical layers. (Fig. 7)

Figure 7. The top of the Mahābodhi Temple covered in gold, photo by Kiroki Ogawa, 2015.[113]

First, in Southeast Asia, gold is one of the most popular offerings among Buddhists, so gold leaves are often sold next to temples to cover the bodies of Buddha statues, suggesting that the

[113] Photo by Hiroki Ogawa, accessed 1 June 2020, https://web.archive.org/web/20161102112708/http://www.panoramio.com/photo/118663999

skin of the historical Buddha was golden. Additionally, gold is the color of the Thai monarchy, so much so that today, to express allegiance to the king, the monarchist people wear a yellow shirt in Thailand in everyday life, also indicating the late Thai king's day of birth that is Monday and the color yellow is associated with it. Furthermore, Thailand claims to be the successor of *Suvaṇṇabhūmi* (T. *Suwannaphum*), in other words the Land of Gold. The official claims suggest that this region consisted of Thailand's predecessor Mon state, Dvāravatī, in U Thong (lower Chao Phraya basin).[114] This claim is reinforced by the name choice for Thailand's main international airport which is called Suvarnabhumi Airport (T. *Tha-akatsayan Suwannaphum*). Moreover, the late Thai king, Bhumibol Adulyadej in whose name the Sanskrit and Pāli word *bhūmi* (earth, land) is incorporated too, initiated this.

Second, Bodh Gayā represents the world axis in at least three ways. One, Buddhists consider the Bodhi tree to be the center of the universe.[115] Two, if we take the tower of the Mahābodhi temple as one of the masterpieces of temple architecture in North India, it is definitely worth noting that the temple tower (S. *śikhara*) in India symbolizes the *axis mundi*. The Hindu temple is intended to visualize the Hindu cosmology, it brings down and manifests the deity itself in the "womb" (S. *garbhagṛha*) of the temple.[116] It connects the divine and human spheres, it is a door to the divine realization and window through which the formless eternal divinity becomes visible.[117] If the emphasis is on the *stūpa*-like closure at the top of the Mahābodhi, it is also meant to display the *axis mundi* through which the divine order can be realized on earth. This is definitely related to the concept of Thai sacred kingship, since the task of the king is precisely to establish and maintain the order on earth.

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[114] Promsak Jermsawatdi, *Thai Art with Indian Influences* (New Delhi, Abhinav Publications, 1979), 16-24.
[115] John Guy, "The Mahābodhi Temple: Pilgrim Souvenirs of Buddhist India." *The Burlington Magazine* 133, no. 1059 (1991): 356-67.
[116] Michael W. Meister, "On the Development of a Morphology for a Symbolic Architecture: India." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 12 (1986): 33-50, 35.
[117] Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple (*Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), 165.

Third, building activity on the site of enlightenment may also be understood as connecting to the roots of Emperor Aśoka, the foremost righteous Buddhist ruler, who established the first sanctuary at Bodh Gayā. In this regard, the act of adding a layer to the temple itself is different from establishing a royal monastery at the site. It is a deliberate contribution to facilitate the commemoration of the event of enlightenment and in this sense, it is parallel to Emperor Aśoka's erection of the Diamond throne. The connection with the *dhammarāja* concept is also established through the act of donation as the very first virtue of the Buddhist king from the *dasavidha-rājadhamma* (tenfold virtue of the ruler) is *dāna*, meaning munificence or generosity.

By all these acts, Thailand has placed itself at the center of Bodh Gayā, representing the Buddhist world *en miniature*. The Thai rulers sent a message in two directions, (1) to the Thai people, and (2) to the pan-Buddhist and international community. The visits and donations of important leaders (both royal members and prime ministers) reinforced the concept of the *dhammarāja* and supported the diarchic logic prevalent in the country.

Chapter 3. Bodh Gayā in Thailand: Virtual Evocations of the Mahābodhi

The previous chapter presented the Thai layers at the original site of Bodh Gayā, and how they represent the ownership of Thailand of the heritage site commemorating the Buddha's enlightenment. However, if all the material of Bodh Gayā's built heritage commemorates, sets, and reaffirms the place of the Buddha's awakening, then how shall the spatially distributed elements be understood? The following chapter examines this question by first enumerating the different means, then contextualizing the act of image replication, and finally engaging in a deeper analysis of the replica temples built around Thailand. As for the twentieth-century Mahābodhi-replicas of Thailand, I documented most of the sites through the accessible sources on the internet. Therefore, the list might be non-exhaustive due to lack of information in English – however, I received help from my native Thai friends during the process. The criteria for my analysis are: date, location, builder(s), structure and stylistic elements of the temple, surroundings, existence of relics, and their status among the temples of Thailand.[118]

3.1.Extension and Recreation of the Sacred Space of Buddhism

Extending sacred space via moveable sacred material is not new to Buddhism. One of the earliest instances of doing so was the distribution of the relics of the Buddha and his disciples. According to the Pāli Canon, after the Buddha's death, his ashes were distributed among eight kings and placed in *stūpa*s that marked the places of his life. These relics were then redistributed by Emperor Aśoka both in his homeland and abroad.[119] Therefore, the connection between biographical topography and bodily relics was established at a very early stage of Buddhist

[118] In Thailand, some temples are under royal patronage.
[119] Sen, "The Spread of Buddhism," 450.

traditions. The relics also played an important role in the revival of Buddhist holy sites, India's international relations, and nation-building strategies, as Brekke explains in detail.[120]

As referred to in the first chapter, the enlargement of the Buddha's topography happened partly via religious literature. In the Theravāda tradition, both the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvaṃsa* mention the Buddha's three visits to Sri Lanka. Visits of of the Buddha also appear in Burmese, Thai, and Laotian chronicles. Among the Thai ones, the *Jinakālamālipakaraṇaṁ* (The Sheaf of Garlands of the Epochs of the Conqueror) and *Phrachao Liap Lok* (The Buddha Travels the World) account these events, but almost all prominent northern Thai monasteries' chronicle begins with a visitation by the Buddha, marking the establishment of the institution. In the *Jinakālamālipakaraṇaṁ*, the Buddha flies from Vārāṇasī to Haripuñjaya of Northern Thailand (Mon kingdom before the siege by Lan Na) to give a sermon, and in the *Phrachao Liap Lo*, he comes to initiate the founding of towns and monasteries.[121]

Another means of recreating and expanding the Buddhist space is planting *bodhi*-trees. As discussed in the first chapter, bringing a sampling of the sacred fig tree helped establishing Buddhism in Sri Lanka. As seen in the second chapter, the evocation of Bodh Gayā also happens by more recent plantings of *bodhi*-trees next to the temples and monasteries. Moreover, Bodh Gayā appears in the name choices of certain building, as it is in the case of Wat Pho, the oldest Buddhist temple of Bangkok, as well as one of the most famous one with the huge Reclining Buddha statue in it, the name of which derived from Bodh Gayā.[122]

In certain cases, the Mahābodhi is evoked through the art of mural paintings. (Fig. 8) Similarly to how Thai buildings are depicted at the Royal Wat Thai in Bodh Gayā, we may observe the

[120] Torkel Brekke, "Bones of Contention: Buddhist Relics, Nationalism and the Politics of Archaeology," *Numen*, Vol. 54. No. 3, (2007): 270-303.
[121] Donald K. Swearer, *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia*, 2nd ed. (Albany: State University of New York, 2010), 106-107.
[122] "The Temple of the Reclining Buddha," Grand Palace & Emerald Buddha, accessed 1 June 2020, https://www.emerald-buddha.com/post/the-temple-of-the-reclining-buddha

depiction of the Indian sites on the walls of Thai temples. To give an example, in Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, situated in Chiang Mai, the life of the Buddha is narrated on the walls behind the Buddha-statues and the observer may learn that at some places the Indian Mahābodhi is illustrated. What is more, the Aśokan pillar of Lumbinī is depicted too.

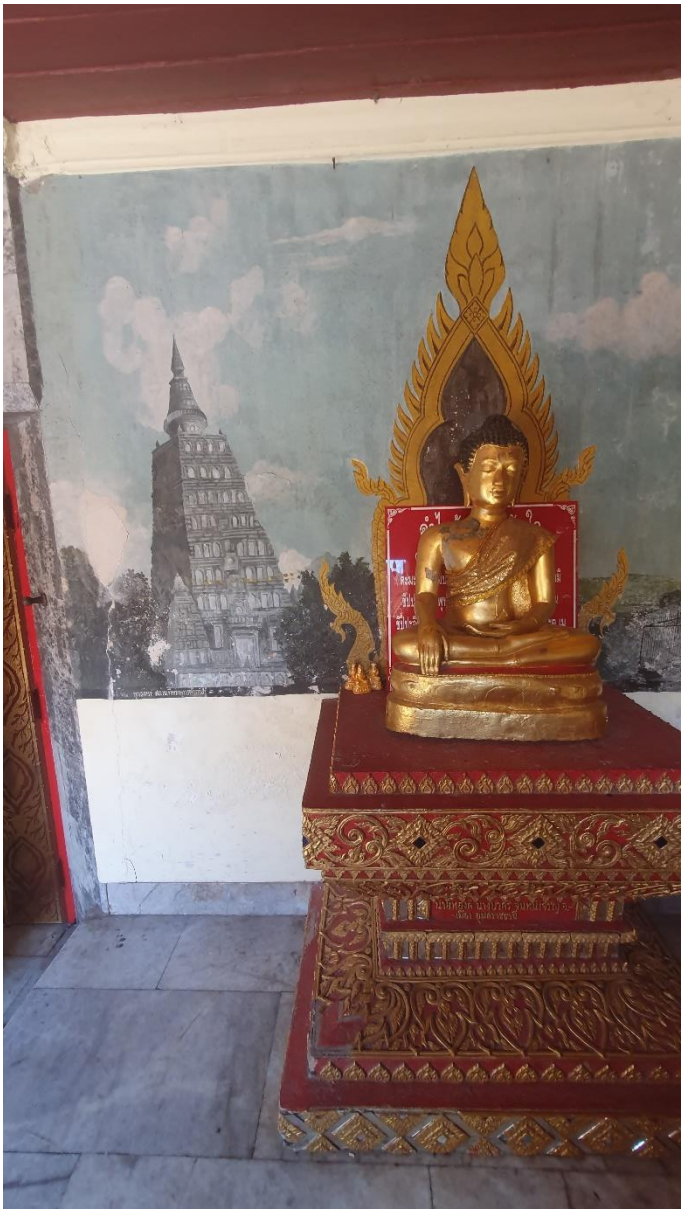

Figure 8. Mural depicting the Mahābodhi at Doi Suthep. Photo by the author, 2019.

To commemorate the fulfillment of pilgrimage, one popular mode of remembering was to create and carry small votive tablets or miniature models (Fig. 9) depicting the Mahābodhi Temple. John Guy provides an extensive account on many models which he identifies as pilgrim

souvenirs.[123] The visual representation of the eight most important sites of the Buddha's life – appearing in a tenth-century Chinese translation of the text *Aṣṭāmahāpratihārya* (Eight Great Miracles) – was specific to the Pāla period, from which most of the miniature models originate. As Guy suggests, besides being a souvenir, these items also acted as proofs of accomplishing the pilgrimage journey.[124] As it is shown, in East Asia sometimes not just the temple but the whole complex was replicated.

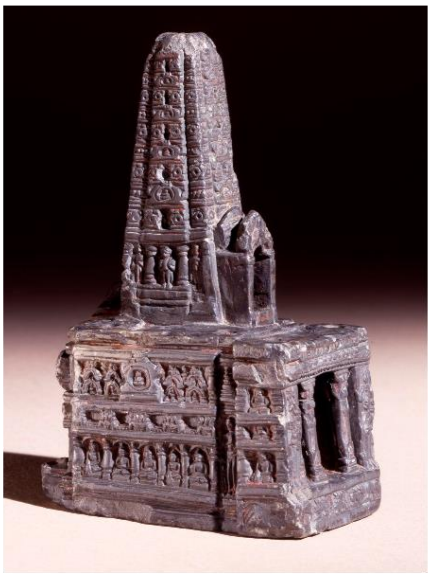

Figure 9. Miniature model of the Mahābodhi, Tibet, 12th century, British Museum, London

Asher distinguishes a group of less complex copies that are of mold-cast low-fire terracotta images.[125] These show the Buddha itself depicting him in *bhūmisparśamudrā*. The Mahābodhi Temple is apparent from the outline of the central Buddha-figure, suggested by the evident *śikhara* (temple tower) and *āmalaka* (disk shaped stone structure) topping illustrated behind it. Usually, numerous *stūpa*s are also depicted around the Buddha and the temple structure.

[123] Guy, "The Mahābodhi Temple," 356.
[124] Guy, "The Mahābodhi Temple," 362-364.
[125] Frederick M. Asher, "Bodh Gaya and the Issue of Originality in Art," in *Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on a Contested Buddhist Site: Bodh Gaya Jataka*, 61-76, 68.

However, the items were unearthed mainly in Burma, therefore we cannot state that the making of votive tablets depicting the Mahābodhi was in practice in Thailand.

The last way of recreating the site of enlightenment discussed is also the most spectacular because it copies the Mahābodhi in life-size versions. One of these sites was built in 1215 at Pagan, under the reign of King Nadaungmya (Htilominlo). It was destroyed in 1975 and repaired afterwards. It shows great Pāla influences due to the proximity in time of the two Burmese missions to Bodh Gayā, and the intake of Indian refugees. The second replica temple in Burma was erected in Pegu by the Mon King Dhammaceti in the fifiteenth century.[126] It was in the same century, that the Lan Na king Tilokarāja also set up a copy of the Mahābodhi, called Wat Potharam or Wat Chet Yot. This practice has been revived and adapted by today's monastic and lay people of Thailand, the case of which is presented in the third section of this chapter.

3.2. Why Make Sacred Copies?

There may be several reasons behind the reproduction of the site of enlightenment. First, as it is shown in the first chapter, by the second millennium, the major centers of Buddhism were outside the birthplace of the religion, and thus outside the topography of Buddha's life. Because of this, there may have been an increased need to recreate the original place of pilgrimage that became inaccessible elsewhere and thus make it available to believers again. Susan L. Huntington notes that it was important to evoke the pilgrimage sites for religious needs as *pāribhogika* place (place that was used by the Buddha), and argues that the focus was on this particular site, because it served as the most sacred shrine during the Pāla and Sena dynasties.[127]

[126] Guy, "The Mahābodhi Temple," 365.
[127] Susan L. Huntington and John C. Huntington, *Leaves From the Bodhi Tree: The Art of Pāla India (8th-12th Centuries) and Its International Legacy* (Dayton and Seattle: Dayton Art Institute and the University of Washington Press, 1989): 203; 206.

An example of this can be seen not only here, but also in the Christian world, when one encounters copies of the Holy Sepulcher.

The second reason for making copies may be to strengthen the image and influence of the ruler. Thus, for example, as presented in the first chapter, the reproduction of one of the main temples of the Thai capital (Wat Benchamabophit) and the incorporation of certain Thai royal elements into the landscape of Bodh Gayā can be classified here. Another such element is when reproduction can be interpreted as intended to maintain and purify the religious order, as was the case of the fifteenth-century King Tilokarāja and the Wat Chet Yot temple.

Third, the motivation to gain an advantage in religious life cannot be ignored. As Skilling argues, the multiplication of images is out of the desire to earn merits and to fulfil wishes. He also cites a commonly used Pāli formula, namely *nibbāna paccayo hotu*, meaning "may this be a contribution to *nirvāṇa*".[128] Besides its merit-making aspects, the copying also serves as transmission of power and prestige. Additionally, in Thailand, there is a strong cult of images, amulets, relics and the magical powers attributed to them.[129] The adoration of such objects also raises concerns and condemnation among the more educated strata of Thai society.[130] This correlates with my own experience in Thailand, when inquiring about the worshipping of images of the Buddha and the importance of festivals, my colleague who was seriously engaged with Buddhism denigrated these as superficial and unfounded beliefs and activities.

[128] Peter Skilling, "For merit and Nirvana: The production of art in the Bangkok period," *Arts Asiatiques* 62 (2007): 76-94, 77.
[129] Jim Taylor, *Buddhism and Postmodern Imaginings in Thailand: The Religiousity of Urban Space* (Routledge, 2016)
[130] Swearer, *Becoming the Buddha*, 237.

3.3.Replica Temples

3.3.1. Before the Twentieth Century

There are two replications of the Mahābodhi from before the twentieth century, the well-known Wat Chet Yot in Chiang Mai, the former capital of the Lan Na Kingdom, and the less familiar in Chiang Rai. Due to the unequal importance of the two temples, in this subchapter only the more popular one of Chiang Mai will be discussed. It is also noteworthy that before the fifteenth century a replication of the Aśokan pillar with the lion-capital next to Wat Umong in Chiangmai was also established under the reign of King Mangrai.

The commemorative project of King Tilokarāja was aiming for claiming authority over the Lan Na region. The erection and enlargement of buildings, especially the Wat Chet Yot (1455-76) or by its other name, the Wat Photharam Maha Wihan (Fig. 10), contributed to both the perfection (S. *pāramī*, T. *barami*) of King Tilokarāja and the popularity of Chiang Mai as a pilgrimage destination. However, this was mainly due to the two relics placed in the Wat Chedi Luang.[131] However, the plans from which the Wat Chet Yot was built is still a contested issue as it is suggested that the basis was provided by its Burmese counterpart from the same century.[132] King Tilokarāja also planted a *bodhi*-tree at the site which was to commemorate the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment.[133] Additionally, it was also a helpful tool in transposing the sacred space of Buddhism.

The building of the temple was also connected to the decline of Buddhism and Buddha-chronologies discussed in the previous chapter, as the year 1456 marked the end of the religion's second millennium and it was believed that each millennium flags a new phase of decline.[134]

[131] Peleggi, *Monastery, Monument, Museum*, 19.
[132] Brown, "Bodhgaya and Southeast Asia," 110.
[133] Peleggi, *Monastery, Monument, Museum*, 21.
[134] Mukherjee, *Pelagic Passageways*, 385.

Another mean to slow down this process was the purification of the *saṅgha*, and the organization of the eighth World Buddhist Council here in 1477 should be considered as such an act.[135] This, through the concept of *dhammarāja*, also dates back to Emperor Aśoka, during whose time the Third Buddhist Council was organized in Pāṭaliputra, again for the purification of the *saṅgha*. The seven spires (that is the meaning of the temple's name too, Wat Chet Yot) symbolizes the seven stages after enlightenment, and there are claims whether the main spire was modelled on the original structure of India, or on the thirteenth-century replica in Pagan.[136]

Figure 10. Wat Chet Yot in Chiang Mai. Photo by the author, 2019.

[135] Volker Grabowsky, *Regions and National Integration in Thailand, 1892-1992* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 1995), 17.
[136] Peleggi, *Monastery, Monument, Museum*, 21.

Figure 11. Bodhi-*tree on the right,* nāga-*statues in front of the Wat Chet Yot from pilgrims born in the year of the snake. Photo by the author, 2019.*

Currently, this site is not as popular as other temples in Chiang Mai. During my visit, only around two or three pilgrims were on site and a group of elementary school students, which suggests the incorporation of its story into the curriculum. Yet, the buildings and its surroundings are well maintained, and even a museum is enclosed to the site. Inside, there is a small-scale model of the fifteenth-century temple structure and one may learn about the history of the place and its renovation, which started interestingly in 1956, the year of the 2500th *Buddha Jayantī*.

A compelling feature of the site is the placement of a plethora of *nāga*-statues. (Fig. 11) This is due to the fact that Wat Chet Yot is also a pilgrimage site for those born in the year of the snake. The practice is closely connected with the twelve-year cycle and its pilgrimage centers in the Northern Thai tradition. Yet, in this system the snake is associated with the original site of Bodh

Gayā in India. However, we learn that in Thailand, there is a list of substitute shrines with *bodhi*-trees that may fulfill the role of the original pilgrimage site.[137] Although the Wat Chet Yot is not mentioned on this list, the experiences during my visit proved that the temple is an important substitute pilgrimage site. This suggests that the temple is not only a replacement for the pilgrimage motivated by the imperative of the Buddha to visit the four major sites of his life, but also for a different religious practice of Northern Thailand that is the pilgrimage to centers of the Chinese twelve-year cycle zodiac signs.

3.3.2. After the Twentieth Century

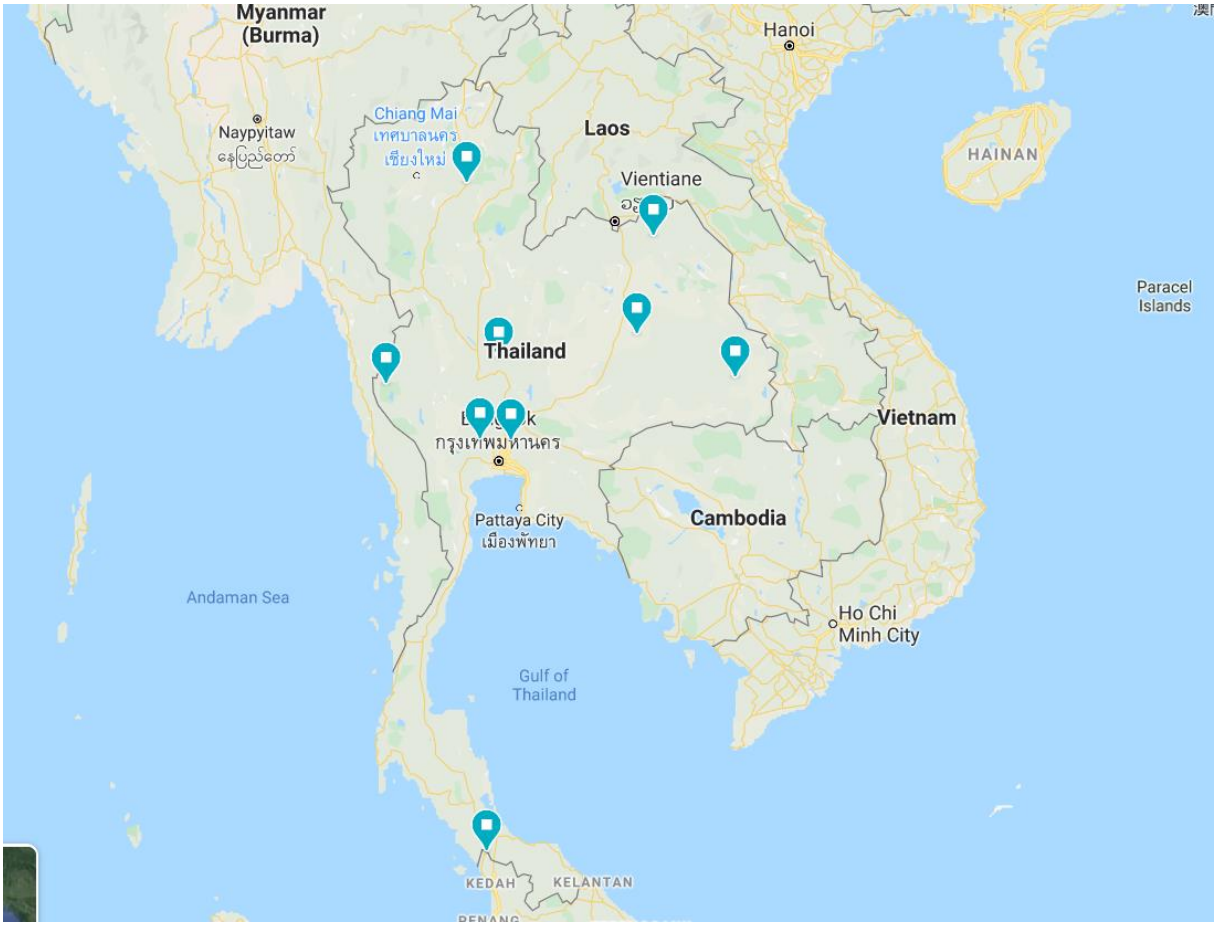

Figure 12. Map of the new replica-temples, Google Maps. List saved by the author.

[137] Charles F. Keyes, "Buddhist Pilgrimage Centers and the Twelve-Year Cycle: Northern Thai Moral Orders in Space and Time," *History of Religions*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1975), 71-89

Following the fifteenth-century replica temples of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, there is no record of other life-size copies up to the twentieth century. After Thailand's reconnection to Bodh Gayā, after the *Buddha Jayantī*, imitations of the Mahābodhi suddenly began to proliferate. I have tried to collect these without claiming completeness and to analyze their appearance and other features, such as date and status among Thai temples. I have found a total of eleven twentieth-century temples, however, the information about them is very disproportionately distributed. In addition, not all of them can be found on Google Maps. Yet, the ones that are there are indicating that space-wise they are evenly distributed among the regions of Thailand.

The Wat Pa Don That is the earliest, built in 1955.[138] It has many Phra Mae Thorani statues emphasizing the event of enlightenment. Inside the temple, one may find a photo of the original building in India. Interestingly, the subsidiary shrines are detached completely and are set up separately. From the seven stations, the Jewel Walk is represented which correlates with the significance of the walking Buddha in Thai Buddhist iconography. The temple gives home to the relics of a famous monk from the Forest tradition.[139] The Wat Phra That Nong Bua was also erected in 1955 for the event of *Buddha Jayantī*, however, a year later a larger *cedi* was added to encompass the older one. It is of the same height as the original building in India (55 meters), and it allegedly contains relics of the Buddha. Wat Wang Pra Do (Fig. 13)) was established in 1975 in the form of a smooth-sided pyramid. A very interesting feature is a pillar which resembles the Aśokan pillars, however, on the top of it a baby Buddha-statue is set.

Wat Tham Khao Rup Chang is from 1976 and it is attached to a cave. Instead of the four subsidiary shrines that are found on the corners of the original temple, there are eight of them,

[138] Earliest based on the available data which are however not necessarily hundred-percent reliable and sometimes differ between different sources.
[139] Forest tradition is a lineage of Theravāda Buddhism, also called Kammaṭṭhāna.

and inside there is a Guan Yin statue besides the Buddha, which indicates that it is a Thai-Chinese temple. The depiction and worship of Guan Yin (T. Jow Mae Kwan Im), who represents the Mahāyāna Buddhist *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, is a recent phenomenon as Chinese forms of Buddhism infiltrates religious practices in Thailand.[140] Wat Pai Rong Wa was erected in 1980, but the main attraction at this site – which is more like a theme park – is not the replica but a giant Buddha-statue. Inside the sanctuary, the builder monk LP Khom's visits to the four major pilgrimage sites are depicted on murals, with which the sacred topography of the Buddha's life and its monuments are again evoked.

Figure 13. Wat Wang Pra Do[141]

[140] Michael Jerryson and Rachelle M. Scott, "Contemporary Thai Buddhism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Buddhism* (Oxford University Press, 2017), accessed 1 June 2020, https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199362387.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199362387-e-24

[141] Accessed 1 June 2020, https://dhammawiki.com/images/8/88/Watwangprado.jpg

Figure 14.Wat Pa Siriwattanawisuth[142]

Wat Wang Wiwekaram and Buddhakaya Chedi was built in 1982, and interestingly, contains not the ashes but a coffin of the temple's former head monk, Luang Phaw Uttama. Chedi Putthakaya was built in the same year and there is a board which states that:

> "In 2532 B.E., His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn came on behalf of His Majesty the King for the enshrining ceremony of 2 relics of the Buddha's right thumb-bone with the size of a rice-grain, transparent white and shiny yellow, contained in the 3 layer boxes which originally were brought from Sri Langka by the abbot. 400 tickets of the golden umbrella were also lifted to the top of the pagoda."

Here, Phra Mae Thorani is also illustrated, but the seven stations representing the seven weeks after the Buddha's enlightenment are not replicated.

Wat Pa Siriwattanawisuth (Fig. 14) was established in 1984 and was under the royal patronage of Galyani Vadhana, Princess of Naradhiwas. It is an exact copy of the Mahābodhi just in smaller size (28 metres) and in red, and even the railings resemble the original site. It also

[142] Accessed 1 June 2020, https://dhammawiki.com/images/8/83/Siriwat.jpg

contains relics but does not include buildings corresponding the seven stations. On the lower part of the Buddha-statue inside, the earth-goddess Phra Mae Thorani is depicted, and outside of the temple gate there are two replicas of Aśoka's famous lion capitals from Sārnāth. A crowned Buddha-statue is also found at the site.

Wat Panyanantaram was erected in 1994. Inside the temple there is an exact replica of the Buddha-statue from the Mahābodhi of India. The edifice itself is a very close copy of the original. Interestingly, other Buddhist sites are also replicated, such as the Dhamek *stupa* of Sārnāth, with a Buddha-statue in front it in *dhammacakkapavattanamudrā* (wheel-turning gesture symbolizing the first sermon), the buildings in Lumbinī, and even a gate of the famous Sāñcī *stūpa*. Another distinguished element is the copy of the Aśokan pillar in the Indian city, Saṅkisā with an elephant capital. This was the place where the Buddha returned after preaching in the *Tāvatiṃsa* heaven, the world of the gods (*deva*s). The white elephant is also a sacred Siamese symbol.[143] Wat Chongkham was built in 2002 : Additionally to the Mahābodhi replica, a copy of the Aśokan pillar with lion capital and a crowned Buddha is also established here. The most recent replica is the Mahābodhi Wang Tong from 2017, but unfortunately, no information is available on it yet.

We might conclude that although the expansion of the Buddhist sacred space happened via means of literature, distribution of relics, or plantation of *bodhi*-threes, the replacement of Bodh Gayā could be done by recreation of the temple in life-size versions. The copies of the Mahābodhi in Thailand – both the fifteenth- and the twentieth-century ones – are erected on a scale of completely resembling the original site to more localized or modernized versions. Additionally, while in the case of the Wat Chet Yot, the building is clearly a form of political act as a *dhammarāja*, from the twentieth-century the main actors of establishment are monks

[143] Antonio L. Rappa, *The King and the Making of Modern Thailand* (Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2017), 1.

and the religious community. From the case of the cave-temple we might also remark that As Sura Piriyasanguanpong argues, at the newer replica-temples it is not important to provide copies of the seven stations unlike at Wat Chet Yot.[144] However, it seems that one common feature of the sites is the inclusion of structural elements from the time of Aśoka such as pillars from other Indian Buddhist sites. The copying of other buildings than the Mahābodhi may support Piriyasanguanpong's argument that the construction of these monuments might convey a sense of 'nostalgia for India'.

Overall, it seems that besides the efforts of King Tilokarāja in the fifteenth century, the veneration of the Mahābodhi did not have a significant role in Thai Buddhism until the *Buddha Jayantī* in 1956. However, as the original site and India at all became accessible to Thai devotees, the temple appeared in the copying practices introduced in this chapter as merit-making activities. Therefore the establishment of the Thai-India relations by King Bhumibol resulted in a more intensified commemoration of Bodh Gayā throughout Thailand.

[144] Sura Piriyasanguanpong, "Mahabodhi Temple Replicas in Thailand in the 26th Buddhist Century: The Transmission of Art Styles from India and the Transfer of Symbolic Meanings," *The Journal of Thai Khadi Research Institute*, Vol. 15. No. 2. (Jul-Dec 2018): 177-208, accessed 1 June 2020, https://so06.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/thaikhadijournal/article/view/164886

Conclusion

Overall, this research has demonstrated that the Mahābodhi has been incorporated in the cultural memory of Thailand, and their endeavors to reconnect with Bodh Gayā's heritage both provided tools to maintain and legitimate the monarchy, and resulted in the enrichment of religious practices. The first happened mainly via the symbolism of the *dhammarāja* concept and the evocation of its prime example, Emperor Aśoka, and the second through the Mahābodhi re-entering the repertoire of sacred objects in the practice of image replication of Thailand.

With regard to the identification and classification of the occurrences of the Mahābodhi Temple in Thai cultural practice, these cultural memory layers are divided into tangible and intangible forms. The latter division also overlaps with the categories of material dimension as tangible, and social and mental dimensions as intangible. In Bodh Gayā, we may identify the erection of Thai buildings, their features and iconographical styles, the photographs of both other Thai edifices and members of the royal family, and the donations to restore or add extra elements to the Mahābodhi complex as the tangible hence material dimension. In the forms that constitute the material dimension in Thailand, we may distinguish the categories of replicas, both in miniature and full-size versions, and depictions of the Mahābodhi on temple murals.

As to the social and mental dimensions hence intangible aspect, we may classify here the visits of the Thai elite, building their activities on the righteous ruler model, and the Theravāda Buddha-chronology used for the *Buddha Jayantī* in line with the official calendar of Thailand. Additionally, the concepts and motives initiating the multiplication of Bodh Gayā's sacred space belong here. These are the ideas of *dāna* or generosity as well as the perfection of the *dhammarāja*, the power of images and their copies, or the literary texts expanding the topography of the Buddha's biography.

Concerning the symbolism, we may conclude that with the amalgamation of the tangible and intangible aspects, the Thai cultural practices regarding Bodh Gayā are becoming means of legitimation of political power. On the one hand, Thai Buddhist actors claim ownership of Bodh Gayā's heritage by shaping the site according to their own artistic heritage. This happens primarily through the establishment of Thai buildings at the site, usage of Thai-style decorations, and the invocation of Thai royalty through photographs. Nevertheless, the most symbolic act on behalf of the Thai monarch is the covering of the original temple with copious amount of gold, thereby representatively formulating dominance over the *axis mundi* and illustrating the wealth and prosperity of the kingdom. By donating, the late Thai king's act may also be understood as of the *dhammarāja*. On the other hand, the Thai leaders and elite build on the legacy of Emperor Aśoka as they evoke the act of *dhammayātrā* with their pilgrimage. Furthermore, they associate themselves with the *dāna* perfection through their donations. In the enlarged sacred space of Bodh Gayā, we may identify the building of the Wat Chet Yot as evocation of the righteous ruler concept.

With respect to current religious practices in Thailand, it is clear that the power of the Thai cultural activities at Bodh Gayā shaped and affected them. Besides the Wat Chet Yot, it seems that the Mahābodhi Temple had little significance in the minds of Thai Buddhists before 1956. Yet, as its image and importance has been incorporated in the Thai cultural memory through the institutional means of the Thai kingdom, the virtual recreation of the temple became a popular activity. Moreover, we may also observe a proliferation of replicas of other Indian – sometimes Nepali – monuments as a "nostalgia for India". Therefore, the Buddhist heritage of India, especially of the Mahābodhi had entered the repertoire of the image-copying practice of Thailand, reinventing the tradition of larg-scale replica buildings. Nevertheless, in the absence of an extensive research, we may not be sure whether these sites act as replacements for the original one, especially as access to the latter is greatly facilitated today. What is positive is that

both animistic and Chinese Buddhist elements blend into the Thai Buddhist practices, which may suggest the existence of irrespective perceptions of the replica temples from the general one as "Mahābodhi replacement". However, this aspect would need a more systematic scrutiny and fieldwork that goes beyond the scope of the present thesis.

I see two directions of possible further research from this point. First, it would be intriguing and illuminating to carry out a comparative analysis among the Buddhist dominated countries of Southeast Asia in terms of how reconnection with Indian Buddhist sites promotes political legitimation. Taking into account the different histories and political formations of Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos, the result could be enlightening to similarities and differences of the usage or absence of the *dhammarāja* notion in these varied conditions. Second, an anthropological research could be done about the use and perception of the replica temples in Thailand. This would reveal the manifold functions of life-size copies of the Mahābodhi, and the actual magnitude of Indian heritage sites in the Thai Buddhist imagination.

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Glossary

āmalaka. Disklike closing on the top of the Indian temple tower.

Aṣṭāmahāpratihārya. Eight Great Miracles, referring to the eight places where eight miraculous events took place including the four major ones of the Buddha's life: Lumbinī, Bodh Gayā, Sārnāth, Kuśīnagar, Śrāvastī, Rājgīr, Saṃkisā, and Veśālī.

bhūmisparśamudrā. The earth-touching gesture of the Buddha illustrating the event when he summoned the earth goddess to witness his enlightenment.

bodhighara. House of the *bodhi*-tree, usually an open shrine surrounding it.

bodhisattva. Someone who seeks enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, the ideal of the Mahāyāna tradition.

***Bodhi*-tree.** Sacred fig tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment.

Buddha Jayantī. Commemoration of the Buddha's birthday, enlightenment, and death.

cakkavatti. Pāli term for the "turner of the wheel", the ideal universal monarch in Indic traditions.

Cakkavatti-Sīhanāda Sutta. The Lion's Roar on the Turning of the Wheel. A *sutta* about a wheel-turning monarch named Dalhanemi.

dāna. The virtue of generosity, closely related to the restoration and donation activities in Buddhism.

dasavidha-rājadhamma. The ten virtues a ruler or king should possess: generosity, morality, altruism, honesty, gentleness, self-control, non-anger, non-violence, forbearance, uprightness.

Dhamek *stupa.* A *stupa* in Sārnāth originating from the third century BCE from the time of Emperor Aśoka.

dhammacakkapavattana mudra. The hand gesture of "turning the wheel of law" referring to the event of the Buddha's first sermon.

dhammarāja. The idea of the rigtheous ruler in Buddhist kingship. King Aśoka is the exemplary *dhammarāja*.

dharmayātrā. Tour of pilgrimage.

Dīpavaṃsa. The oldest chronicle of Sri Lanka composed by Aṭṭhakathā around the third and fourth century CE.

dvārapāla. Gate guardian, widespread architectural element in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain architecture.

Dvārāvatī. Culture between the sixth and eleventh century in the region that constitutes present-day mainland Thailand.

garbhagṛha. The "womb" of the Indian temple in which the deity manifests on Earth,

Garuda. Legendary bird in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain mythology, mount animal of god Viṣṇu, and also the national emblem of Thailand under the name Phra Khrut Pha.

Guan Yin. Chinese name for the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara.

Jātaka. Stories of the previous lives of the historical Buddha.

Jinakālamālipakaraṇaṁ. The Sheaf of Garlands of the Epochs of the Conqueror. Chronicle of Chiang Mai from the sixteenth century, however, the first copy is from the end of the eighteenth century.

***Kālacakra* ceremony.** Wheel of time ceremony of Tibetan Buddhism frequently held in Bodh Gayā.

Lan Na kingdom. One of the first Tai kingdoms existing between the thirteenth and eighteenth century in present-day northern Thailand.

Lan Na style. The architectural style of Northern Thailand, where the Lan Na Kingdom flourished from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century.

Lokeśvara. A *bodhisattva*, the "Lord of the World", identical with Avalokiteśvara or Padmapāṇi.

Mahāparinibbāna Sutta. The sixteenth *sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* (Long Discourses) in the Pāli Canon composed around the second half of the fifth century BCE, which describes the last day of the Buddha.

Mahāvaṃsa. The Great Chronicle. A famous chronic of Sri Lanka from the fifth century CE composed by the monk Mahānāma.

Mahāyāna. The "Great Vehicle" stream of Buddhism in which the *bodhisattva* is the new ideal instead of the Theravāda stream's *arhat*.

Māra. Buddhist demon, "Lord of the Senses", who tempted the Buddha during the awaiting for enlightenment.

māravijaya. The victory over Māra (demon) posture, closely resembling the *bhūmisparśamudrā*.

Mon people. Ethnic group in mainland Southeast Asia, especially present-day Burma, which ruled major parts of the region at various points of history.

nāga. Mythical semidivine serpents in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain mythology. An important *nāga* of Buddhism is Mucalinda, the king of serpents, who shelters the Buddha from rain at the time of enlightenment.

Pagan kingdom. Kingdom in present-day Burma between the ninth and thirteenth century CE.

pāramī. Pāli term for perfection, or quality necessary for obtaining enlightenment. Usually, ten such *pāramī*s are listed: generosity, virtue, renunciation, insight, effort, patience, honesty, determination, loving-kindness, serenity.

***pāribhogika*.** Objects used by the Buddha.

***parinibbāna*.** That is beyond the *nibbāna*, the final passing away of the *buddha*s. Indicating the death of the historical Buddha.

***Paṭhamasambodhi*.** A version of the Buddha's biography that is widely distributed in Southeast Asia in at least ten versions, and different languages. It dates back as far as the sixteenth century.

Pegu. Historical city of Burma and a former Mon capital.

Phra Mae Thorani. The Thai name of the Earth Goddess, who is known in Southeast Asia as a woman who wrings her hair and helps the Buddha by flooding the army of Māra.

Phrachao Liap Lok. The Buddha Travels the World. Thai Buddhist folk literature retelling the history of Thailand's northeastern region through stories of the Buddha's journeys.

Śaiva. Hindu sect dedicated to the god Śiva.

Sāñcī *stupa*. One of the best preserved *stūpa*s originally built in the third century BCE.

***saṅgha*.** Pāli name for the Buddhist monastic orders and community.

Saṅkisā. The place to where the Buddha is believed to descend from the *Tāvatiṃsa* heaven after giving his teachings there.

Sarvāstivāda school. It is often called the "positivist" school of Buddhism due to their doctrine: *sarvaṃ asti*, that is "everything exists". It is a branch of the *sthaviravāda* (school of the elders) tradition.

***śikhara*.** Temple peak in Sanskrit. Technical term for the temple tower in Indian architecture.

***śrāddha*.** Ancestral rites in Hinduism.

***stūpa*.** Sanskrit term for burial mound or hemispherical structure containing relics of the Buddha or highly venerated monks.

***Tāvatiṃsa* heaven.** The world of the gods in Hindu and Buddhist cosmology.

Theravāda. "Way of the Elders", the only denomination left from the early non-Mahāyāna school of Buddhism.

***triratna*.** The three "jewels" of Buddhism: the Buddha, the *dhamma* (his teaching), and the *saṅgha* (monastic order, community). One takes refuge in these three when becoming Buddhist.

***ubosot*.** Ordination hall in Thai temple architecture.

***vajrāsana*.** Diamond-throne erected where the Buddha attained enlightenment.

Vajrayāna. "Diamond Vehicle", the Tantric or Esoteric branch of Buddhism, sometimes identified with Tibetan Buddhism.

Vessantara Jātaka. Story of one of the previous lives of the Buddha as a prince under the name Vessantara, and brings prosperity to his people by attaining the perfection of generosity when he gives away all his possessions.

vitarkamudrā. Teaching hand-gesture in Buddhist art.