

# Tantric Theravāda: A Bibliographic Essay on the Writings of François Bizot and others on the Yogāvacara Tradition.

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Over the past three decades François Bizot has produced a series of studies of Southeast Asian Buddhism that should have radically changed our understanding of Theravāda. His findings indicate the presence of an esoteric tradition of texts and practices within the Theravāda of mainland Southeast Asia that is far removed from the rationalistic monolithic Theravāda presented in many secondary sources. Given the nature of its practices, and its underlying philosophy, the tradition described by Bizot might be called 'tantric', as shall be discussed further below. I shall refer to it as the *yogāvacara* tradition. *Yogāvacara* means 'practitioner of spiritual discipline' (i.e. of meditation). The term recurs in the texts examined by Bizot with reference to the person undertaking the practices advocated therein.

A number of features of the *yogāvacara* material have led to it being described as tantric Theravāda. These features include:

1. The creation of a Buddha within through the performance of ritual by placing and recognising within one's body the qualities of the Buddha, which in turn become the Buddha. This Buddha then replaces the unenlightened, physical individual at death.
2. The use of sacred language, combined with microcosm to macrocosm identity. Sacred syllables or phrases are used to represent a larger entity. Groups of syllables of a particular number represent other significant groups of the same number. This use of sacred language includes use of heart syllables (akin to Mahāyāna *dhāraṇī*), mantras and yantras.
3. Sacred language as the creative principle. The Dhamma arises out of the Pali alphabet and sacred syllables. This refers to formation of Dhamma in all senses of the term: in the sense of spiritual teaching, in the sense of qualities of a Buddha, and also Dhamma in the sense of the material and living world.
4. The application of the substitution of items and the substituted item then being treated as the original.<sup>1</sup>

5. Esoteric interpretations of words, objects and myths that otherwise have a standard exoteric meaning or purpose in Theravāda Buddhism.
6. The necessity of initiation prior to the performance of a ritual or practice.
7. The application of the methodologies outlined above to both soteriological ends, i.e. the pursuit of Nibbāna, and worldly ends, such as healing, longevity, protection, invincibility and, potentially, the harming of others.

Other distinctive features of the *yogāvacara* tradition include:

1. Foetal development and the spiritual recreation thereof.
2. The importance of Abhidhamma categories and the books of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka.<sup>2</sup>
3. The importance of performing *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation — although these are not interpreted as they are in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*.
4. Expertise in the *yogāvacara* tradition is not restricted to monks. Lay people, including women, may be practitioners, and may even be teachers to monks.

While most *yogāvacara* material studied to date is from Cambodia, evidence of the tradition is widely dispersed, in Laos and northern Thailand, as well as central Thailand and Burma. It is even found in Sri Lanka to a limited extent. However, it is difficult to ascertain the true historical extent of the tradition, since its history has been obscured by the vagaries of the past few centuries. In particular, the rise to dominance of a reformed school of Buddhism from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (the Dhammayutikanikāya) and, more recently, the devastation of Cambodian culture by the Khmer Rouge have taken their toll. The current potential for the 'revival' of Buddhism in the region, is, ironically, a further threat, since revival is taking place under the guidance of mainly foreign, rather than local, forms of Theravāda. Bizot's work is all the more important, since it bears witness to a form of Buddhism that has been greatly damaged and largely lost as a living tradition. We can at least be grateful that Bizot began his study of this fading tradition (while working with the archaeological team at Angkor) a few years before the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and the subsequent rise to power of the Khmer Rouge, the final blows that changed the nature of Buddhism in Cambodia forever.

In spite of the significance of Bizot's work, it is only within the last decade that it has begun to influence more general Theravāda studies, and that influence has by no means reached the spread or significance it warrants.<sup>3</sup> What, then, is the reason behind the lack of attention paid to his work? The first answer is that Bizot's work is in French. While this may seem too simple and banal an obstacle to hold up the unflinching pursuit of academic progress, the fact is that there does

indeed appear to be a language divide not preventing, but at least hindering, the incorporation of Francophone findings into Anglophone Theravāda studies. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to review the major publications of Bizot and his increasing circle of collaborators, in order to draw attention to the nature and direction of his work. As such, this article is principally intended as a reference source to facilitate access to the important work of Bizot and other scholars in the field.

Having blamed a basic language divide for the lack of use of these materials, it must be acknowledged that the nature of the material itself also plays its part. Bizot and his colleagues are presenting a complex range of sources spanning chronological, geographical and linguistic borders. They do so with great sensitivity to the traditions they are presenting and to the heirs of that tradition for whom, in part, they are presenting it. As such their publications often appear dauntingly complex. In a number of cases, several texts are established in parallel, alongside sometimes a single translation, but sometimes more. A plethora of scripts are used alongside complex systems of numeration, punctuation and cross-referencing. Understanding the wealth of material presented often requires careful reading of the various supporting chapters, where technical data must be gleaned from the discussion of content to establish the rationale and meaning behind the structural detail. In explaining some examples of these systems I again hope to ease accessibility. Further, each text in itself is only a partial reflection of the *yogāvacara* tradition. No one publication provides a full picture. Its meaning is dependent on the content of the others.

I should remark on a further problem hindering the uptake of this material into broader Buddhist Studies. This problem is at the most fundamental level of accessibility: physical availability. Most of Bizot's works are published in Paris by the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO). It is consistently difficult to purchase books from EFEO. To relate my personal experience by way of example: All my attempts to purchase EFEO books through international book suppliers in the UK over the past ten years have failed. Few of Bizot's works, or EFEO publications in general, are represented in UK research libraries. They do not appear to be well represented even in research libraries in France. My only success has been through going in person to the EFEO bookshop in Paris by prior arrangement or by asking the authors themselves to supply copies.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, there is some underlying problem of communication or distribution that warrants improvement if the publications of EFEO, which are very reasonably priced, are to reach the readership they deserve.<sup>5</sup>

I shall first describe the individual works of Bizot et al. and discuss some of the main themes and theories emerging from the material. I shall then review other relevant materials, such as the Sri Lankan evidence and both primary and secondary English-language publications. In sum, this essay references twenty nine books, articles, sections of books and unpublished works that focus on the subject of *yogāvacara* Theravāda.

Bizot F. (1976). *Le figuier à cinq branches*, Recherches sur le bouddhisme khmer I, PEFCO, vol.CVII, Paris.<sup>6</sup>

"The Fig Tree with five branches" was the first work by Bizot to introduce *yogāvācāra* material to a western audience. Apart from the edited text that forms the focus of the work, there is a substantial introduction which offers the key to understanding the entire project of Bizot's work as well as many references in his later publications. Bizot describes his own initial interest, his teachers, his involvement in the project to copy and catalogue the manuscript collections of Cambodia, and the difficulties encountered in this process. At the time of his writing the foreword in 1975, four hundred and fifty five Cambodian manuscripts had been recorded.<sup>7</sup> These became the basis for the publication series "Recherches sur le bouddhisme khmer", of which *Le figuier* is the first volume. While the manuscripts are the main basis of this research, Bizot indicates this policy that anthropological research into the traditions of Cambodia will be drawn on as much as possible to elucidate these texts.

Bizot provides a useful introduction to Cambodian Buddhism, in particular to the sometimes confrontational division between traditional Buddhism on the one hand, referred to generically as Mahānikāy 'great monastic school' (although not in fact consisting of a single entity), and the reform school of the Dhammayutikanikāya, on the other. This latter, created by King Rāma IV of Thailand in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was imported into Cambodia when Cambodia was a protectorate of Thailand.<sup>8</sup>

The prestige, royal patronage, and particularly role in education granted to the Dhammayutikanikāya, led to the demise of the traditional forms of Buddhism in Cambodia. Of particular relevance for the manuscript tradition is that the Dhammayutikanikāya emphasised the use of canonical and commentarial texts as handed down through the Mahāvihāra school of Theravāda. These stem from the unification of the Sri Lankan *nikāyas* (monastic lineages) of Polonnaruva under one particular *nikāya*, the Mahāvihāra, by king Parākramabāhu I in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The unification led to a review of canonical and commentarial materials, and the production of subcommentaries and handbooks in relation to those materials, mainly taking the 5<sup>th</sup> century commentator Buddhaghosa (to whom most of the commentaries were ascribed) as the authority on orthodoxy. This textual tradition gradually became authoritative among Sinhalese influenced monastic schools in mainland Southeast Asia in the centuries following the Sri Lankan reform. In focusing on these texts, the Dhammayutikanikāya judged many current Buddhist practices at the time of its establishment to be unorthodox. Reformers thus used this textual tradition as the yardstick by which to judge orthodoxy.<sup>9</sup> The rejection of local practices that took place at this juncture was in part a reaction against clearly unorthodox practices on the part of the Thai Sangha, in particular the involvement of monks, including soldier monks, in the warring factions of Thailand in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the circumstances of which are briefly related by Bizot in the introduction to *Le Fiquier*.<sup>10</sup> However, the rejection of

some undesirable, politically destabilising local practices led to the rejection of many other local practices simply because they are not authorised by the canonical and commentarial tradition up to the 12<sup>th</sup> century as preserved in Sri Lanka. The prestige of the Dhammayutikanikāya in Cambodia from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward led to the reproduction of texts relating to this 'orthodox' tradition and to a decline in the reproduction of works not in keeping with that textual tradition. When Cambodia became a French protectorate, the French authorities perpetuated the favouritism towards the Dhammayutikanikāya. Bizot quotes government prohibitions on a number practices of traditional Buddhism. He also discusses the impact of reforms in education, affecting freedom of travel, and in dress, as well as programmes of translation of Pali texts, even those produced by the Pali Text Society of London, into Khmer.

Bizot's discussion of the division between traditional and reform Buddhism offers the key to some recurrent themes and terms found throughout later works by Bizot and others following in his footsteps.<sup>11</sup> These terms include Mahāvihāra, non-Mahāvihāra, Sinhalese orthodoxy, and Mahānikāy(a). When Bizot uses 'Mahāvihāra' he is referring to the textual orthodoxy established by the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Sri Lankan reform under the Mahāvihāra *nikāya*. He is not referring to the Mahāvihāra monastery as a living entity, i.e. he is not referring to practices that may have been part of the religious life of monks of that monastery and the Sangha descended from it at any stage. This explains his apparently incongruent use of the term non-Mahāvihārin for the *yogāvacara* tradition even though we know it was practised by members of the Mahāvihāra Sangha, at least in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> The practices of the Mahāvihāra before or after the reform, and distinctions in practice between its members and those of other *nikāyas*, are not known in detail, so it is important to bear in mind that the Mahāvihāra and non-Mahāvihāra distinction used by Bizot refers to textual orthodoxy only, particularly as accepted by the Dhammayutikanikāya. This means that in Bizot's works the terms 'non-Mahāvihāra', 'Mahānikāy', 'non-reform' and 'traditional/indigenous Southeast Asian' Buddhism are all more or less synonymous, and are all found in contrast with the virtual synonyms 'Mahāvihārin', 'Dhammayutikanikāya', 'Sinhalese orthodoxy', and 'reformed Buddhism'. The terms make sense with reference to the Buddhism of Cambodia and Thailand from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and later, where they refer not just to textual authority but to an ideology.<sup>13</sup> In my view, they can not be meaningfully applied to the Buddhism of Sri Lanka at any date.

Bizot points out that the division between traditional and Dhammayutikanikāya Buddhism in Cambodia was initially a division between rural and urban Buddhism, broadly speaking. Consequently the division has had an impact on the understanding of Cambodian Buddhism in the West. Generally, from the earliest period, those outside observers who wrote on Cambodian Buddhism, wrote about what they witnessed in the cities, so that the traditional rural, i.e. *yogāvacara*, Buddhism of Cambodia is largely unrepresented in secondary literature.

The lack of any clear 'original' authority for the *yogāvacara* form of

Cambodian Theravāda leads to difficulty in establishing its origins and validity, but the presence of similar practices and forms in Thailand, outside of the reform, attests to the broad base of the traditional religion, and makes it extremely unlikely that we are dealing with a local Cambodian invention.<sup>14</sup>

In looking at possible sources for the tradition, Bizot briefly looks at the possibility of an association with the Abhayagirivihāra of Sri Lanka<sup>15</sup>; at the possibility of a local syncretism between Theravāda and Mahāyāna tantra, as a result of the introduction of Sri Lankan Theravāda in Thailand and Cambodia in the 14<sup>th</sup> century; and also as a result of a syncretism with Brahmanical Hinduism. He also looks tentatively at a possible relationship with Shan Buddhism of Burma and the mysterious Arī sect. In particular he looks at 'unorthodox' practices, including those attributed to the Arī, and the famous report by the 13<sup>th</sup> century Chinese traveller Tcheou Ta-Kouan of a Cambodian Buddhist ritual in which monks' deflower pubescent girls. This he broadly relates to a Cambodian rite undertaken by girls after the onset of their first menstruation. This rite involves a three month retreat on a special diet after initiation into the *mūl kammaṭṭhān* (meditation exercises) by an *ācārya* or monk. It is a coming of age ceremony for girls on a par with the ordination for the rains retreat undertaken by teenage boys.

Finally, Bizot points out the rarity of manuscripts relating to the *yogāvacara* tradition in comparison with orthodox works. He suggests that one factor contributing to this may be the primarily oral transmission, given the esoteric nature of the material.<sup>16</sup>

The text edited in *Le Figuier* is based on portions of five manuscripts in either *mūl* or *jriēn* script and Khmer language, entitled or described as being on the subject of *mūl kammaṭṭhān*.<sup>17</sup> Descriptions of the manuscripts and features of the scribal practices are given on pp.45-49. The text is then given in transcription into Roman script, not in the original scripts used in later publications in the series.<sup>18</sup> The translation into French<sup>19</sup> is followed by a discussion of the content.<sup>20</sup>

The text relates each of the stages of conception and embryonic development to individual sacred formulae. These in turn represent constituents of Dhamma, either in the sense of elements of the physical world and individual, or in the sense of the elements of the spiritual world, e.g. the scriptures, particularly *Abhidhamma*. The importance of understanding these identifications if one is to gain Nibbāna is emphasised. The text also contains two stories. The first story relates how the Buddha entrusted his teaching to Yama, the king of the dead, and gave him permission to write down in his register of death and rebirth only those who do not 'close their eyes to see the three spheres of crystal, namely the Buddha gem, Dhamma gem, and Sangha gem.'

The second story begins with a conversation in which Yama explains the inevitability of death, and of acquiring demerit through bad action as long as one lives, to the two children *Cittakumārā* and *Cittakumārī*. This pair, a boy and a girl, represent that aspect of us which is reborn, *nāma* and *rūpa* respectively. A god who finds *Cittakumārī* weeping, informs the pair that there is only one way to escape death: one must find the crystal gems that are the fruit of the fig tree that

grows in the land of the rose apple tree, i.e. India. These gems are guarded by birds of prey that represent the sense faculties, sight, hearing, etc. Anyone who manages to overcome the birds and take one of the gems arrives at the city of Nibbāna. The crystal gem acts as a key to the gates through the walls of the city and allows the bearer to enter Nibbāna. The fig tree is identified with the human form and also with the Dhamma, the soteriology of the *yogāvacara* tradition being based on the interchangeability of the two. The gem is identified with the Buddha.

Other features of the text include teachings on how one should understand the true identity of one's mother and father in terms of 12 water and 21 earth elements respectively. This is related to ordination: lower ordination at the age of 12 years ensures the salvation of the mother; higher ordination at the age of 21 years ensures the salvation of the father. Mantras to be repeated to alleviate the debt owed to one's mother, father and relatives are also given. Much use is made throughout the text of the sacred syllables found in other *yogāvacara* texts, such as the initial syllables of the books of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* and the five syllables *na mo bu (d)dhā ya*. These five syllables form the two words *namo buddhāya*, "Homage to the Buddha". They are one of the most frequently occurring sacred phrases of the *yogāvacara* material, and are placed in parallel to all groups of five constituents, such as the five Buddhas, the five *khandha* ('aggregates'). The other most frequently occurring sacred phrase in the *yogāvacara* material is *araḥaṃ*, "worthy one", an epithet of the Buddha, but, divided up into the three syllables *a ra haṃ*, it is used in this context to represent important sets of three, such as the three divisions of the canon, the three gems, the three robes, or the three breaths.

The structure of the text published in *Le Figuier* is far from straightforward. Passages are repeated. There is no obvious progression in the order of subject matter. For this reason Bizot provides a commentary after the translation and in part draws on other texts that put some of the content in a more systematized manner. These include a text that gives a clearer description of the symbolism of the fig tree<sup>21</sup> and the stages of foetal development in terms of syllabic substitution.<sup>22</sup> The original of these texts is given in the appendix. Diagrams included show the relationship between the sacred syllables and foetal development. A series of plates included at the end of the work reproduce manuscript illustrations of Cittakumārā and Cittakumārī at the fig tree, and the fig tree as the human body.

The text translated as *Le figuier à cinq branches* is called *mūl kammatṭhān* on some manuscripts. The title *mūl kammatṭhān* suggests the meaning 'basic action/meditation practice(s)' according to standard Pali syntax. However, as Bizot explains, if one follows the inverse interpretation of compound order in Khmer compared with Pali, the meaning is the 'basis of the meditation practice/action', the basis in question being the fig tree, our body.

Bizot F. (1980) '*La grotte de la naissance*', *Recherches sur le bouddhisme khmer II*, BEFEO, vol.LXVII: 222-73, Paris.

The article focuses on the traditional 'rebirthing' rituals undertaken by pilgrims in a mountain cavern in Cambodia. The cavern is called: 'The cavern of birth', *rañi prasūt*, hence the title of this article. Bizot describes the myths relating to the mountain, and its recent history. He describes his visit there with a group of pilgrims. He also translates four textual passages concerning the type of meditation on embryonic development undertaken as part of this ritual. The texts are transliterated in the appendix. A map of the site is given at the end of the article. This is followed by photographs of the site, of pilgrims undertaking the practice and the features of the cavern that symbolise, for example, the placenta and neck of the womb. The article is discussed and excerpts translated in Strong 1994 and in Cousins 1997 (on both, see below).

In the introduction Bizot mentions a *yogāvacara* text called the *Dhammjhān* or *Dhammavīsūi*. A free translation of a passage of the text into French was published by Leclère as early as 1899, but was forgotten by scholarship.<sup>23</sup> The passage relates the origin of the Dhamma, in the sense of both universe and Buddhist teaching by Braḥ Kev and Buddhagūṇ, through sacred syllables, sets of which are equated with different parts of the body of the Dhamma. For example, the syllables *ma a u* form the arms of the Dhamma, while the syllables *u ū* form the left eye.<sup>24</sup> Bizot explains how this cosmogonic development parallels the ontogenic development, a parallel which is harnessed to transform the individual gross body to a body of Dhamma through an embryonic development created in the *yogāvacara*'s meditation.

Bizot describes the rituals and practices, including a session of collective possession experienced by mediums, in preparation for the descent into the 'maternal womb'. The teacher (*ācāry*) of the group instructs everyone to recite the sacred syllables *a ra haṃ* repeatedly through the entire regression into the 'womb'. The *ācāry* explains the layout of the cave in terms of the mother's womb. He then initiates people into the meditation by having them recite the introductory prayers. The meditation lasts the length of time it takes a stick of incense to burn, i.e. about an hour. The *ācāry* explains, at the end of the session, 'We have just entered this cavern and have acquired great merit, because this is the womb of the sacred mother. The opening here is the golden door. In going through it to practise asceticism, we have regressed into the mother's womb. In this way we are reborn anew. Let us ask forgiveness for having polluted the sacred mother.'<sup>25</sup> Bizot's description of the cave, its closeness and dampness, reveal the aptness of the uterine symbolism.

The meditation practices taught in *yogāvacara* manuals begin with realising the meditation object at the tip of the nose. The reason for this is explained here: the nose is the gate to the uterine world.<sup>26</sup>

The first of the four textual passages translated by Bizot explains identifications between sets of sacred syllables and, for example, the elements.

The syllables in turn were created by the sacred texts of the Pali canon. The symbolism of traditional monastic dress is explained in terms of the sacred texts. The sacred texts are also related to the formation of the body. The development of the embryo is described in terms of sacred syllables, and traditional monastic dress is also explained in terms of the embryo and its development.

The second text teaches that one must recite the sixteen vowels during the ten months of foetal development. Three types of breath are named, the third of which is located at the navel and equated with the seven books of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. The text relates the descent of the breath to progressively lower places within the body (sternum, navel, coccyx), which is accompanied by the pronunciation of a variety of sacred phrases, to the attainment of progressively higher levels of spiritual attainment. The spiritual attainments range from stream entry to arhatship, and culminate in entry into Nibbāna.

The third text summarises the symbolism of the person as a tree and the myth of Cittakumārā and Cittakumārī, themes familiar from *Le Figuier*.

The fourth text makes identifications between different sets of sacred syllables, and further identifications between, for example, the sacred syllables and the qualities (*guṇa*) of the mother, father, king, family and teacher.

**Bizot, F. (1981a). *Le donne de soi-même*, Recherches sur le bouddhisme khmer III, PEFCO, vol.CXXX, Paris. ISBN 2-85539-730-8.**

"The gift of oneself" focuses on a group of rituals of traditional Southeast Asian Buddhism which concern a gift to the officiant priest or monk of a cloth, or similar item, as part of a set of rituals performed for both the deceased and for the living or their representative. The first chapter describes the various types of these *paṇsukūl*, lit. 'ragrobe' rituals. In Buddhism more generally the term *paṇsukūl* refers to the ascetic practice (*dhutaṅga*) of monks wearing only discarded robes, i.e.. taken from a rubbish heap or a corpse, rather than specially given robes. The central acts involved in the *paṇsukūl* rituals of Southeast Asia are the taking of the piece of cloth, or robe, etc. from the dead body (or in some cases the living body) and the recitation of certain sacred texts.

The various types of *paṇsukūl* ritual are listed and described by Bizot in Chapter One. He gives the name of the ritual, the texts recited and the practices entailed. He discusses utensils and offerings used in their rituals and their symbolism. The practices and attendant beliefs that vary according to region and school of Buddhism are described. The Mahānikāy, or non-reformed schools of Buddhism, practise a greater range of such rituals than the Dhammayutikanikāya. Mahānikāy *paṇsukūl* rituals are performed on the following occasions:

1. at the watch for the deceased after the corpse has been wrapped in the shroud;
2. at an 'offering of flesh'. This is the practice of donating one's body after

death to the birds. This practice is discontinued, but Bizot provides a description of the preparation of the body through washing and cutting up on the basis of observations of Leclère, who wrote on Cambodian Buddhism at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

3. at the donation of a corpse to the Sangha as a basis for monks to practise the meditation on the decomposition of the body.

4. on the exhumation of a body that has been awaiting cremation.

5. during and after a cremation. Bizot gives a full description of the different types of *pañsukūl* performed on the occasion of a cremation. When the ritual takes place after the cremation the bodily remains unburnt by the fire must be placed in the anatomically correct position as if the body were still intact.

6. transfer of the bones of the deceased into an urn after a cremation.

7. festival of the ancestors. This is performed to the urn containing the remains gathered at the transfer of bones after the cremation.

8. New Year. A *pañsukūl* may be performed for the remains of deceased relatives at New Year as at the festival of the ancestors (see previous).

9. ritual for the exorcism of illness. This ritual is similar to that performed at a cremation. The sick person lies in the position in which a corpse is placed, and is covered by the cloth or monastic robe to be removed during the ritual. This ritual is thought to be particularly efficacious by Buddhists of northern Thailand if malevolent spirits are determined to be the cause of the illness.

10. rite for longevity. The number of monks required for this ritual is the same as the age of the person for whose benefit the ritual is performed. An inscription at Angkor Wat testifies to the performance of this ritual there in 1671.

11. 'Chāk Mahāpañsukūl'. The *pañsukūl* for the prolongation of life are shorter versions of a much more elaborate rite called 'Chāk Mahāpañsukūl' known throughout Southeast Asia with the exception of Burma. Bizot describes two such rituals witnessed by him. He reproduces plans of the maze or initiatory enclosure used in these rituals, and explains their symbolism.<sup>27</sup>

Chapter Two translates extracts from three Khmer manuals that belonged to the officiants of *pañsukūl* rituals. The Khmer texts are provided in transliteration in the appendix. The first text provides varieties in the performance of the ritual, layout of the body and urn, etc., according to the month in which the ritual takes place, the sex of the deceased, etc. It gives instructions for the ritual and attendant

offerings. It also provides the correct texts to be recited according to the ritual, and the point in the ritual at which they should be recited. The second text relates the story of the occasion on which the Buddha explained the incomparable advantages of the *paṇṣukūl* ritual to the god Indra. The third text is extracted from an important and popular work called *Brahṅunṅkēv piṭak*, 'The sacred basket of precious virtues'. This discussion of the *Paṇṣukūl* rituals is fuller than that contained in the other texts. It provides an origination myth for the ritual. It describes different versions of the ritual, the prescribed offerings, the choice of teacher, the sacred formulae according to age of the beneficiary, the period after death. It also explains various allegories and esoteric interpretations, including the identity of the ritual enclosure with both the island of Lankā and the maternal womb.<sup>28</sup>

Chapter Three offers interpretation of the rituals and relates to beliefs and practices discussed elsewhere in Bizot's studies on the *yogāvācāra* tradition, while the conclusion looks at possible origins of the *paṇṣukūl* rituals from funerary rites. The table on p.101 summarises the types of related ritual, whether the officiant is a brahmin, a non-ordained *grū*, or a Mahānikāy monk, and what item they take, be it an antelope skin, piece of cloth or monastic robe. It also identifies the intended beneficiary of each ritual, e.g. the gods, other supernatural beings, or the triple gem of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.<sup>29</sup>

A few supplementary matters are included in the 'additional notes'.<sup>30</sup> These mention the problematic derivation of the word *paṇṣukūl*, a related practice in Sri Lanka, and the Southeast Asian practice of performing a *Paṇṣukūl* ritual for pets, such as a cat or dog, to which one was particularly attached. The opening of prayers and verses used in the rituals are listed on p.131. Sacred formulae and heart syllables used are listed on p.132. At the end of the volume 46 photographs illustrate the progressive stages of some *paṇṣukūl* rituals witnessed by Bizot.

**Bizot, F. (1981b), "Notes sur les yantra bouddhiques d'Indochine", in M.Strickmann (ed.) 1981, *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein*, Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques vol.XX, Bruxelles: 155-191.**

This article looks at the use of protective sacred diagrams, *yantras*. These consist in part of pictures, in part of diagrams formed of Pāli letters and phrases. The article discusses and illustrates with photographs the use of *yantras* on clothing and as tattoos. The use of *yantras* as tattoos, the nature of the representations according to the part of the body, their creation and empowerment are also discussed by Terwiel.<sup>31</sup> The formation of *yantras* in the *yogāvācāra* tradition is considered in more detail in *La Guirlande* (1994), discussed below.

Bizot, F. (1988), *Les traditions de la pabbajjā en Asie du Sud-Est, Recherches sur le bouddhisme khmer IV*, Göttingen. ISBN 3-525-82454-8. (*Pabbajjā*)

This work is not about the *yogāvacara* tradition directly, although Bizot uses some of his findings to discuss its possible Mon (Southern Burmese) and also Abhayagirivihāra origins. *Pabbajjā* examines the three current liturgies in use for the lower ordination (*pabbajjā*) into the Buddhist Sangha, and other texts and issues that shed light on their history. Unlike the liturgies for the higher ordination, the *upasampadā*, which have become established by ritual texts, the liturgies for the *pabbajjā* have, according to Bizot, been modified over the centuries and thus offer an indication of the history of the ordination lineage that uses them. Bizot presents the texts of all three *pabbajjā* liturgies along with their corresponding *upasampadā* and translations of both.

The first of the three *pabbajjā* in question is that of the Mahānikāya, by which is meant the non-reformed schools Buddhism of mainland Southeast Asia. This form of the *pabbajjā* also forms the basis of a number of other ceremonies, including initiation as an ascetic and initiations into *yogāvacara* meditation. The Mahānikāya liturgy includes the term *okāsa*. Bizot reports on the alleged introduction of this term into Burmese Buddhism by the famous 11<sup>th</sup> century monk Shin Araham, also attributed with the conversion of the Burmese king Anuruddha to Theravāda. Since this term, which means '(please grant) permission' is alien to the Pali canon, commentaries and sub-commentaries at least up to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, this attribution seems entirely possible. Bizot uses this to suggest a Mon origin for the *yogāvacara* tradition as a whole.

The second liturgy is that used by the Dhammayutikanikāya founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The third liturgy is that used by the Burmese Sudhammanikāya. This liturgy begins with the word *sakalavaṭṭa* and seems to be of modern origin. Bizot points out that it was not used by the Burmese sects established in Sri Lanka from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>32</sup>

Bizot summarises the issues relating to the possible pronunciations of the refuges (*Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gaṇchāmi*, 'I go to the Buddha for refuge', etc.) which form the basis of the *pabbajjā*.<sup>33</sup> His account is based on von Hinüber's analysis of Buddhaghosa's discussion of the *pabbajjā* in the *Samantapāsādikā*.<sup>34</sup>

Chapter Five, Six and Seven present texts relating to *vinaya* reforms of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century, in part resulting from the influence of Sri Lankan Buddhism on mainland Southeast Asia. This material is fascinating and warrants further study. The conclusions drawn here also warrant more thorough scrutiny in my view. The difficulty in basing anything on the current liturgies is that the two liturgies without the *okāsa* formula are of modern creation. It seems possible to me that the Dhammayutikanikāya liturgy is based on a reading of Buddhaghosa's discussion of the subject in the *Samantapāsādikā* passage mentioned above.

The 'Mahānikāya' *pabbajjā* liturgy is the same as that now followed by the Mahāvihāra of Sri Lanka. Bizot puts this down to the (re-)importation of the *pabbajjā* into Sri Lanka from Thailand in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, an importation which put an end to the earlier Mahāvihārin *pabbajjā*, which Bizot thinks will have been without the *okāsa* formula. While this is possible, I suggest that this proposition faces three difficulties. Firstly, while the term *okāsa* is not found in the canon or commentaries on the canon (nor as far as I can tell in the sub-commentaries to the canon at least up until the 12<sup>th</sup> century), and the suggestion that it is of Mon origin seems reasonable, the Mon ordination was exported to Sri Lanka in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Thus the Mahāvihāra ordination may already have included the *okāsa* formula at that point, unless evidence is supplied to the contrary. Secondly, we cannot assume from silence that the debate with Dhammagambhīra related to the inclusion of the *okāsa* formula.<sup>35</sup> The phrase *okāsa* is not mentioned, while other issues, the number of pronunciations of the refuges and the formulation of the precepts are mentioned as points of controversy. Thirdly, the orthodox Sri Lankan Sangha of the 18<sup>th</sup> century regarded itself as reimporting the *pabbajjā* tradition that it had exported to Siam centuries before. Given that a number of the Sri Lankan Sangha had already received a *pabbajjā* prior to the arrival of the missionaries from Siam in 1753, one might expect to find some discussion of the difference of the new *pabbajjā* ceremony if it was other than the one already present there. I draw attention to these issues as further avenues of exploration.

An English abstract is included at the end of the text.<sup>36</sup> The preface in English by Heinz Bechert gives an overview of possible origins of the 'tantric' Theravāda uncovered by Bizot.<sup>37</sup> It also mentions the relationship between *yogāvacara* meditation and the meditation practice of the modern Dhammakāya foundation (on which see Mettanando's work below).<sup>38</sup>

At the end of the work a series of plates reproduce photographs of *pabbajjā* ceremonies using the *okāsa* formula. These photographs show both the clothes in which ordinands dress, as well as the different postures of standing, sitting and squatting appropriate to different stages of the ceremony. Just as the liturgies for initiation into the *yogāvacara* meditations are based on the *okāsa pabbajjā*, so the manuals for those initiations also prescribe the attendant variations in posture seen here.

**Bizot, F. (1989). *Rāmaker ou L'Amour Symbolique de Rām et Setā, Recherches sur le Bouddhisme Khmer V, École Française d'Extrême-Orient, Paris. ISBN 2-85539-755-3.***

This volume is a translation and interpretation of a Khmer rendering of the Indian epic, the Rāmāyaṇa. The *yogāvacara* tradition<sup>th</sup> interprets the story of the Rāmāyaṇa, present in Cambodia from at least the 7<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>39</sup> as an allegory for the spiritual path, the quest for *Nibbāna*. This version of the Rāmaker, 'the glory

of Rāma', was recounted by the traditional storyteller Mi Chak over several days in 1969 to Bizot and fellow residents of the village of Srah Srang at Angkor. Bizot recorded the story then worked on it with the assistance of Ly Vouong, Ung Hok Lay, and You Oun. The volume is dedicated to these three men, all of whom were murdered under the Khmer Rouge in 1975. Bizot published the Khmer text of Mi Chak's narrative in 1973. This volume contains an abridged translation of that text, in places literal, especially where the narrative relates to the symbolic meaning of the text.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to the translation, this volume contains a lengthy introduction. This relates the circumstances of Mi Chak's narration, and also contains: a general discussion of the *yogāvacara* soteriological system as understood by Bizot up until that time (but prior to the publication, in particular, of the *Saddavimāla* and *Ratanamālā*);<sup>41</sup> an explanation of the main differences between this version and the version in the Royal library in Phnom Penh, re-edited and translated by Saveros Pou<sup>42</sup>, and the Thai version attributed to king Rāma I;<sup>43</sup> and a discussion of similarities between the soteriology of the *yogāvacara* tradition and the soteriology of the Upaniṣads, as well as Brahmanical Hinduism and tantra in general.<sup>44</sup> At the back of the book 166 black and white plates reproduce an incomplete set of photographs taken in 1957 by R. Maury of EFEO of a series of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century temple wall paintings of the Rām story from the silver pagoda of the Royal Palace at Phnom Penh. At the end of the introduction, Bizot discusses these illustrations, and the damage incurred through the war, vandalism, neglect and an incompetent attempt at restoration, thus adding to the broader picture painted by Bizot of the damage wreaked on Cambodian culture in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>45</sup>

The greater part of the introduction presents Bizot's interpretation of the Rāmakīrti.<sup>46</sup> He begins with an overview of other Hindu and Buddhist esoteric interpretations of the Rāma legend, the nature of which is not fully understood in several cases.<sup>47</sup> In the remainder of the introduction, Bizot provides an overview of the esoteric interpretation of the plot, both in outline for all five sections of the Rāmaka, summarised by Table 1<sup>48</sup> and alternatively by Table 3,<sup>49</sup> and for the individual sections. He also lists the esoteric role of the key players, events and places of the epic.<sup>50</sup> Throughout he refers to other texts translated and practices described by him in previous publications by way of explanation of the significance of events in the Rāmaka.

The esoteric roles of the key players, events and places are given as follows:

The three worlds = the body of the *yogāvacara*.

Ayudhyā (the city of which Rām is eventually crowned king) = the seat of the *yogāvacara's citta*, 'mind'.

the hero Rām = the *citta* of the *yogāvacara*.

Laks, Rām's younger brother and devoted companion = the *cetasika*, mental

factors, of the *yogāvacara*.

Hanumān, the monkey god and devoted servant of hero = the internal or embryonic breath of the *yogāvacara*.

Setā, the heroine and wife of Rām = the internal gem or 'crystal sphere'.

The antihero Rāb (Rāvaṇa) and his 12 brothers = the thirteen fetters of existence (*pāpadhamma*).

King Dasarath, Rām's father, and his wives = the parents of the previous existence.

The four hermits = the letters NA MA BA DA (Sūtr, Vinay, Abhidhamm, Dhammasit, the four elements).

The wedding = the initial sight of the gem.

The kidnapping of Setā by Rāv = the impossibility of keeping the gem.

The island of Lankā on which Setā is imprisoned = the maternal womb.

The army of monkeys = the meritorious actions acquired by the *yogāvacara*.

The crossing of the ocean = the *yogāvacara*'s regression in the initiation.

The dyke = the bridge or boat.

The adviser and ally Bibhek = the Grū who instructs the *yogāvacara*.

The battles = the meditation exercises (*kammaṭṭhāna*) undertaken by the *yogāvacara*.

The death of Rāb = the destruction of attachments by the *yogāvacara*.

The victory = the ceremony of the initiation enclosure.

The banishment of Setā = the death of the *yogāvacara*.

The forest = the cremation ground.

Mahāmegharāj = the *ācāry yogī* who performs the funerary rites.

Rām braḥ laks, jab braḥ laks (the twin sons of Setā and Rām) = the name and form (*nāmarūpa*) of the *yogāvacara*.

The funerary rites = the definitive realisation of the gem by the *yogāvacara*.

The final union = the entry into Nibbāna.

The main events of the narrative, Bizot interprets as follows:

The key characters making their appearance represents the formation of the embryo, and the birth in a womb of the *nāmarūpa*.

The wedding of Rāma and the abduction of Setā represents the realisation in the womb of the gem and its immediate loss because of the presence of the factors of existence.

The battles with Rāb and Rām's victory represent the *samathavipassanā-kammaṭṭhān* (the meditation exercises).

Crossing the ocean represents reaching the island which is our initiatory body, the destruction of the factor of existence and seizing the jewel.

Rebirth represents the end of the initiation.

The banishment of Setā represents the impossibility of union with the gem before the physical constituent of the *yogāvacara* has been used up, death of the *yogāvacara*.

The birth of the twins, acting out of the pretend funeral and the return of Setā represent the regression in an ideal womb after death; the appearance of the initiatory *nāmarūpa* and the final union with Nibbāna after death.

Bizot presents a slightly different interpretation in Table 3 where the banishment of Setā represents the using up of the residual lifespan and death of the initiated *yogāvacara*, and the birth of the twins, enacted funeral and return of Setā represent the formation of the immortal body and attainment of the gem at Nibbāna.

Bizot explains that his interpretation is in part provisional, ambiguous and incomplete.<sup>51</sup> With reference to the events that overtook Cambodia, he writes, "There were, as I explained, masters capable of saying much more on the subject, but whom circumstances prevented me from meeting."<sup>52</sup>

The spiritual practitioner, the *yogāvacara*, is Rām. His search is for the gem that is the key to Nibbāna within him. The gem is personified by Rāma's wife Setā ('white/pure', rather than *Sitā* 'furrow').<sup>53</sup>

**Bizot, F. (1992). *Le chemin de Lanḱā*, Textes bouddhiques du Cambodge no.I<sup>54</sup>, Collection de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, Paris. ISSN 1150-2177, ISBN 2-85-539-301-9.**

This volume revolves around an edition and translation of a text on meditation practice. It contains some supporting material by Olivier de Bernon and Christian Bauer. A further text, the *Dhammakāya*, is given in Chapter Eleven.

The main text, that gives the title to the volume, is preserved in a mixture of Khmer, Pali and Thai and thought by Bizot and Bauer to be of Thai origin. The text edited in this volume is in two parts, each of which circulated separately. In the fifteen different manuscripts used by Bizot the text goes under various titles for which he offers a variety of interpretations:<sup>55</sup>

*phlūv braḥ dhamma lanḱā*, "le chemin (conduisant aux) augustes *dhamma* de Lanḱā";

*mūl phlūv braḥ dhamma laṅkā*, "Les bases (principes) du Chemin de Laṅkā";  
*braḥ dhamma laṅkā*, "l'enseignement recellé à Laṅkā";  
*phlūv laṅkā*, "Le Chemin de Laṅkā";  
*mūl phlūv laṅkā*, "les bases du chemin de Laṅkā";  
*vipassanācoda(ka)*, "les questions incitatrices sur l'inspection".<sup>56</sup>

The mention of Laṅkā immediately begs the question of a possible Sri Lankan origin, but Bizot thinks this unlikely. One manuscript of the text does attribute the teaching to a Sinhalese monk who left Sri Lanka when the British occupied Kandy in 1825 and this offers one possible reason for the title.<sup>57</sup> However, Bizot interprets the Siamese characteristics of the text to indicate that even if it was introduced by a Sri Lankan monk, he had in turn received it from the Siamese monks who took the tradition to Sri Lanka in the 1750s.<sup>58</sup> He does not see Laṅkā in the name of the text as a connection with this monk, but regards the reference to Laṅkā as mythological and symbolic rather than geographical.<sup>59</sup> This theory is supported by the appearance of the island of Laṅkā as the symbolic goal of the *yogāvacara* practices, the maternal womb in which the initiate undergoes a symbolic spiritual rebirth:

Pourquoi Laṅkā? La réponse est dans le sens occulte donné à l'île par la tradition:

'Le maître compare la chasse à la forêt profonde appelée l'île précieuse de Laṅkā', c'est-à-dire l'auguste ventre de la reine mère'.

Ici, le ventre de la 'reine mère' (*samtec braḥ janani mātā*), c'est celui de la mère de Gautama. Les maîtres expliquaient qu'il s'agit du centre sacré dans lequel l'initié, à l'instar du Buddha, régresse pour renaître. La référence à Laṅkā ne renvoie donc pas à une place géographique, mais à un lieu mythique.<sup>60</sup>

The first part of the text provides a liturgy in which the practitioner makes offerings to the Buddha and seeks his help in getting rid of his faults and successfully receiving the meditation practices.<sup>61</sup> This liturgy is very similar and undoubtedly related to that found in the *Samatha-vipassanā-bhāvanā-vākkapparaṇa*, a text found in Sri Lankan manuscripts (see below).

The second part is a dialogue between meditation master and disciple which is of great importance for our understanding of the anticipated experience and purpose of *yogāvacara* practices. The meditation master asks the practitioner about his experiences at certain stages of the practice and offers interpretations of them.<sup>62</sup>

The following is a summary of some of the practices, experiences and visions described in the dialogue between meditation master and practitioner:

The practitioner recites the sacred letters *arahaṃ* repeatedly in order to obtain merit.<sup>63</sup> *Arahaṃ*, meaning 'worthy one', is an epithet of the Buddha, but in the

*yogāvacara* tradition also is broken up, each section representing one of a set of three. This recitation continues to be mentioned throughout the practice.

The practitioner experiences positive sensations at the nose, beginning with a white light which is replaced by the syllable *na*. The focus moves to the epiglottis, the light becomes blue. It is replaced by the syllable *mo*. Proceeding down to the base of the throat a yellow colour appears that is replaced by the syllable *bu*. At the sternum a red light is replaced by the syllable *ddhā*. At the navel the light is white and is replaced by the syllable *ya*. The five syllables together make up the sacred formula *na mo bu ddhā ya*. The practitioner sees the five internal points corresponding with these five external points on the body.

Through the *bhāvanā* (mental creation, often translated by Bizot as recitation) of the phrase *ujumkāyam* ('straight body') followed by phrases meaning first positive then negative activity of the body, speech and mind, the practitioner first sees his body, speech and mind as being straight like the path of the Dhamma, then not.

In the centre of his navel the practitioner sees a post the size of a peppercorn. Then five coloured lights of which he selects one. These come from the sacred syllables *arahaṃ*. These are then the 'origin'.

A few stages further on the practitioner sees the 'sphere of the mind' (*tuṇ citta*) at the same post. He sees that the post is in the centre of the navel of the earth and resembles the throne on which the Buddha sat under the Bodhi tree when he attained Enlightenment. Light appears from the Buddha, then a sphere of the four elements, water, etc. Again these are created from the syllables *arahaṃ*. From these the practitioner establishes his *citta* (mind) which then becomes enamoured of the crystal sphere which is the Dhamma.

The practitioner sees the letter *a*. He has to write it for the meditation master who warns him against using it for magical practices against anyone, but to protect it night and day as a divine, liberating panacea. The letters *ra* and *haṃ* are also seen.

Further sights include the beginning of meritorious actions, i.e. the ten moral precepts in the world of people and their culmination in the city of Nibbāna.<sup>64</sup> Similarly the culmination of unmeritorious action is seen in hell. The practitioner sees that hatred (one of the three fires that fuel the round of rebirth) is created by the Dhamma and can be made to disappear by recitation of *arahaṃ*. Creation is also attributed to Dhamma which told the god Brahma to create it.<sup>65</sup> The relationship between Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha are understood as follows: the Buddha is likened to the viceregent, the Dhamma to the king, and the Sangha to the crown prince.<sup>66</sup>

Perhaps the most significant part of the text in terms of the nature of the soteriology underlying the practice, begins with the practitioner's recognition that the 84000 components of the Dhamma are found in the navel.<sup>67</sup> Single-pointedness of mind, *ekaggatācitta*, in exoteric teaching signifies the focus on a single object in meditation. Here it is taught as the recitation of only a single syllable (*a*) rather than several.<sup>68</sup> Practising this recitation rapidly the practitioner

recognises that the Dhamma comes from the Buddha, and, reciprocally the Buddha comes from the Dhamma. The practitioner then continues the repetition of a single syllable so rapidly it prevents his breath from escaping. This causes the breath to descend to the anus and forces out faeces and urine, all during a single breath.

An identification is made between the father as the earth and mother as water.<sup>69</sup> Continuing to practise the repetition, the practitioner sees the Buddha, thumb-sized, in his navel radiating six colours. Within the Buddha is the Dhamma and the sphere of the Sangha. The process of suppressing the breath through rapid repetition is again repeated. The resulting exhaustion and pain are explained by the master to be the 'true suffering'. This is the equivalent of the exoteric 'truth of suffering', i.e. the first of the four noble truths. The exoteric noble truth of suffering teaches the ultimately unsatisfactory nature of all aspects of existence. The moment when there is no more air or breath at the navel is identified by the master as the truth of the origin (of suffering), again an esoteric interpretation of one of the four noble truths.

The master asks why the practitioner is not able to continue practising on a single breath, to which the reply is that physical birth has made him a *puthujjana*, an unenlightened person subject to passions and craving. The Buddha, by contrast, maintained *ekaggatācitta* for seven days and nights. This is a reference to the Buddha remaining in *samādhi* for seven days and nights after his Enlightenment.

A parallel is drawn between the suffering at the absence of breath and the suffering of a mother on giving birth, which sometimes leads to death, but, if giving birth is successful leads to an end of (the) suffering and the experience of happiness.<sup>70</sup>

The five syllables of the phrase *na mo bu ddhā ya* are located at the five centres of focus mentioned above (the nose, epiglottis, etc.) and identified with the five Buddhas, then with the virtues of mother, father, etc. and similar identifications are made using the alphabet. The breath is stated to come from the Dhamma because it descends to the place of the Dhamma at the navel.<sup>71</sup> The body practises the repetition of sacred syllables to make the air rise to nose and mouth. Its passage is straight like a line whereas externally it is straight like a boat. The text then states that this is the end of the path of 'breathing in and out', *ānāpāna*. Again *Le Chemin* offers an alternative interpretation of a teaching common in Buddhism generally, where *ānāpāna* is the meditation of observing the breath in and breath out, but without checking its passage or attempting to alter it in any way.

The text then describes how one must recognise a path going to the gate of the anus from which one must make the sphere of crystal exit by a finger's breadth. Doing this the practitioner observes the form of 'repugnance' (*asubha*, the meditation practice on impurity or vileness of the body). The master causes the practitioner to see inside himself the three characteristics of existence, namely, suffering, impermanence and lack of self. The master teaches the practitioner to

be able to exit the body by a few fingers breadth until he sees a river and its two banks. Then he sees mount Sumeru, the mountain at the centre of the world. He sees the *stūpa* on its summit, also a boat or a bridge. He sees a monk get in the boat and row across to the other side. The monk prostrates himself before the *stūpa*, circumambulates it, then offers candles and incense to it. There are the physical remains (*dhātu*) of the Buddha placed inside the *stūpa*. The fivefold division of the physical body is described in parallel with the fivefold divisions of the body of the Dhamma.

The above material is found in the first seven chapters of *Le Chemin*. The subsequent chapters provide supplementary materials.

In Chapter Eight, Olivier de Bernon discusses the reforms of Cambodian orthography during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In Chapter Nine, Christian Bauer examines an epithet of the Buddha found in *Le Chemin*. The epithet is *braḥ buddha jā amcās*. Bauer argues that it is of Mon origin, but through the medium of Thai.

Chapter Ten offers a literal translation of the first section of *Le Chemin*, translating the combination of the Pali liturgy with its Khmer translation.

Chapter Eleven gives the text and translation of the *yogāvacara* text the *Dhammakāya*, 'body of the Dhamma'. The text is based on three Cambodian manuscripts. The text is traditionally recited at the 'eye-opening' ceremony of Buddha statues. A version of this text was first published with a translation of the first 30 verses by Coedes in 1956. It equates parts of the Buddha's body, i.e. the hair, etc., with components of the Dhamma. For example, the Buddha's head is equated with omniscience, the tongue with the four truths, etc.

Chapter Twelve lists and explains technical terms, both Pali and Khmer, while Chapter Thirteen gives variant Khmer, Pali and Sanskrit terms and their translation according to the *yogāvacara* context.

#### F. Bizot, *Le bouddhisme des Thaïs*, 1993.

Unfortunately, I was unable to regain access to this work in time to include a detailed account of it in this review article. Other than discussing some of the aspects of Southeast Asian Buddhism found in his other works, and theories about its possible origins (Abhayagirivihāra, Mon, etc.), Bizot also gives details of the different forms of monastic dress in Southeast Asia, the *nikāyas* they represent, and the interpretations given to them. Traditional monastic dress is more elaborate than reform monastic dress. The robes of the reform Dhammayutikanikāya revive monastic dress as described in canonical texts. Traditional dress is linked to the embryonic imagery as well as the heart syllable symbolism found in *yogāvacara* texts.

F. Bizot & O. von Hinüber, *La guirlande de Joyaux*, EFEO, Paris 1994a.  
ISSN 1150-2177, ISBN 2-85-539-302-7.

*La guirlande de Joyaux*, "Garland of Gems" contains three texts. The first is the *Ratanamālā*, the 'garland of gems', from which the volume takes its title. The second is the *Namo Buddhāya Siddhaṃ*. The third is an extract from a text previously published by Sarikaput on the use of the substitution between sacred terms, the subject of *La guirlande* as a whole. The book also contains 81 *yantras*, sacred diagrams, with their attendant *mantras*, sacred phrases, taken from observation and various manuscripts. The work mainly focuses on the *Ratanamālā* text and content and the formation of *yantras*.

Bizot first began work on the text of the *Ratanamālā* in 1974, but his work was disrupted by the disappearance of his teacher when the Khmer Rouge captured Phnom Penh in 1975. They had been working on the basis of a copy of the text from the national library of Phnom Penh, and on the notebooks of Grū Suon Chun, an expert in the use of 'Buddha mantra' and 'Veda mantra', who knew the *Ratanamālā* by heart, as is related in the foreword.<sup>72</sup> Grū Suon Chun was himself killed by the Khmer Rouge in 1975. The volume is dedicated to him. A photograph of him forms the frontispiece.

The subject of the *Ratanamālā* is the magical manipulation of the *itipiso* formulae that are widely popular in Buddhism, but especially so in Theravāda. The *itipiso* formulae form a short Pāli text that lists the positive attributes, *guṇa*, of each of the three gems, the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, in turn. The full text and scriptural sources for it are given in Chapter One.

There are a number of witnesses of the text of the *Ratanamālā*: oral, manuscript and printed. In establishing his edition, Bizot used six Khmer manuscripts, all in *mūl* script, a northern Thai manuscript in *yuon* script, and three Thai printed versions in addition to one previously published article. The details of these sources, some with variant titles, are given in Chapter One. The origin of three other Cambodian manuscripts of texts mentioned elsewhere in the volume are given at the end of the bibliography.<sup>73</sup>

The *Ratanamālā* is presented in a combination of two languages, Pali and Khmer. It also exists in Thai. The author of the Khmer text, which is part translation, part exposition of the Pali in prose, is clearly not the same as the author of the Pali text, since he could not always fully understand the latter. The Pali text is in acrostic verse. Von Hinüber, pointing out the lack of any study of the Pali of such texts, provides some indication of the difficulty of the language in Chapter Two. The grammar is sometimes classical, sometimes highly irregular. The metre is not always met. The meaning is not always clear, nor is it clear where the meaning is explicit or hidden. Some features of the language suggest that a Thai origin is possible.

One of the canonical authorities for the use of the *itipiso* formulae as a basis for meditation on the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha is the *Dhajaggasutta*, which

Bizot discusses in Chapter Three. In the *Dhajaggasutta* the *itipiso* formulae are taught as a means of dispelling fear. The number of the syllables of the *itipiso* formulae is regarded as being the auspicious number 108 (56, 38 & 14 respectively, counting only the first part of the Sangha section). In Cambodia it is believed that the recitation or writing of them provides protection. The auspicious syllable count is preserved when the text is transposed into Sanskrit by adapting the text slightly. Bizot interprets this to mean that the syllable count was regarded as an essential aspect of the sacredness of these formulae at least by the date of the *Mahāvvyutpatti*, i.e. by the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>74</sup>

As background to the equation between syllables, *Buddhagūṇa* and other phenomena, Bizot briefly relates a cosmogony found in a Khmer text called *Brah̄ Dhammaviṇṣuṇ* or *Brah̄ Dhammajhān*.<sup>75</sup> The world begins with a personification of the Buddhagūṇa. First, 'Brah̄ Kev Dibbasrot' ('divine ear'), on a diamond throne in the middle of the country of the Rose-apple tree, i.e. the Indian subcontinent. He gives rise to the primordial Dhamma, through concentrating on a series of *mantra*: *na mo bu ddhā ya; ma a u; ku sa lā; a ku sa lā; a ā i ī u ū o e*. 'Buddhagūṇ' uses these to produce the elements, then with some dry substance extracted from the Dhamma, he produces a boy. The boy's shadow becomes a girl. Called Gato and Gatā, they produce offspring. Dibbasrot disappears, but Buddhagūṇ remains to propagate the Buddhist religion and offer the possibility of salvation to the descendants of Gato and Gatā. Bizot relates this myth to the creation of a Buddha by the meditation practitioner in his navel, as described in the *Chemin de Lan̄kā* (1992). There the navel is identified with the centre of the country of the Rose-apple tree using these same mantras. The equivalence between the Buddha virtues and the elements that make up the body of the world is a particularly original feature of S. E. Asian Buddhism, and is alien to the teaching of the Pali canon.<sup>76</sup> These equivalences can be used to replace the impermanent mortal components of a person with the immortal unchanging elements of the Dhamma.<sup>77</sup>

The equivalence of the creation of the Dhamma, of people and of the world is discussed by Bizot.<sup>78</sup> He suggests there is a direct connection between the understanding of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha *gūṇa* with the early Indian Sāṃkhyā analysis of the world as made up of *gūṇa* which form the material world, *prakṛti*. He further points out the similarity between the *yogāvacara* application of sacred language and similar doctrines in brahmanical Hinduism and tantra. He points to the use of linguistic items in correlation with cosmic forces in tantra. In brahmanical Hinduism he points to the belief that sound/word *śabda* and sacred formula, *mantra*, are eternal, *aṅśara*, and that the term *aṅśara*, 'eternal', is in fact also used to mean syllable.

In terminology reminiscent of Hindu tantra, but in fact with different connotations, a distinction is made in Cambodian Buddhism between the right-hand path (*phlūv stām*) and the left-hand path (*phlūv chven*). The reform *nikāya*, the Dhammayutikanikāya<sup>79</sup>, understands the right hand path to be the orthodoxy it promulgates, and the left-hand path to refer to unreformed traditional teaching.

Traditional, i.e. *yogāvacara*, Buddhism itself has a different interpretation, however. In *yogāvacara* Buddhism, i.e. that represented by the practices described in Bizot's works, the right-hand path and the left-hand path refer to the same type of practice, e.g. the use of sacred symbolic language and substitution, but distinguish between practice that is aimed at soteriology (right hand) and that which is aimed at worldly goals (left hand), such as protection, destruction of enemies, etc.<sup>80</sup>

One such protective practice is the creation of a sacred substance from the powder produced from repeatedly writing then erasing sacred syllables on a slate, then mixing it with other substances, such as funerary ashes, etc.<sup>81</sup> The product is used to form Buddha statues or a protective body paint. The master (*grū*) performs this process, which may take several days and nights, while in a meditative trance, in front of a shrine. Bizot notes the similarity between this process and the creation of the first boy, Gato, from a dry substance extracted from the Dhamma by Buddhagūṇ in the creation myth related above. The statuettes exemplify the equivalence between the Buddha and his Dhamma body.<sup>82</sup>

The *grū* applies a method of substitution through *sandhi* as taught in Kaccāyana's grammar to derive the *rūpasiddhi* (translated as 'formes accomplies', 'perfected forms') from the *mūla akkhara* (translated as 'racine des lettres'/'root of the letters').<sup>83</sup> An example explaining the phases involved in deriving the sacred formula *na mo bu ddhā ya* from the phrase of five words *idha cetaso dāḥam gaṇhāhi thāmasā* is presented by Bizot on pp. 44-46. In the second appendix<sup>84</sup> Bizot reproduces and translates the passage of a text describing a similar substitution process from a Thai work by Tep Sarikaput, who collected material concerning this type of practice, but unfortunately did not identify his sources.<sup>85</sup>

Syllable combinations, either the aural or visual characters, derived from the *itipiso* formula are used both as *mantras* and *yantras*, i.e. as aural and visual sacred formulae. The processes of using the syllables of the *itipiso* formula in order (*anulom*), in reverse order (*paṭilom*), then in increasingly complex combinations and reformations to arrive at the resulting *mantras* and *yantras*, are described by Bizot on pp. 46-56. They are handed down orally and are also found in collections in manuscripts. In the manuscripts, however, no explanation of them is offered, other than the offerings to be made before creating and using them. The method of inviting powers such as the ten *pāramī* to enter the practitioner's body while reciting the *mantra* to turn it into a supernatural body, a *kāyasiddhi*, is parallel to the method by which the *yogāvacara* on the right hand path brings into his body the *kammaṭṭhāna*, meditation subjects. The underlying theory of transformation by substitution with equivalents is the same.<sup>86</sup>

Eighty one different *yantras*, or magical geometric designs made from placing the *iti pi so* syllables in elaborate shapes, interconnected or surrounded by single lines, are reproduced on pages 57-84. The relationships between them are explained in the preceding pages. The shapes thus formed include set geometric designs and also the stylised figure of the Buddha seated. The different designs have specific names. The order in which the syllables are used also produces the

attendant mantra. These mantras are given alongside the diagrams reproduced. The source is given in brackets, either a Cambodian manuscript (TK) or a *yantra* (Y).<sup>87</sup>

The stylised pronunciation of the mantras suggests to Bizot a possible Mon source of the practices. This represents one of Bizot's main pieces of evidence pointing to a Burmese origin, or intermediary, of these practices in Cambodia.

The second part of *La guirlande* begins on p.85 with a chapter entitled *Le manuscrit*. A single text is reproduced according to manuscript folios. The first part, the Pali text in verse, is then divided from the second part in Khmer and they are then given again separately as Chapters Five and Six. Given the list of manuscripts apparently used to produce the text it is somewhat surprising that the only variants recorded are some from B, a manuscript singled out as showing the greatest divergence from the others. Slightly confusingly, B is used both to mean a particular manuscript and to stand for Buddhagaṇa, for in the margin alongside the verses the Buddha-, Dhamma- or Sangha-gaṇa of the *itipiso* formula to which the verse corresponds are helpfully indicated. The lack of variants is corrected to some extent by von Hintüber in the Romanised Pali text that accompanies his translation of it in Chapter Seven.

The Pali text consists of verses of praise of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Each verse ends *namāmi'haṇ* "I worship/bow down to". Each line of each verse starts with the syllable of the *itipiso* formula to which it relates. Thus the Buddha quality, *arahaṇ*, gives rise to three verses with the initial words *anassāsakasattānaṇ*, *assāsaṇ*, *anantaḡaṇasaṇpanno*, *antaḡāmi*; *rato*, *rato ramāpeti*, *raṇacāgaṇ* and *haññate*, *haṇsāpeti*, *haṇsamānaṇ*, *hataḡāpaṇ*.<sup>88</sup>

The Khmer text in translation forms Chapter Eight. It part translates and part interprets the Pali verses. At the end it lists the benefits of memorising the text: that those who recite the three *gaṇa*, learn them by heart, are superior to all others because they have attained *appaṇasamādhijhāna*, the highest development of meditative states *jhāna*.

*La guirlande* contains an appendix. This contains a further poem in Pali, very similar in character to the *Ratanamālā*, called *Namo buddhāya siddhaṇ*. It treats the sacred formula *namo buddhāya*, 'homage to the Buddha', in the same way that the *Ratanamālā* treats the *itipiso* formula. In other words, for each syllable of the formula there is a four-line verse, each line of which begins with that syllable. Each verse likewise has the term *namāmi* "I worship/bow to" in the last line. After the syllables of the *namo buddhāya* formula are treated in this way, the letters of the alphabet are each given the same treatment. Sometimes the verses explain the magical usage to which that letter can be put, e.g. "By using AI against the *supaṇṇa*, in using AI as protection against serpents, in using AI Māra is conquered, I worship AI." The verses for the consonants each worship a different Buddha. A translation is provided for most verses. For some the meaning is unclear, or only partially clear.<sup>89</sup>

The Thai text extracted from a publication by Sarikaput is also included in the appendix and translated into French.<sup>90</sup> It explains the progressive elision of one

sacred formula syllable by syllable and its replacement with another, syllable by syllable, the focus being the *itipiso* formula.<sup>91</sup> The whole process begins with the drawing of Mahārāb, a hero from the story of Rāma and Seta (see *Rāmker*, below)<sup>92</sup> and culminates in the drawing of 56 Buddha outlines with each of the 56 *itipiso* syllables superscribed. Bizot summarises the different formulae used in his introduction to this section of the appendix.<sup>93</sup> The powder created by the continuous rubbing out of the sacred syllables in this process of continuous substitution is collected. The text describes a few different uses for it: by consecrating oil for the body with the heart letters (*pu vi ka*) of the nine *guṇas* the body can be made invincible against a range of weapons; using the letters to consecrate ginger or medicinal plants bestows intelligence comparable to that of the Buddha on the person who consumes the product.

The material provided in *La guirlande de Joyaux* adds another level to our understanding of *yogāvacara* practices. Elsewhere, in particular from the text published as *Le Saddavimāla*,<sup>94</sup> it is taught that there is an underlying identity between the syllables of the Pali alphabet and the Dhamma, Dhamma being the constituents both of the universe and of Enlightenment. Knowledge of this identity can be directed towards gaining enlightenment. *La guirlande* demonstrates how the knowledge can also be directed towards worldly ends. It demonstrates the technique by which the substitutions between different sacred syllables are made and the creation of sacred diagrams with the use of those syllables. The use of this knowledge towards power and protection, worldly rather than soteriological ends, constitutes the 'left hand path.'

**Recherches nouvelles sur le Cambodge I. F. Bizot (ed.) EFEO, Paris 1994c.**<sup>95</sup> ISBN 2-85539-600-X.

This volume, conceived to mark the reopening of the École française d'Extrême-Orient in Cambodia, contains 18 articles on Cambodian studies.<sup>96</sup> They are divided into three broad areas: Language and Religious Texts, History, Space and Architecture. The periods tackled range from the prehistoric to the recent modern. A summary of each article is provided at the back of the book.<sup>97</sup> Articles in French are summarised in English, while articles in English are summarised in French. A few of these articles, all found in the section on Language and Religious Texts, are relevant to the *yogāvacara* material: those by Becchetti, Lagirarde, de Bernon and Bizot. The article by M. Ferlus, "Kamratāñ, kamratāñ, kamrateñ, et autres: un cas d'imbrication lexicale entre le khmer et le môn"<sup>98</sup>, supports Bizot's statement in *La guirlande*, regarding the possible Mon origin of the stylised pronunciation of mantras in Cambodian *yogāvacara* tradition.

Catherine Becchetti, "Une ancienne tradition de manuscrits au Cambodge" Bizot 1994c: pp.47-62.

Becchetti's article describes in detail the different types of traditional manuscripts of Cambodia, namely the concertinaed paper manuscripts and the two types of palm leaf manuscripts, the shorter and longer format; what type of text they are used for, the processes involved in making them and the beliefs associated with them.

Becchetti points out factors that have led to the decline of the scribal tradition and the belief systems that produced manuscripts, and the irreplaceable and unquantifiable loss particularly of those texts representing traditional Cambodian Buddhism, rather than reform Buddhism. By the time systematic study of them by EFEO began in the 60s, cheap centrally printed books from Phnom Penh already threatened manuscript production. This meant that fewer new manuscripts were produced leaving unreplaced those manuscripts continually used up through the practice of burning the oldest manuscripts on funeral pyres or installing them in *stūpas*. Furthermore, the type of text reproduced was affected by the increasing domination of the reformed Sangha, i.e. the Dhammayutikanikāya.

Becchetti translates from a passage from the 'Chroniques royales de l'Institut bouddhique' the decision made in 1854 by king Hariraks Rāma of Cambodia to request King Rāma IV of Thailand to establish in Cambodia the *tipiṭaka* (Pali canon) and the Dhammayutikanikāya, "because the doctrine of the Buddha was obscure and vulnerable in Cambodia and because there was neither the *tipiṭaka* nor *sūtras* there to study." Becchetti interprets this statement regarding the availability of texts to mean that the traditional texts of Cambodian Buddhism, such as those studied by Bizot, were available at that time, but were not regarded as having the prestige of the canonical texts newly re-established in Thailand.<sup>99</sup> The emphasis on canonical texts in the Dhammayutikanikāya led to a decline in the reproduction of traditional texts, and in the body of knowledge that had produced and used them. This situation in turn was exacerbated greatly by the programme of cultural destruction and genocide executed by the Khmer Rouge, particularly as the traditional texts themselves were only to be understood through oral tradition and a lineage of teaching passed on through initiation. Unlike the canonical texts explained through a vast body of textual exegesis, consisting of textual commentaries and handbooks, traditional Buddhism was never subject to such a body of written exegesis.

How does this material relating to manuscripts relate to the *yogāvacara* tradition? In addition to pointing out reasons for the loss of this tradition, the attitude to manuscripts itself reflects the system of symbolic interpretation found in the *yogāvacara* tradition. Becchetti relates the belief that 'each syllable is the form of the Buddha' to the cosmogony found in such texts as the *Dhammavīnsuī* in which the syllables of the alphabet create the world and the Buddha.<sup>100</sup> The

texts are therefore treated with the same reverence as a Buddha statue, or Buddha relics. The *yogāvacara* symbolism of numbers and of foetal development is even reflected in the final threading and wrapping of the manuscript, in the number of times the string is wrapped around the boards and leaves, in the identification of the cloth in which the manuscript is wrapped with the embryonic sac, etc.

There is some overlap in content between the material provided in this article and that offered in Bizot's introduction to *Le Figuier*.<sup>101</sup>

**F. Lagirarde, "Textes bouddhiques du pays khmer et du Lanna" un exemple de parenté", Bizot 1994c: 63-77.**

Lagirarde adduces evidence to establish that the *yogāvacara* Buddhism of Cambodia studied by Bizot is, as Bizot himself had already realised, also attested in Thailand, in particular in the northern Thai region of Lanna. This fact may prove crucial in our understanding of traditional Cambodian Buddhism given the devastation wrought by recent history in Cambodia. While this association between Lanna and Cambodian Buddhism is later established by the *Saddavimala* study<sup>102</sup>, Lagirarde focuses on a Lanna parallel to the *mūl braḥ kammaṭṭhān*, published by Bizot from Khmer sources as the *Figuier à cinq branches*.<sup>103</sup> The Lanna version, witnessed by a number of manuscripts, is called the *Pvārabandh*, 'the noble garland' or 'the excellent work'. The earliest dated manuscripts are all 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lagirarde's suggestion that they go back to the period when Thais and Cambodians received their Buddhism from the Mons towards the 13<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> centuries is based on statements by Bizot in his *Pabbajjā*.<sup>104</sup>

The parallels between the Thai yuon and Khmer texts are such that they must derive closely from a common source. However, the divergences, such as the single *Cittakumārī* as the principle of the individual that transmigrates, rather than the pair *Cittakumārī* and *Cittakumārā* found in the Khmer text, as well as the fact that in places they complement one another in elucidating the meaning, demonstrates that neither version results from direct translation of the other.

Lagirarde summarises the main points of agreement and divergence, clarifying the parallels in a comparative table at the end of his article.<sup>105</sup> His study, he points out, is preliminary. More will become clear after examining more versions of the text, a task he has undertaken. Lagirarde also points to the potential benefit of looking for further parallels in the literature of neighbouring regions, i.e. in Lao and Mon literature. Other texts of the tradition mentioned by Lagirarde are the *Abhidhammalā*m, the *Saddāvimalā* (the length of the vowels vary in the manuscripts), now published, and the *Trisam*.

**O. de Bernon, "Le Trai Bhet: une autre version de la légende de Rāma?" Bizot 1994c: 79-95.**

This article gives a summary of the Trai Bhet, which begins with a cosmogony

and develops into a version of the Rāma and Setā story.<sup>106</sup> That this once very popular text developed into the Rāma legend was previously unrecognised. Whether or not the Trai Bhet, the text on which this article focuses, has anything to do with the *yogāvacara* tradition or not is completely unknown. There is no evidence that it does, but de Bernon thinks the apparently un-Buddhist and unsoteriological story may conceal a hidden meaning. His thinking here rests mainly on the fact that the Dhammayutikanikāya advised against the preaching of it to lay people, but he is also naturally influenced by the esoteric interpretation of the Rāma and Setā story as presented by Bizot.<sup>107</sup> The issues raised by de Bernon highlight the difficulties of assessing possibly lost esoteric interpretations of traditional Southeast Asian material.

**F. Bizot, "La consécration des statues et le culte des morts", (1994b) in Bizot 1994c: 101-139.**

While not dealing with the *yogāvacara* tradition, this article gives a detailed overview of a crucial aspect of Cambodian Buddhism: the attitude to the Buddha image. A passage from a manuscript of the *Saddhammasaṅgaha* records the story of how the Buddha image was made with the Buddha's permission on the orders of King Pasenadi of Kosala to comfort him and give him the opportunity to worship the Buddha in the event of the Buddha's absence. When the Buddha arrives in the palace in person, the Buddha statue rises up from the shrine to worship him, but the Buddha commands it to stay in its place, saying "Don't get up from the shrine. The religion of the Buddha must last 5000 years. I entrust it to you. Once the Tathāgata has entered Nibbāna, you will stay to save all beings, in place of the Buddha, for five thousand years."

After translating this story, Bizot relates the various beliefs and practices associated with the Buddha image, thus authorised by the Buddha as his representative and treated by devotees as the living presence of the Buddha. Buddha images are empowered by the presence of *pāramī*, literally the 'perfections' of a Buddha, but here protective powers, which have a life of their own and can possess a medium and be consulted. The Buddha image is empowered by an ordination ceremony (*pabbajjā*) of the new image before an older image. As part of the ceremony the power of the old image is invited to enter the new image without leaving the old. The cremated remains of a deceased hero or holy person being used in the making of an image also imparts power to that image. The beliefs and practices surrounding Buddha images lead Bizot to draw conclusions regarding the origins and development of Cambodian Buddhism.<sup>108</sup>

F. Bizot & F. Lagirarde, *La pureté par les mots*, École française d'Extrême-Orient, Paris, Chiang Mai, 1996. ISSN 1150-2177. ISBN 9 782855 393049.

*La pureté par les mots* (*La pureté*) focuses on the text called the *Saddavimāla*, the 'purity of/by sound.' This is the most important text published so far for our understanding of the philosophy on which the entire *yogāvacara* system is based. This volume also contains the clearest account of the methodology of Bizot's work to date, and makes clear the pains taken in the handling of the relevant materials. I shall therefore give a fairly detailed description of the structure and layers of *La pureté*, as well as the content, in order to convey the complexity of the task involved in presenting these materials.

The *Saddavimāla* contains an explicit statement of the philosophy of language that lies behind the main features of the other texts and practices studied by Bizot. It explicates the hidden meaning behind the Pali language and its grammar. As such it gives a doctrinal foundation for the use of identifications and substitutions between language and both temporal and ultimate reality. As we have seen, such identifications and substitutions are found throughout the *yogāvacara* corpus and practices. They are parallel to similar features found in Hindu *upaniṣads* and in Tantra generally. They are one of the key features of the tradition that have given rise to the term 'tantric Theravāda'.

*La pureté* is the collaborative work of eleven scholars, each contributing to the uncovering of various aspects of the text, the *Saddavimāla*. The scholarship is presented in a number of languages: French, English, Lao and Thai. The text itself is preserved in Lao and Thai yuon (northern Thai). The volume is divided up into four parts, introduction, texts, translation and appendix.

The first chapter provides explanation of the title, discussion of the contents of the *Saddavimāla* and a discussion of the work of Louis Finot who first made the existence of this text, and a little of its content, familiar to the academic community in his "Recherches sur la littérature laotienne", published in 1917. Bizot reproduces Finot's description of the *Saddavimāla*.

The title of the *Saddavimāla* is found in a number of forms in the various regions in which it is popular, with different vowel lengths, but also with a variation between *sadda/ā* and *saddhā*. These variations affect the meaning. The understanding of the authors is that the Pali word in question is *sadda*, i.e. 'sound', 'word' (Skt. *śabda*). This interpretation is confirmed by the content. However, most monks and scholars of Vientiane and neighbouring regions understand the first part of the title to be *saddhā* 'faith', (Skt. *śraddhā*).

The section entitled 'What the *Saddavimāla* does not say' reflects the increasing clarity in the layout of Bizot's works. This section explains that the text assumes a range of information and understanding, represented only by the lists found in the text where no explanation is offered. Bizot concludes his explanation of the knowledge or practice assumed with the following summary of *yogāvacara*

practice:

The *yogāvacara* must:

1. memorise the stages of the embryonic development (with their alphabetic equivalents) which form the stages of his own formation;
2. through these stages build himself another body using the organs and constituents that are the letters, i.e. the portions of the Dhamma;
3. become conscious that this new body which he is going to produce outside of himself, first takes form within him, in his stomach at the level of the navel, taking the form of a Buddha the height of a thumb;
4. pursue and achieve in this life the construction of this immortal vehicle because it leads the person who possesses it to Nibbāna, in that it takes the place of the spent physical form at the moment of death.

Bizot takes most of this information, not given in the *Saddavimāla* itself, from *Le Chemin* (1992).

The *Saddavimāla* uses canonical and commentarial terminology. However, Bizot resists the possibility that the *yogāvacara* system arose out of the orthodox tradition that preserved the canon and commentarial materials. He suggests that the terminology of orthodox texts is being used to rationalise local belief and practice, rather than local practice and belief developing from them.<sup>109</sup> Canonical passages used by the *Visuddhimagga* are also used in the *Saddavimāla*.<sup>110</sup> The inclusion of that work that most represents Theravāda orthodoxy is curious, not to say problematic for Bizot's interpretation. However, because of the corruption of the *Visuddhimagga* passages in the manuscripts, Bizot suggests they are being used out of context and without understanding. He therefore dates the presence of them to *before* the introduction of the Śīṅhalapakkha, the Sri Lankan ordination lineage, to Southeast Asia during the 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries which in turn led to the emergence of centres of study for canonical literature and language. He further suggests that the *Saddavimāla* remained on the fringes of such new centres, again because of the uncorrected corruption of the quotes as they are found in the manuscripts. He also suggests that passages not identified as quotes could be a direct derivation from Mon Buddhism, or even from unidentified Indian sources. We should bear in mind that these suggestions, which could be extremely important for dating and sourcing the practices found in *yogāvacara* texts, are at this stage highly speculative.

The mention in *La Pureté* of 80 groups of worms in the body is related to the *Vimuttimaggā*. In earlier works this taxonomy led Bizot to suggest a connection with the Abhayagirivihāra of Sri Lanka. Here the connection is not repeated, but the possible Indian origins of the *Vimuttimaggā* are emphasised, as is its circulation in 12<sup>th</sup> century Bengal. This shift from the proposed Abhayagirivihāra connection to an emphasis on a possible Indian origin reflects the influence of Pind's suggestion of a Mūlasarvāstivāda origin of a story found in the *Saddavimāla*.<sup>111</sup>

This theory is based on a story found in the text, explained in detail by Ole Pind in Chapter Two (related below in relation to section twelve of the *Saddavimāla*). In Chapter One, Bizot points out the problematic nature of the story of the meditating monk whose use of the phrase 'the herons are eating the fish' in local language is approved of as a correct meditation phrase by the Buddha, yet nevertheless provides the occasion for the Kaccāyana to produce his Pali grammar. The text uses grammar as the basis for an explanation of the relationship between Pali language, grammar and the attainment of Nibbāna. This provides the underlying philosophy of the development of Dhamma from the Pali alphabet and Pali phrases.

As Bizot points out, the story makes better sense in the *Kaccāyananiddesa*, a commentary on Kaccāyana's grammar attributed to the 12<sup>th</sup> century Burmese monk Chaṭaṭa. There the monk is distracted from repeating the phrase *udayabbaya* 'arising and decay', a suitable tool to aid the monk in focusing on the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness. Instead he repeats the phrase *udakabaka* 'water heron'. The same pun in a section of the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya* suggests a possible Mūlasarvāstivāda origin.<sup>112</sup> The passage there in turn appears to be based on the Gāndhārī version of the Dhammapada, where the Prākṛit for *udaya-vyayam* is *udakabakam*.<sup>113</sup> In other words, the pun makes better sense in a context where a Prākṛit language that merges the relevant phonemes is prevalent. Bizot then suggests that one has to see this as the influence of the Mūlasarvāstivādin school of Indian Buddhism in Burma, because no other trace of this story in Pali grammatical literature is known. He<sup>th</sup> further suggests that the influence must have been before the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century because of the beginnings of the influence of Sri Lankan Buddhism at the time.

The presentation of Kaccāyana as a contemporary of the Buddha in the *Saddavimāla* reflects an identification<sup>th</sup> by the Theravāda tradition of the Pali grammarian (otherwise dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> centuries) with Mahākaccāyana, one of the disciples of the historical Buddha.<sup>114</sup> Thus authorised by the Buddha, the grammar of Kaccāyana with the esoteric meanings of the alphabet and grammatical operations provides a path to liberation through grammar. In addition to providing the underlying philosophy of many of the *yogāvācāra* practices, this text bestows on those practices the authority of the Buddha.

The short Chapter Two by Ole Pind gives the full details of the story that leads Kaccāyana to preach his grammar, with its esoteric explanations, and discusses other versions of the story. In addition to concluding the Indian Mūlasarvāstivāda influence on the text, Pind adduces evidence to demonstrate that the text is based on a Burmese recension rather than the Sri Lankan recension of Mahākaccāyana's grammar.

Chapter Three on the manuscript sources demonstrates the widespread popularity of the *Saddavimāla* in mainland Southeast Asia, particularly in Laos and northern Thailand. Manuscript copies of it are recorded in large numbers in existing catalogues/surveys of temple library holdings. Its ongoing popularity is demonstrated by the current continued copying and preaching of the text.

Significantly, the evidence of some extant catalogues is clearly questionable. The catalogue of palm leaf manuscripts begun in 1978 at the Social Research Institute of the University of Chiang Mai had not recorded a single copy of the *Saddavimala* in the three years following the inception of the project. Noticing this silence regarding the text even in the catalogues of libraries where he had himself already found copies, Bizot questioned the director of the institute. It turns out that the text had not been included because, like other local texts, it was not considered a proper Buddhist text, but regarded as the product of uneducated peasants. In response to Bizot, the director changed the institute policy. This anecdote nevertheless indicates that the kind of self-censorship regarding what is and is not true (orthodox) religion is present in Thailand, just as Bizot had already observed in Cambodia.<sup>115</sup> This self-censorship is a major factor in the loss and marginalisation of what seem to have been mainstream Southeast Asian traditions.

There are known to be over two hundred extant manuscripts of the *Saddavimala*.<sup>116</sup> Twenty-two manuscripts were selected for consultation in the production of the text as given in *La pureté*. Eleven of these manuscripts are in Lao while the other eleven are in Thai. The Laotian language manuscripts are in Tham script, and mostly from temple libraries in Vientiane, with one Lao version from north-east Thailand. The Thai language manuscripts are mainly from the Lanna region of northern Thailand and are mainly in yuon script, while one from the Shan states of Burma is in Khün script and one from Laos is in Lü script.

The manuscript selected as the main text of the Lao recension is that from the Palais Royal de Luang Prabang dated 1841. It was selected on the basis of its age, being the oldest in Tham script, its legibility and the relatively low number of lacunae. Difficulties in the text have been tackled with close reference to the manuscript from the Siam Society in Bangkok, with consultation of other manuscripts when readings are unclear, elliptical or corrupt.

The principle text in Thai yuon and in yuon script is a manuscript dated 1869 from Kuang Sing temple, selected because of the lack of lacunae and the care with which it was established. The Tai Lü manuscript was particularly useful in elucidating difficult points because it diverged the most from the other copies of the text.

The authors have not produced a critical edition. A critical edition establishes a single, hypothetical original or 'correct' text on the basis of all available readings, and provides all variants in *apparati* to the main text. Nor is the edition diplomatic. A diplomatic edition records one manuscript version in exact transcription, thus recording a historical reality. The edition is, however, closer to the latter, i.e. it is a diplograph but includes emendations on the basis of the consultation of other mss. Nevertheless, the discussion of each group of manuscripts provides an overview of the manuscript families and subgroups, as well as suggested contamination.<sup>117</sup> This provides some of the information expected from a critical edition.

In establishing the two editions based on the Lao and Thai versions respectively, great care has been taken to preserve the integrity of the main

manuscript used for each. The following details reflect this meticulous attention to detail: The end of each line of the manuscript is marked with a single vertical line. Each side of the manuscript is marked with Arabic numerals, while the traditional alphabet numeration (i.e. k, kh etc.) found on each verso of the manuscript is also reproduced in Tham script. Hence in the left-hand margin of the text there are two Arabic numerals to every Tham letter-numeral. In the second edition, i.e. the Thai version in yuon script, a bold vertical line marks a break in pagination at the corresponding point of the first edition, i.e. of the Lao version in Tham script. At these points, the corresponding pagination is printed in feint in the margin. Details of the appearance of a manuscript such as gaps in a line occasioned by the string hole, punctuation marks, missed characters, diplographs, and interlinear notes are all faithfully reproduced. At the end of each page, counted in Arabic numerals, the variants for that section of text are given, identified by the number of the line of the manuscript (up to 5) to which they represent a variant. A helpful example of the system of marks used to explain the relationship between the main text and variant is provided on page 86. The apparatus is positive, i.e. it gives the reading from the main text first, then the sign ], followed by all the variants thought worthy of inclusion.

The historical reality of the *Saddavimāla* is represented by each of the two almost diplomatic editions. The living reality is represented by the modern versions created on the basis of each of these. This results in four representations of the text in chapter five. A modern Lao version corresponds to the first of the diplomatic editions; the modern Thai version corresponds to the second of the diplomatic editions. By 'living' reality I refer to the painstaking process undertaken by the team of putting aside the more philological considerations of the exact representation of the text and variant readings in favour of a coherent whole where the meaning and application of the text has been sought from senior monks experienced in the application of the practices, while Bizot's experience with Cambodian texts elucidates the religious symbolism to which the *Saddavimāla* refers. It is a worthy feat to have represented the text both as a concrete historical form, in other words looks to the *byañjanakkhara*, the letters of the text, and to have also represented the text sensitively as an expression of Buddhist spirituality, in other words looks to the *attha*, the meaning of the text. The value of this far outweighs any initial dismay the reader experiences on confronting the four separate versions of the text in four separate scripts.

The modern texts are divided up into chapters and paragraphs, which are given the same numeration in both the Lao and the Thai version. In brackets, in bold, is the Arabic numeration representing each side of the manuscript in the diplomatic editions of the Laotian and Lanna manuscripts respectively. Bizot quite reasonably expresses concern regarding the imposition on the text of this artificial structure and punctuation, because such divisions also impose units of meaning.

Putting the Lao text into Lao script (rather than Tham) proved problematic because the modern oversimplified version of the script contains insufficient characters to represent Pali.<sup>118</sup> A compromise was reached in part through the

Lao authorities renege on some of the decisions of the script reform and in part by developing some new characters. The Pali grammar in Lao language of Mahā Silā Viravongs<sup>119</sup> informed the development of new characters, because it lists the additions necessary to complete the Lao alphabet for the writing of Pali.

In a volume of near three hundred pages on the *Saddavimāla*, it comes as something of a surprise that the French translation of the entire text, which forms Chapter Nine, takes up only twenty-five pages. The work has been divided into 17 sections.

The first section, after the traditional homage to the three jewels, and to their 108 virtues (*guṇa*), teaches that any *yogāvācāra*, i.e. monk or lay person, seeking Nibbāna must ask for instruction in the forty *samathakammaṭṭhāna* and *vipassanākammaṭṭhāna* (the 'meditation exercises on tranquillity and insight) then practice *bhāvanā* (mental creation, often translated as 'meditation', but by Bizot more usually as 'repetition'). Note that the *yogāvācāra* path is open to all, regardless of whether or not they are members of the monastic Sangha.

The text relates that on death one is reborn into the mother's womb where one should take into one's body from the flowers of the fig tree the jewels that are the moral precepts, the *sīla*. These empower the *yogāvācāra* to reach the city of Nibbāna. This city is encircled by seven walls. The way to it is beset by dangers, such as bandits and wild animals, as well as a thorny impassable forest. Holding firmly to the crystal gems the *yogāvācāra* reaches the wall of crystal that shatters, leaving a closed door. The *yogāvācāra* then uses a set of eight keys that open the gate of the crystal wall of Nibbāna.<sup>120</sup>

Section two of the *Saddavimāla* lists the benefits that result from the offerings made by people in *saṃsāra*. These include, for example, rebirth in a good family. The text asserts that one can only be reborn as a man or a deity, if one makes offerings. It also emphasises, however, that acts of generosity nevertheless do not remove faults. It is only the *samatha* and *vipassanākammaṭṭhāna* that rid the *yogāvācāra* of fault through the series of 'purities' that culminate in the attainment of arhatship. Only then can he/she open the door of the crystal wall with the crystal key and enter Nibbāna. The principle that self-transformation through *bhāvanā*, rather than meritorious actions, is essential to gain Enlightenment is entirely orthodox.

Section three describes the continuous rebirth into hell suffered by all living beings before the appearance of the five masters, *ācārya*, in the propitious age (*bhaddakappa*). These masters together form the five syllables *na mo bu ddhā ya* ("Homage to the Buddha"). These five letters are equated with each of the five Buddhas, Kakusandha, Konāgamana, Kassapa, Gautama and Metteyya respectively. These reside in the right eye, left eye, the ears, the navel and the forehead of living beings respectively, while the Dhamma resides in the crown of the head and the Sangha in the back.<sup>121</sup> The next five ages (*k ta, tretā, dvāpāra, kāli* and *kośa*) each represent the ages of these five Buddhas. The percentage of people who are reborn in hell, paradise or achieve Nibbāna in all these ages is given. The age of the future Buddha Metteyya being the most auspicious, since

people are only reborn in heaven or attain Nibbāna.

Section four gives the sacred syllables of the three divisions of the canon, i.e. SU(tta Piṭaka), VI(naya Piṭaka) and A(bhidhamma Piṭaka). The sacred syllables representing the individual sections of each of those three divisions are also given. Focusing on the books of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, each is attributed with offering a particular benefit, e.g. the *Dhātukathā* bestows the benefit of smelling pleasant scents.

Following this, rebirth in the mother's womb is described as an initial consciousness the size of a tiny drop of oil, which develops through a clot of blood into a form with five branches: a head, two arms, two knees. This is the fig tree of five branches described in *Le Figuier* (1976).

The fifth section identifies the 33 letters of the Pali alphabet with the individual 'impure' constituents of the body into which the foetus next develops. Eighty groups of parasites are said to be born in the different parts of the body.

Section six equates each of the five groups of consonants of the same place of articulation to each of the five *khandha*, or 'aggregates', into which the individual person is traditionally analysed in Buddhism. For example, the five guttural consonants of the Pali alphabet *ka, kha, ga, gha, na* are equated with the *rūpakkhanda*.

Section seven states that at the age of 12 one must take ordination in order to ensure salvation for one's mother. If one does not do this and the moral and meditation practices that attend it, which are listed, rebirth in hell is inescapable. The same is said of higher ordination at the age of 21 for the benefit of both father and mother. The age at which the ordination should take place is linked to the number of qualities of the mother and father respectively. Ordination offers salvation for one's parents and family.

Section eight offers a metaphor for *akusaladhamma* (bad things, primarily mental states). They are a wild black elephant that will lead one to ruin. Positive mental states, *kusaladhamma*, are a white elephant that leads one to heaven or Nibbāna.

Section nine reveals that it is the seven books of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* that produce the body and mind of all creatures in the world. Each of the seven books is identified with a day of the week and a part of the body. Each is recommended for recitation at the funeral of someone who died on that particular day in order to erase sins committed by the relevant part of the body as well as to provide merit for that person. As always in the treatment of the *Abhidhamma* books, it is the seventh, the *Mahāpaṭṭhāna*, that provides the most merit. Towards the end of the section, this interesting conclusion is given:

At death, people must have the Kusalābhidhamma recited in order to totally wash away their sins. Because it is in the nature of the *Abhidhamma* books to produce the physical form and the spirit together.<sup>122</sup>

This suggests that the attribution of the generative process to the *Abhidhamma*

books in turn allows them to be used at death to regenerate the perfect (i.e. pure from sin) psychosomatic individual.

Section ten names YA as the syllable that allows individuals to leave the mother's womb. It allows the individual to breathe. It is the syllable of the gate on the forehead that leads to the city of Nibbāna, in contrast to the eight other gates or ritual boundaries<sup>123</sup> of the body, i.e. the eyes, ear, etc. down to the urethra.

Section eleven states that learned people can only attain a good rebirth (*sugati*) if they know the various divisions of the elements fire, wind, water and earth. Otherwise they will be reborn in hell. The different elements are given in terms of their role in the body, i.e. the earth elements are divided according to nails, etc., water into bile, etc., fire into physical functions in the body; while wind corresponds with breathing and movements of and in the body. This association of the elements with the constituents of the body is quite orthodox.

Section twelve offers the story that led Pind to suggest links with the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*. An elderly man takes up meditation after his ordination as a monk. Seated on the shore of a lake he becomes distracted from his meditation by the sight of a flock of herons. The realisation that the fish in the lake live always in fear of death from these herons awakens in him an understanding of the constant threat of birth, old age, sickness, death, destruction and danger overshadowing all humans. In other words, he realises the noble truth of suffering. He then meditates on this subject while repeating the phrase, "the herons eat the fish, the herons eat the fish". A group of monks come across the elderly monk at his meditation. They are outraged, presumably by his use of an assistant phrase for meditation that is not taught in relation to meditation by the Buddha. They report his behaviour to the Buddha who reassures them that the monk's performance was correct. The monk did not know the prescribed syllables for meditation, but practised using the meaning and sound of ordinary language. The Buddha states, "The meaning is expressed by means of the syllables. The meaning of all words is expressed only through syllables. Therefore, if the syllables are not correct, the meaning is wrong. Mastery of syllables is therefore of great assistance in (understanding) the *suttas*". This last statement is also the opening phrase of Kaccāyana's grammar. While the Buddha's statement does not match the introductory story, it allows for the introduction of the need for a grammar of Pali. For, the text states, it will be difficult to understand [the Buddha's teaching] in the final period of decline in the religion when there are corruptions and gaps in the syllables of the sacred texts.<sup>124</sup>

This story introduces the theme of section thirteen: the most important contribution made by the *Saddavimāla* to our understanding of the *yogāvacara* tradition. The monk Mahākaccāyana asks leave of the Buddha to compose a book on words (*sadda*) in order to preserve the Pali canon of scriptures and enable people to refer to all the Dhamma, such as *rūpadhamma* (form) etc., i.e. the *abhidhamma* categories, in conformity with the words of the texts. The Buddha approves the enterprise and (Mahā)Kaccāyana begins his grammar (section

fourteen).<sup>125</sup> It opens with the number of letters, vowels and consonants in the Pali alphabet. As the grammar proceeds, the identifications given in previous sections, e.g. of letters with different parts of the body, or other *abhidhamma* categories are also incorporated. The grammatical explanation of suffixes and verbs is related to understanding the action, agent, object and state, terms that have both a grammatical meaning and a meaning in terms of moral agency. We have then in part a grammar and in part an explanation of how the Pali language, its alphabet and grammar relate to the categories of the universe and the path to enlightenment. These equations underlie the practices of the *yogāvacara* tradition. The section concludes that it is since Kaccāyana composed his grammar that beings have been able to attain the four supramundane states from stream entry through arhatship to Nibbāna. In other words, enlightenment depends on grammar.

Section fifteen explains that in the initial aeon living beings did not like each other and quarrelled and that from their mouths came just the three syllables A I U. This is why Kaccāyana composed his grammar taking these three short vowels as the basis. Once living beings during the initial aeon learned speech they were happy and ceased to quarrel, having the full range of vowels. Kaccāyana wrote his grammar that captures the language of people at the first origins (*paṭhamamūlamūli*). Here grammar is portrayed as the basis of a harmonious society and linked with the beginning of speech itself.

Section sixteen discusses the cycle of twelve animal years that form the basis of the Chinese and Southeast Asian calendar. The text describes the practice of a sick person releasing the animal of his or her birth year to ensure his or her recovery. The origin of the twelve year cycle is attributed to 'grandfather Ithaṃgeyyasaṅgasī' and 'grandmother Saṅgasī' who had no toys to give to their son and daughter to play with, so fashioned a different animal in turn from the earth, each of which possessed *sati*, mindfulness, and *viññāṇa*, consciousness.

The colophon relates that the text was preached by the Buddha at the 'moment of the first origins' *Kalāpapaṭhamamūlamūli*, and that the epithet *lokavidū* 'knower of the world' for the Buddha refers to his knowledge of the past, future and present. The length of the text (one bundle) then the usual date, name of sponsor and result of merit from writing are given.

The appendix contains glossaries, bibliographies, a list of the Thai yuon words found in the Lanna text, alongside their Thai equivalent and a French translation, index of Pali words and phrases found in the texts, a general index and a table of the different scripts.

### **Observations on theories regarding the origins of the *yogāvacara* tradition.**

The Pali canon, commentaries, subcommentaries and handbooks handed down through the 12<sup>th</sup> century Mahāvihāra tradition of Sri Lanka and beyond, present themselves as a more or less coherent whole with a unitary transmission from a

single point, the key links in the chain being the Buddha, the councils, Mahinda, Buddhaghosa, the 12<sup>th</sup> century Sāriputta and his pupils. Regardless of the historical reality and diversities underlying this apparent unity, it nevertheless means that those beliefs and practices found in Theravāda Buddhism that can be related to the content of those texts have an impeccable pedigree. Those practices not authorised in such literature are suspect in purity and history. As such, when it comes to examining non-authorised (one could say, unorthodox) Theravāda literature and practices, certain questions recur: Is the practice in question truly Buddhist? What are its origins? Is it an influence from Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna, Hinduism, or spirit cults? Or is it, as has also been suggested, an immediate fabrication without any organic development, made up on the basis of an ill-informed reading of orthodox texts? An ongoing theme in the works of Bizot et al. is the search for origins and influences on the *yogāvacara* tradition. Below are some of the sources proposed and the evidence adduced for those propositions.

### Mon

In all Bizot's works there is some suggestion of a Mon (Southern Burmese) influence on or origin for the *yogāvacara* practices. Evidence adduced in support of this theory includes the phrase *okāsa* 'permission' that recurs throughout the *yogāvacara* texts as a way of addressing a senior monk in non-reformed ordination rituals and in the rituals based on the *pabbajjā* for initiation into meditation practices. The term is not found in the Pali canon, commentaries or subcommentaries, and as such might be regarded as 'unorthodox' or at least non-Mahāvihāra (even though the current Mahāvihāra *pabbajjā* uses the term). The introduction of the term into Burmese Buddhism has been attributed to Shin Arahān, also attributed with the conversion of the king of Burma to Theravāda Buddhism in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. A further piece of evidence supporting this theory is that the pronunciation of the *mantras* drawn from the *itipiso* formulae is prescribed in a manner that reflects Mon pronunciation, specifically the glottal stop.<sup>126</sup>

### Sri Lankan Abhayagirivihāra

The suggestion of a link with the Abhayagirivihāra of Sri Lanka is made in the *Chemin de Lankā* (1992), the *Pabbajjā* (1988) and the *Bouddhisme des Thaïs* (1993). It is based on comments by Bureau on the nature of the Abhayagirivihāra, the general reputation of the Abhayagirivihāra as unorthodox/influenced by Mahāyāna, Skilling's attribution of the *Vimuttimaggā* to the Abhayagirivihāra and the present of a list of worms in the *Vimuttimaggā*. I have devoted time elsewhere to examining each of the proposed connections in detail.<sup>127</sup> My conclusion there was that, interesting as the material and explorations thrown up by this suggestion are, the association can not be made on the basis of current evidence. A further piece of evidence adduced by Bizot in favour of a connection is the emphasis on

the *paṇṣukūl* practices described in *Le donne de Soi-Même* and the association of the Abhayagirivihāra with *paṇṣukūl* monks. A difficulty pointed out by Bizot himself is that it is not clear that the reference is to the same practices. The funerary rites described by Bizot are a development some way beyond the understanding of *paṇṣukūl* ('wearing only 'rag-robles') as an acceptable ascetic practice described in canonical literature.

### **Mūlasarvāstivāda**

Looking to the Mūlasarvāstivāda school of north India is a recent suggestion, first made in *Le pureté par les mots* by Ole Pind on the basis of a reference in the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* to a story also mentioned in the *Saddavimāla*. The difficulty with this is that the stories are not identical, although clearly related, and that, as ever with post canonical literature (i.e. the Southeast Asian literature in which it is found), it is difficult to assess the spread or singularity of the story on the basis of current familiarity with medieval works. This suggestion remains an interesting avenue for further exploration. Pind further suggests this influence arose from the emigration to mainland Southeast Asia of Buddhists fleeing the Muslim conquest of north India in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Hindu influence**

Various hints at an ongoing early Hindu view of the world progressing into the Theravāda of Southeast Asia are mentioned. Examples include the shared belief in the efficacy of the ritual use of sacred language and the speculated connection of the *guṇa* of the Buddha with the *guṇa* of Sāṃkhya.<sup>128</sup>

### **Mahāyāna-Theravāda syncretism**

The suggestion that the *yogāvacara* tradition and other aspects of traditional Southeast Asian Buddhism derive from a synthesis of Mahāyāna and Theravāda Buddhism is similar to the suggestion of Hindu influence. It is based on the known existence of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the Southeast Asian peninsular before the rise to dominance of Theravāda, as well as similarities between, for example, the Mahāyāna use of heart syllables and *dhāraṇī* and the *yogāvacara* use of heart syllables.

### **Theravāda that is exclusively un-Sri Lankan**

Repeatedly Bizot uses the phrase non-Mahāvihārin to refer to the practices described. The reason for this has already been explained, but I wish to clarify further some difficulties with the impression this gives of Mahāvihāra Buddhism. The *yogāvacara* tradition was introduced into Sri Lanka in the 18<sup>th</sup> century under the auspices of the Mahāvihāra. At that time then, it was incorrect to call the

tradition non-Mahāvihārin. To what extent the tradition was understood and spread after this period remains unknown. However, what concerns me most about the repeated adjective 'non-Mahāvihārin' is not the evidence to the contrary at this relatively late phase, but the difficulty of defining what counted as Mahāvihārin in earlier periods. The Dhammayutikanikāya is not Mahāvihārin. Its founder had been trained in the traditions described as 'traditional Southeast Asian Theravāda', i.e. *yogāvacara*. His rejection of them, and emphasis on canonical learning and Buddhaghosa, does not necessarily reflect Sri Lankan preferences other than a reliance on the body of canonical and supporting literature as established in the 12<sup>th</sup> century reform that took place in Sri Lanka. If, in the drive for reform, one rejects the authority of the Sangha, the other authority available, other than personal experience, is the canon of authoritative texts. Those texts recognised as the word of the Buddha himself and those of the great exegete Buddhaghosa are the obvious resort for a would-be reformer. If study and comparison of these suggested that the traditional *yogāvacara* texts were the word of the Buddha, nor authorised by him, this is reason enough to have rejected them.<sup>129</sup>

One piece of evidence in particular causes me to doubt the assumption that the prestige of the Mahāvihāra in 13-16<sup>th</sup> century Southeast Asia adversely affected traditional Buddhism as represented by the *yogāvacara* tradition. That evidence is the inscriptions employing heart syllables found in S. E. Asia. Heart syllables, i.e. the representation of some greater spiritual potential by a syllable, such as the initial syllable of the names of the books of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, is a key aspect of *yogāvacara* belief and practice. Some inscriptions from 15<sup>th</sup> century Thailand that employ heart syllables have recently been described by Pentz.<sup>130</sup> One of the interesting features of these inscriptions is that they are in two scripts, one of which is Sinhalese. This suggests that for those either from Sri Lanka at that period, or influenced by imports from Sri Lanka, the use of heart syllables was regarded as viable and acceptable. Nevertheless, the current evidence of the *yogāvacara* tradition in Sri Lanka is minimal, as I shall discuss below, and it is the greater familiarity with the Theravāda of Sri Lanka that has led scholars into rejecting the *yogāvacara* material as un-Buddhist.

### **Pre-Buddhist practices re-emerging through Buddhism.**

Occasionally it is suggested that the practices encountered are pre-Buddhist practices adopted or re-emerging through Buddhism. For example, the location of the Dhamma on the forehead of a person (and the gate at the forehead through which one travels to the city of Nibbāna) reminds Bizot of the position of the 'maître de naissance' (khmer *grū koṃṇōt*, Lao *cām khv\_n*) in animist beliefs.<sup>131</sup>

### **Bizot's work as a Memorial to the Cambodia lost in the 1970s.**

Reading Bizot's account of how he came to be involved in work on traditional

Southeast Asian Buddhism, one is overwhelmed by the sense of shock and grief at how much has been lost and the manner of its loss. So often he gained access to works and teachings only months before those who understood them died in the north-Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia or under the Khmer Rouge.

Worth mentioning in this context is the brief report by Olivier de Bernon on the work of the Fonds pour l'Édition des Manuscrits du Cambodge (FEMC). De Bernon gives some indication of the state of the literary and manuscript tradition after the end of the civil war. He writes, "The literary heritage, conserved for centuries on palm leaf manuscripts in monasteries and village, has been more than 95% destroyed in Cambodia by the war, then under the regime of the Khmer Rouge (more than 83% of the monasteries visited [by FEMC] no longer possessed a single manuscript; only 30% of the manuscripts found are complete)."<sup>132</sup>

Bizot tapped into a level of traditional Cambodian Buddhism almost entirely unnoticed by scholars till then, even by scholars who had dedicated their lives to the study of the subject. This esoteric dimension of Buddhism went unnoticed because researchers had depended on, for example, university scholars, rather than traditional teachers, the *grū* and *ācāry* at the village level.<sup>133</sup> But Bizot tapped into this unnoticed level of traditional Buddhism only shortly before it was almost completely devastated. He is thus in the position of trying to recapture, two or more decades on, a system of Buddhism to which he had only just been introduced, on the basis of those documents that remain, without the assistance of the *grū* and *ācāry* so essential to a thorough understanding of the system. Bizot repeatedly points out the difficulties of the task before him, and these difficulties should be borne in mind when the state of the evidence or hesitant interpretation seems frustrating to those of us who would like the material to be neatly packaged with all evidence and answers systematically arrayed for our edification and entertainment.

## Accessibility

The motive behind much of the work of Bizot and others in the field is clearly to make accessible what is of significance within the Southeast Asian Buddhist tradition, particularly that which flies in the face of preconceived notions of Theravāda orthodoxy and that which risks extinction through the marginalisation that exacerbates the misfortunes of the region over the past few hundred years. This motive is, quite properly, primarily aimed at preserving the tradition for itself, hence the great attention given to preserving texts in the appropriate scripts, for example, and the urgent tone of the introductions. Given this purpose of accessibility, and my own wants as an outsider interested in the tradition but finding material on, for example, Sri Lankan orthodoxy much more accessible, I should like to suggest a few matters of structure that might increase the accessibility of the works reviewed for a broader audience.

1. A brief summary at the beginning or end which states the name and language(s) in which the text that forms the focus of the volume is written. The

information on the language of the text is often buried and takes some finding.

2. In the introductions, it is sometimes difficult to ascertain what is conjecture and what is established, and then again what is drawn from external evidence and what is drawn from the current object of study. The desirability for clarification on this matter pertains particularly in discussion of origins and influences, which sometimes feel nebulous, and are stated more certainly out of context than they are in the volume where these theories are actually established. *La pureté* moves toward greater clarity in this regard.

3. A little biographical information about the contributors to a volume would be welcome, even if this is minimal. This anonymity shows admirable humility regarding the status of the author in relation to the material, but the material itself whets the curiosity regarding the messengers. It might also be of assistance in furthering academic contact.

4. For the benefit of those working outside EFEO, a clear statement in each volume about the location of the sources used could prove helpful: are the copies registered in the 1970s in Cambodia now in Paris, Phnom Penh or both? Similarly desirable is the referencing of projects, e.g. the German-Laotian manuscript project mentioned but unreferenced in *La pureté*.

5. The nature of the edition is becoming increasingly sophisticated, the *Saddavimāla* being the most well thought through to date. Editions tend, however, to fall between the status of a diplomatic and a critical edition. Even if this pattern is pursued, it should be possible to indicate where the reading of the main text is not a diplograph of the main manuscript, the source of the reading or that it is purely an emendation.

6. Indications in brackets of the modern country in which a site mentioned is found. Sometimes references to 'the centre', 'south' and 'north' are unclear, whether a specific country, e.g. Laos, is intended, or more generally the entire Southeast Asian peninsular. This difficulty arises because of the trans-national nature of the material studied. Such statements are perhaps clear to those more familiar with the different regions and countries of Southeast Asia, but a closer indication would improve accessibility a broader readership.

7. The language names, region names and script names sometimes overlap and sometimes duplicate one another. Perhaps a standardised glossary for the terms used by the teams would be helpful.

8. Translation or indication of the meaning of the various titles in Khmer and Thai, particularly the honorifics given to people would be of help to those less familiar with the languages and Buddhism of Southeast Asia.

9. Abbreviations are often unexplained in the volume in which they appear. Given that there is a potential Buddhist Studies audience for this material that is far broader than that of Pali and Southeast Asian philology, it might be helpful if the abbreviations used, which are not numerous but are crucial, could be given in each volume. Readers in works from 1988 onward are referred to the *Critical Pali Dictionary* and Bechert's *Abkürzungsverzeichnis zur buddhistischen Literatur in Indien und Südostasien*. These two works are relatively obscure, making the

reader dependent on volumes generally only to be found in very specialist linguistic libraries.

On a different level from the previous suggestions are the following two wishes.

10. Now that a sizeable amount of primary material has been brought into the public arena by Bizot, it would be interesting to see articles in which the suggested origins, such as the Mon versus the Mahāvihāra distinction, are themselves the focus of a study, rather than included as incidentals. This would allow the evidence to be adduced in a single place and scrutinised for validity. This would in turn highlight the avenues of further research to be pursued to either establish or disprove such suggestions.

11. There are clearly a number of Thai publications relating to the practices and texts of the *yogāvacara* tradition. The interesting nature of these texts revealed by translations of short extracts published so far suggests that the translation of these texts themselves in their entirety as freestanding works is highly desirable.<sup>134</sup>

I should emphasise that the suggestions I have made here are in no way criticisms. They form a wish list. They are clearly secondary to the main and overwhelmingly important goal of Bizot's work: to preserve and explicate the remnants of traditional Southeast Asian Buddhism for posterity.

### Works not consulted.

Unfortunately I was unable to access the following two publications by Bizot relevant to the *yogāvacara* tradition in preparing this overview. They have been taken into consideration only briefly on the basis of memory or on the basis of statements by Bizot elsewhere:<sup>135</sup>

*Histoire du Reamker. Riön rāmakerti nai tā cak', Récit recueilli et présenté par F. Bizot, Phonm Penh 1973, reprint Bangkok 1980.* This edition of the Khmer text was recorded from Mi Chak's narrative and forms the basis of the translation in Bizot 1989.

F. Bizot, *Le Bouddhisme des Thaïs* 1993. I have discussed this text only superficially on the basis of notes taken several years ago.

### Yogāvacara Texts from Sri Lanka.

Bizot recognised early on that his material is related to the Sinhalese language meditation manual published by T.W. Rhys Davids. This manual is thought to derive from the introduction of *yogāvacara* meditation into Sri Lanka from Siam as part of the 'revival' and reorganisation of the Sri Lankan Sangha in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century by the Sangharāja Saraṇṅkara under the patronage of King Kīrti rī Rājasinha. Two further texts from Sri Lanka pertaining to the *yogāvacara* tradition are also thought to derive from the same source.

Rhys Davids, T.W. (1896), *The Yogāvacara's Manual*, Pali Text Society, London, reprint 1981, ISBN 0-86013-196-3.

This was the first *yogāvacara* text to be edited and published, but understanding of it was limited and in isolation this pioneering forage into the *yogāvacara* tradition proved something of a *cul-de-sac*, except for the English translation published two decades later. In fact, the work has been dismissed as a fabrication. The Sinhalese monk Mātara Ñāṇārāma (b.1901), who revived meditation in Sri Lanka from textual sources and co-founded a forest hermitage with Jinavaṃsa in the 1950's, wrote a history of meditation in Sinhala called *Vipassanā Parapura*, "The Tradition of Insight Meditation". There he states that there were two types of meditation text in Sri Lanka originating from the second Siamese mission in the 1750s. One is the *Yogāvachara-saṅgaha*, which he identifies as that contained in the text published by Rhys Davids as *The Yogāvacara's Manual*. In Ñāṇārāma's opinion this "is not a method of meditation". Carrithers concurs, "I suspect that here we have an example of an imaginative but not very insightful attempt to revive meditation from the text, for the texts seem to have been treated as repositories of magical lore."<sup>136</sup>

The translation of *The Yogāvacara's Manual* appeared as: Woodward, F.L. (1916), *Manual of a Mystic being a translation from the Pali and Sinhalese Work entitled The Yogāvachara's Manual*, Pali Text Society, London, reprint 1982, ISBN 0-86013-003-7. In addition to a translation of *The Yogāvacara's Manual*, this book contains an appendix by Jayatilaka discussing the circumstances of the import of the tradition to Sri Lanka from Thailand in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

A version of the *Yogāvacara's Manual* was also published as one of three texts in Ratanajoti and Ratanapāla 1963 (see next).

**Ratanajoti, Galkātiyagama and Karalliyadde Ratanapāla (1963), ed. *Vimuttimaggo. (Bhadantārahanta-Mahārīṭṭha-Upatissa-tthera-vara-ppanīto. Government Press of Ceylon, Colombo.***

This text has been discussed by Bechert 1989. Two *yogāvacara* texts are included among the three texts in this volume. The first is another version of the Sinhalese text published by Rhys Davids as *The Yogāvacara's Manual*. The second is called the *Vimuttimagga-uddāna*. It is a Pali text in verse, closely related to *The Yogāvacara's Manual*. From comparison with Sri Lankan manuscripts of a text called the *Amatākaravaṇṇanā* 'account of the mine of immortality', it is clear to me that the published text of the *Vimuttimagga* is an abridged version, about one third in length, of the *Amatākaravaṇṇanā*.

***Amatākaravaṇṇanā.*** Edition and translation, Kate Crosby, unpublished.

This text of nearly 4000 verses contains a detailed meditation manual akin to the Sinhalese text published by Rhys Davids as *The Yogāvacara's Manual*. Curiously, a text cited by the Sinhalese version of this name (*Amatākaravaṇṇanāva*) was accepted as authentic by ñāṇārāma in contrast with his view of *The Yogāvacara's Manual* cited above. This suggests that either there is another text by the same name, or there was some confusion regarding the contents of the two texts on the part of ñāṇārāma. I have produced an edition of this text and am in the process of completing the translation. The length and repetitive character of the text leave me uncertain as to the best medium for publication.

***Samatha-vipassanā-bhāvanā-vākkapparakaraṇa.*** "Liturgy for the Samatha and Vipassanā Meditation Practice", Edition and translation, Kate Crosby (in preparation).

This text provides the liturgy for the preliminary offerings and prayers to the Buddha to be performed before each of the meditation exercises outlined in the *Amatākaravaṇṇanā*. I know of two versions from Sri Lankan manuscripts at present. It is akin to the liturgical part (rather than the question and answer section) of *Le Chemin de Lanā*. I have edited and translated this text and plan to publish it shortly.

### **The presence of the *yogāvacara* tradition in Sri Lanka.**

The known *yogāvacara* texts from Sri Lanka listed above are manuals without any explanation or inclusion of myth or interpretation. It is therefore difficult to judge on the basis of the current evidence the extent to which the texts fully refer to the practices and beliefs revealed by Bizot in relation to mainland Southeast Asia. It is also unclear to what extent the system of practice was followed or fully understood in Sri Lanka. Woodward records the story of the supposed 'last practitioner' going mad from the practice in 1900.<sup>137</sup> However, the practice of Jayasuriya of repeating the phrase *arahaṃ arahaṃ* very rapidly while in meditation (as recorded by Obeyesekere and Gombrich in the 1970s) is clearly related.<sup>138</sup> Unfortunately for our purposes, Obeyesekere's and Gombrich's comments on this practice are brief, since the potential connection with an older tradition was not recognised by them at the time. Whether Jayasuriya's practice results from a direct connection with the 18<sup>th</sup> century Sri Lanka tradition, or from, for example, a modern importation of Thai forest monk practices that incorporate some similar elements can not be ascertained on the basis of the limited information. Progress in our familiarity with medieval Sri Lankan literature in its various languages may yet shed light on the subject.

## Other English-language primary and secondary materials on the *yogāvacara* tradition.

The discoveries of Bizot et al. will permeate the general understanding of Theravāda in Anglophone traditions once it is represented in works used for undergraduate teaching. This has begun to happen. While many introductions to Theravāda present it as a more or less homogenous whole and tend to focus on Sri Lanka, this picture is changing. Bizot's work has begun to figure in introductory secondary literature. Furthermore, the results of Anglophone research into this area are beginning to make their appearance. This next section looks at the primary and secondary sources on the *yogāvacara* tradition now available in English, in addition to *The Yogāvacara's Manual* and related works already discussed above.

### Primary sources.

**Mettanando Bhikkhu (1999), *Meditation and Healing in the Theravada Buddhist Order of Thailand and Laos*, Hamburg (Ph.D. thesis).**

Perhaps the most significant recent primary research published on the *yogāvacara* tradition in English is the doctoral thesis of Mettanando bhikkhu of the Dhammakāya Foundation in Bangkok.<sup>139</sup> The meditation system used by the Dhammakāya (Thammakai) Foundation is derived from the *yogāvacara* tradition. Mettanando undertook the thesis as a result of his search for an immediate predecessor of the Dhammakāya practices. Previously the understanding within the Dhammakāya foundation had been that "that school of meditation was the re-discovery of the lost teaching of the Lord Buddha by the late abbot of *Wat Paknam Phāsīcaroen*, when he was meditating ... on the full moon of the tenth lunar month in 1915."<sup>140</sup> His search for earlier origins led Mettanando to a Thai publication by Cai Yasotharat:

**Yasotharat, Phramahā Cai (1935), *Nangsue phuttha-rangsi-thrisadi-yān wā duai samatha lae wipassanā-kammathān sī yuk* (Thai), Bangkok B.E. 2478.**

Yasotharat's work is a collection of *yogāvacara* texts copied from manuscripts. In the excerpt of the introduction translated in Mettanando, Yasotharat does not give dates. However, he does indicate that one set of manuscripts had named authors dating back to before Vientiane lost its independence to Thailand in 1827, that others were 'old manuscripts' and that they were composed "through the span of several centuries".<sup>141</sup> Mettanando's thesis is mainly a translation of passages from Cai Yasotharat's publication concerning the use of *yogāvacara* meditation practice for healing. In addition to translating an excerpt of one of the texts, Mettanando reproduces and explains some of the diagrams contained therein.<sup>142</sup>

Interestingly, one of the manuscripts edited by Yasotharat is associated with the Thai meditation master Kai Thuean (1733-1823), who, as abbot of a monastery in the *āraññavāsī* ('forest-dwelling'/ meditation-orientated) tradition near the ancient capital Ayutthaya (Ayudhya), was invited by Rāma I to head the meditation tradition in Bangkok. Kai Thuean went on to be made Sangharāja by Rāma II in 1820.<sup>143</sup> This confirms both Mettanando's and Bizot's suggestion that the *yogāvacara* tradition was mainstream before the Dhammayutikanikāya reform of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This initial work on *yogāvacara* material by Mettanando highlights the potential significance of Yasotharat's book, a publication that has not so far come to the attention of Bizot et al. Given his knowledge of Thai and English, and his familiarity with Pali, as well as his membership of a living, if somewhat adapted, form of the *yogāvacara* tradition, Mettanando is ideally placed to offer further advances in our understanding of the tradition. Unfortunately, Mettanando appears to have been completely unaware of the work of Bizot et al. Consequently he was unaware of the issues of most interest to the existing scholarly circle working in this area. This missed opportunity highlights the point I made at the outset, namely that Bizot's work has not reached the spread or significance it warrants: it even remains unknown to a researcher in the same field. It is unclear whether Mettanando did not know of Bizot's work or did not use it because it was in French. Nevertheless, the material highlighted by Mettanando is of great potential for future developments in our understanding of the *yogāvacara* tradition.

Swearer, Donald K. (1995a), "The Way to Meditation", in Donald S. Lopez (ed.) *Buddhism in Practice*, Princeton University Press: 207-215. ISBN 0-691-04441-4.

"The Way to Meditation" is a translation from *Pali and northern Thai (Tai yuon)* of part of an essay on meditation written c.1900 by Bhikkhu Pannawong (1871-1956). According to Swearer, his meditation techniques represent the Buddhism of northern Thailand prior to the modern influence of the insight meditation of Thai students of the Burmese meditation teacher Mahasi Sayadaw, whose insight (*vipassanā*) method became popular throughout the Theravāda world in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The connection between this meditation text and *yogāvacara* meditation is not immediately obvious and may not be very close, but I mention it here for two reasons. Firstly, the liturgy used in preparation for the meditation is extremely close to that found in the Sri Lankan Pali text the *Samatha-vipassanā-bhāvanā-vākkapparakaraṇa*.<sup>144</sup> It is likewise similar to that found in *Le Chemin de Lanā*.<sup>145</sup> Similarities include the homage to the five gems, rather than the standard three, found throughout the *yogāvacara* tradition. The five gems are the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, plus the meditation subject and the meditation teacher. Secondly, it advocates the repetition of the sacred

formulae thousands of times found in the *yogāvacara* meditation. This northern Thai meditation text clearly has inherited features in common with the *yogāvacara* tradition, although the extent of the common ground is not clear from the short manual.

**Swearer, Donald K. (1995b), "A Summary of the Seven Books of the Abhidhamma", in Donald S. Lopez (ed.) *Buddhism in Practice*, Princeton University Press: 336-342. ISBN 0-691-04441-4.**

This is a *yogāvacara* text translated by Swearer from a northern Thai palm leaf manuscript in the languages Pali and Thai yuon (northern Thai). The text mainly consists of equivalences drawn between sacred syllables and other sets of sacred phenomena, as found in other *yogāvacara* works discussed above.

The seven books of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* are discussed in terms of the sacred initial syllables of each text. The seven syllables are *san vi dhā pu ka ya pa*, representing the seven books of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, i.e., the (*Dhamma*)*saṅgani*, *Vibhaṅga*, *Dhātukathā*, *Puggalapaññatti*, *Kathāvatthu*, *Yamaka* and *Paṭṭhāna*. The seven syllables are then equated with the stages of embryonic development of men, and also with the five senses, the mind and the body. The syllables of the sacred phrase *na mo bu ddhā ya* are identified with the elements as well as with the five parts of the body, the five elements and the five aggregates (*khandha*), forms, sensations, etc., with the qualities of the mother, father, Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, and finally with the five Buddhas. The letters of the Pali alphabet are equated with the 32 constituents of the physical body (hair, bones, marrow, etc.).

The text also states which of the seven books of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* should be recited for a recently deceased person according to the day of the week on which they died. The text identifies the three robes with the three bodies of scripture, i.e. the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, *Sutta Piṭaka* and *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. The text mentions as an authority the *Sadd(h)āvimālā*, i.e. the text published by Bizot and Lagirarde as *La pureté des mots*.

## Secondary Sources

**Cousins, L.S. (1997), "Aspects of Southern Esoteric Buddhism", in Peter Connolly and Sue Hamilton (eds.), *Indian Insights: Buddhism, Brahmanism and Bhakti. Papers from the Annual Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions*, Luzac Oriental, London: 185-207. ISBN 1-898942-15-3.**

Cousins' article, which is written at an accessible introductory level, contributes towards eroding the monolithic representation of Theravāda. As evidence, he cites Bizot 1976, 1980, 1981a, 1988 and 1992. The first section introduces the

variety present in Theravāda Buddhism more generally, then summarises five possible origins for 'tantric Theravāda'. These are:

1. the influence of Mahāyāna;
2. the influence of Śaivite Hinduism;
3. a 'home-grown' development within Southeast Asia;
4. a product of the Abhayagiri school.
5. a product of the Mahāvihāra tradition.

Cousins' own primary contribution to the subject comes under this fifth possibility. Building on a topic already mooted by Bechert,<sup>146</sup> Cousins points out the mention of secret texts by Buddhaghosa and the author of the *Abhidhamma* commentary.<sup>147</sup> He also discusses other commentarial statements of possible significance. Cousins ends the first section of his paper with the conclusion that, "It is certainly premature to assume that it (tantric Theravāda) has its origins in unorthodox circles."<sup>148</sup>

In the second half of his paper, Cousins offers slightly abridged translations of some brief extracts from Bizot's writings, giving a taste of *yogāvacara* concepts.

### Introductory literature.

The only authors who include mention of the content of Bizot's material in introductory books on Buddhism, as far as I am aware, are Andrew Skilton and John Strong. Skilton discusses the existence of the tradition and suggestions of its origins in his *A Concise History of Buddhism*.<sup>149</sup> Under the title "Meditational Endeavors: A Theravādin Tantric Pilgrimage", Strong translates into English an excerpt from Bizot's description of the 'rebirthing' rite from "La grotte de la naissance" in his *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretation*.<sup>150</sup>

The poor representation of Bizot's findings is disappointing, given the continuous appearance of new introductory works on Theravāda and Buddhism more generally.<sup>151</sup> While I outlined at the outset a number of reasons for the slow uptake of Bizot's findings, I can not help but suspect that those well versed in the simplified version of reform Theravāda are reluctant to concede that they have not understood what may turn out to have been the mainstream tradition of Theravāda in Southeast Asia. It is no longer viable to dismiss the *yogāvacara* tradition as a short-lived artificial method of meditation made up on the basis of a misunderstanding of texts.<sup>152</sup>

The wealth of material now presented by Bizot and others reflects a multidimensional tradition. Dimensions attested include an underlying philosophy of language and parallel substitution, akin to the process of *upaniṣads* in Hinduism,<sup>153</sup> that informs both soteriology and other dimensions of practice; soteriological practices; practices aimed at worldly ends including protection, longer life, increased intelligence and healing; mythology including cosmogony; a social dimension including communal practices relating to particular festivals and

practices performed for the benefit of relatives, particularly parents, as well as coming of age rituals; liturgies and a material culture that manifests visual representations such as dress and tattoos. Isolated non-orthodox features of Theravāda have long been recognised, as have dubiously validated practices that transgress a rationalistic view of karma, such as transfer of merit and *paritta*. However, the varied practices and insights advocated for the *yogāvacara* can no longer be regarded as isolated anomalies. They mount up to a coherent and full religious system, a system that may well have been the Great tradition of Theravāda before the modern period. For our understanding of this tradition we are indebted to François Bizot for three decades of work largely unacknowledged in the Buddhist Studies world pursued on the basis of diffuse and often intractable materials. Increasingly we may thank other scholars who are taking up the avenue of research pioneered by him.

### **Abbreviations used in the publications of Bizot et al.<sup>154</sup>**

**B.E.F.E.O.** *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*. The journal of EFEO, q.v.

**E.F.E.O.** École française d'Extrême-Orient. Originally founded under the name 'Mission Archéologique en Indochine' in 1898 for the purpose of archeological exploration, collection of manuscripts, conservation of monuments, and the study of history and linguistic heritage of all Asian civilisations. First based in Saigon, then Hanoi in 1902, where they established a library and museum, taking charge of the conservation of the site at Angkor in 1907. Political events led to EFEO's base being moved to Paris.<sup>155</sup>

**F.E.M.C.** Fonds pour l'Édition des Manuscrits du Cambodge is the branch of F.E.M. for research into and conservation of Cambodian manuscripts, and the study of the Buddhism of Indochina, particularly in its local forms. It was established in 1989 and set up its headquarters near to the Silver Pagoda of the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh in 1990 when EFEO reestablished a base in Phnom Penh after two decades absence.<sup>156</sup>

**F.E.M.** Fonds pour l'Édition des Manuscrits was established by EFEO, with its headquarters in Chang Mai, Thailand, in 1975.

**P.E.F.E.O.** Publications de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient. Monographs published by E.F.E.O., q.v.

**TBC** Textes bouddhiques du Cambodge. An EFEO publication series devoted to the publication of Buddhist texts from Cambodia in their original script, transcribed into modern Khmer script and translated into French.<sup>157</sup>

**TBL** Textes bouddhiques du Laos, parallel to TBC above.

**TBT** Textes bouddhiques du Thaïlande, parallel to TBC above.

**TK/TL plus number.** These numbers are used to identify manuscript sources used in the works of Bizot et al. They are the cataloguing codes used in the recording of manuscripts in the EFEO project from the early 1970s.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Given the evidence of the *Saddavimāla* and description of the formation of *mantra* and *yantra* in the *La Guirlande* (on both of which, see below), it seems possible to me that this treatment of the substitute as the original is an extension of the rules of *sandhi* from Pali grammar (or is justified through them), on which see the discussion of *La Guirlande*, below.
- <sup>2</sup> The *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* is that section of the canon that presents Theravāda doctrine shorn of the narrative frameworks in which it is embedded in the *Sutta Piṭaka*. Some of the contents result from systematisation of *sutta* material, some from developments necessitated, or at least driven, by that systematisation.
- <sup>3</sup> I am aware of only two introductory books on Buddhism that take Bizot's work into account. See my discussion of Skilton 1994 and Strong 1995 below. On the lack of knowledge of his work even on the part of researchers in the same field, see my discussion of Mettanando 1999, below.
- <sup>4</sup> I am grateful to Jacqueline Filliozat for facilitating my visit to EFEO and to François Lagirarde for sending me a copy of *La pureté*.
- <sup>5</sup> The typical price of the publications discussed here is about 200FF.
- <sup>6</sup> No ISBN given.
- <sup>7</sup> Avant-propos I-IV.
- <sup>8</sup> See p.2 note 1. See also the discussion of this event in Becchetti.
- <sup>9</sup> It should not be assumed that the influence of Protestant Christianity lies behind this use of scripture to establish orthodoxy. The practice has recurred throughout the history of Buddhism in many countries, and many such occurrences predate European and American contact with Asia.
- <sup>10</sup> pp.4ff.
- <sup>11</sup> Indeed a number of passages are found almost verbatim in later publications, when Bizot realised the publication of material already familiar to him at the time of writing this first book.
- <sup>12</sup> Bizot's own attempts to explain the apparently incongruent 18<sup>th</sup> century juxtaposition of Mahāvihāra with apparently non-Mahāvihārin practices given in *Le Chemin* (1992: 42ff.) seem unnecessary to me if one bears in mind the distinction I am making here.
- <sup>13</sup> p.21.
- <sup>14</sup> p.22.
- <sup>15</sup> pp.25-26. I have critically examined the individual steps of this proposed association elsewhere (1999).
- <sup>16</sup> pp.43ff.
- <sup>17</sup> For Bizot's interpretation of this title, see below. Also on this text, see Lagirarde 1994.
- <sup>18</sup> pp.50-73.
- <sup>19</sup> pp.74-110.
- <sup>20</sup> pp.111-146.
- <sup>21</sup> p.117.
- <sup>22</sup> pp.125ff.

- <sup>23</sup> Leclère 1899.
- <sup>24</sup> Bizot 1981: 224-225.
- <sup>25</sup> pp. 235-239.
- <sup>26</sup> p.240 with note 1.
- <sup>27</sup> pp.27ff. I have come across drawings that appear to be simplified plans of these enclosures on the boards of Sri Lankan *yogāvacara* manuscripts, which suggests that *paṇṣukūl* rituals may have been practised in Sri Lanka too.
- <sup>28</sup> On the significance of these in the *yogāvacara* tradition, see the discussion of Bizot's *Rāmaker* and *Le Chemin* below.
- <sup>29</sup> pp.85-91.
- <sup>30</sup> pp.104-106.
- <sup>31</sup> Terwiel 1979, reprint 1994: pp.69ff.
- <sup>32</sup> Bizot p.43.
- <sup>33</sup> Chapter Three.
- <sup>34</sup> von Hinüber 1987, English translation and update 1994. Augmenting this, see Kieffer-Pülz 1993. Expanding on it to show that the wording of the precepts as well as the refuges were restricted to a particular formula by Buddhaghosa, see Crosby 2000.
- <sup>35</sup> Chapter Five.
- <sup>36</sup> pp.134-138.
- <sup>37</sup> pp.9-12.
- <sup>38</sup> Bechert p.10 cites the following work describing the practice: Pra Bhavana-Kosolthera, *Basic Meditation Practice by Vija Dhammakaya Approach, based on the general teaching of the Ven. Chao Khun Pra Mongkol-Thepmuni*, Bangkok 2527 B.E.).
- <sup>39</sup> p.26.
- <sup>40</sup> p.40.
- <sup>41</sup> pp.16-21.
- <sup>42</sup> pp.30-33. Pou 1979, 1982.
- <sup>43</sup> pp.33-35.
- <sup>44</sup> pp.20-25.
- <sup>45</sup> pp.62-63.
- <sup>46</sup> pp.42-61.
- <sup>47</sup> pp.42-43.
- <sup>48</sup> p.47.
- <sup>49</sup> p.51.
- <sup>50</sup> pp.46-48.
- <sup>51</sup> E.g. in the interpretation of the role of the twins as *nāmarūpa*, p.59.
- <sup>52</sup> Bizot 1989: 46.
- <sup>53</sup> A further work on Mi Chak's *Rāmaker* by Olivier de Bernon and Bizot is advertised as forthcoming 1995, as the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the EFEO series *Textes bouddhiques du Cambodge* in the final pages of *La guirlande* (1994) but is not listed in the publications of EFEO in *Le pureté* (1996). I have not been able to get hold of a copy of this work, nor do I know if it has already been published.
- <sup>54</sup> On the rationale for this new series, see TBC in the list of abbreviations below.
- <sup>55</sup> The manuscripts are described pp. 63-70.
- <sup>56</sup> Bizot 1992: 42.
- <sup>57</sup> Bizot also mentions the presence of a number of temples in Cambodia with names such as Vat Langka, Vat Po Langka, but does not think this necessarily implies an association with Sri Lanka (1992: 43).
- <sup>58</sup> Bizot 1992: 43-44.
- <sup>59</sup> *ibid.* 70.
- <sup>60</sup> Bizot 1992: 42.
- <sup>61</sup> The text is translated on pp.211-224.
- <sup>62</sup> Translation pp. 227-268.

<sup>63</sup> p.228.

<sup>64</sup> pp.244-5.

<sup>65</sup> pp.246-7. This parallels, for example, Vaiṣṇava Hindu creation myths which subordinate the Puranic creator god Brahmā to Viṣṇu by having him create the world only after he himself has in turn emerged from Viṣṇu. Seeing the Dhamma as the creative principle is completely alien to canonical Theravāda Buddhism.

<sup>66</sup> p.247.

<sup>67</sup> pp.248-9.

<sup>68</sup> p.249.

<sup>69</sup> This identification is also found in *Le Figuier* (1976).

<sup>70</sup> p.256.

<sup>71</sup> p.260.

<sup>72</sup> Avant-propos, pp.17-18.

<sup>73</sup> p.228.

<sup>74</sup> p.38.

<sup>75</sup> *brah* is an honorific used when referring to sacred objects or beings in Southeast Asia.

<sup>76</sup> p.41.

<sup>77</sup> p.42.

<sup>78</sup> pp.41-42.

<sup>79</sup> On which, see Bizot 1976, introduction, and Becchetti 1994.

<sup>80</sup> pp.42-44. The right hand path, left hand path distinction is also found in Śaivism. There the left hand practices are those involving such antinomian practices as using the five impure substances, wine, meat, fish, parched grain and sexual intercourse. (See Mishra 1993: 365 ff. on the different interpretations of left hand/right hand from within and without the Śaiva Kaula tradition). One could see the use of the terminology 'left hand' and 'right hand' as closely parallel, if one regards using Buddhism for worldly gains, rather than for altruistic purposes or Nibbāna, as essentially antinomian for Buddhists.

<sup>81</sup> For another list of the ingredients of such sacred substance used for making amulets and the method of empowerment in a central Thai monastery, see Terwiel 1979. The ingredients include the oldest manuscript of a temple.

<sup>82</sup> pp.44-45.

<sup>83</sup> *sandhi*, literally 'placing together', is the process of phonetic change in Sanskrit and Pali when certain phonemes fall together in a sentence. Traditional grammars such as that of Kaccāyana analyse and lay down detailed rules for the phonetic changes that take place by explaining, e.g. that *i* may be substituted by *y* before *a*.

Note that Bizot often translates compounds which appear to be in standard Pali in a way other than one would if they were such, because the tradition studied by him gives such terms specific meanings. The basic difference is that the Khmero-Pali reading of the compound is usually from the first member to the second, while the classical Pali reading usually takes the final member of the compound as primary and the earlier members of the compounds as qualifiers of it.

<sup>84</sup> pp.209-224.

<sup>85</sup> Tep Sarikaput 1967, *Brah gambhīr brah ved* III, Bangkok-Thonburi 2510. Other works by venerable Sarikaput are listed in the bibliography to *La Guirlande*.

<sup>86</sup> pp.48-49. The corresponding right hand practice for soteriological purposes is found in, e.g. the *Amatākaravaṇṇanā*. The left hand path applied to healing is found in Mettanando 1999.

<sup>87</sup> As far as I can see, the source and numeration used with *Y* is not explained.

<sup>88</sup> This last word is emended by von Hintüber from the manuscripts, which read either *hanta-* or *hamta-*. I think the manuscript readings have to be correct here for the full syllable *ham* to be reproduced, regardless of the classical elision of the nasal in the

formation of the past participle. However, my suggestion would also require *anusvāra* in place of the homorganic nasal in *haññāte*: *hamñāte*.

- <sup>89</sup> The establishment and sources for this text are not made explicit, but from the sigla D, E, F and G in the apparatus it appears that at least one of the Khmer manuscripts contains it, as do three of the Thai printed texts, two of which are by Sarikaput.
- <sup>90</sup> pp. 209-224.
- <sup>91</sup> The term used for this elision is *Iopa*, the standard term in classical Sanskrit and Pali grammar for the elision of a phoneme in the process of word formation or euphonic combination (*sandhi*), on which see above.
- <sup>92</sup> Note the depiction of characters from the story of Rāma in the production of tattoos also. See Bizot1981b and Terwiel 1979.
- <sup>93</sup> pp.209-210.
- <sup>94</sup> 1996. See discussion below.
- <sup>95</sup> For Bizot 1994b, see below.
- <sup>96</sup> New series explained Avant-propos, p.ix.
- <sup>97</sup> pp.353-358.
- <sup>98</sup> pp. 19-25.
- <sup>99</sup> p.47 note 1. It should be pointed out that this postdated king Rāma IV's reedition of the canon on the basis of texts from all over the Theravāda world including Burma, northern Thailand and Sri Lanka.
- <sup>100</sup> p.53.
- <sup>101</sup> Bizot 1976.
- <sup>102</sup> Bizot and Lagirarde 1996.
- <sup>103</sup> Bizot 1976.
- <sup>104</sup> Bizot 1988.
- <sup>105</sup> pp.73-76.
- <sup>106</sup> The name Trai Bhet derives from Tri Veda, the three Vedas or 'knowledges', possibly a reference to the Brahmanical Hindu sacred texts, although de Bernon is sceptical of this interpretation.
- <sup>107</sup> Bizot 1994b.
- <sup>108</sup> pp.125-127.
- <sup>109</sup> 1996: 42.
- <sup>110</sup> 1996: 45-46.
- <sup>111</sup> 1996: 43.
- <sup>112</sup> The relevant passage survives in Tibetan but not in Sanskrit, so is reconstructed by Pind. Bizot's comment on p.49 that the Mūlasarvāstivādinaya is preserved only in Tibetan and Chinese is misleading — it is also preserved in Sanskrit in a Gilgit manuscript, but not in its entirety.
- <sup>113</sup> Bizot p.49, with reference to Brough 1962: 45-62
- <sup>114</sup> Bizot 1996: 52.
- <sup>115</sup> 1976: 43-44.
- <sup>116</sup> Sources for these figures are listed as the German-Laotian project (no reference given) which focuses on temples mainly in the 'central region'; 'les recherches' in the north and far north, presumably by the contributors themselves; and the programme for the preservation of northern Thai manuscripts at the 'Centre pour la promotion des arts et de la culture' at the University of Chiang Mai.
- <sup>117</sup> Contamination is cross-referencing in the establishment of a text on the basis of more than one source by the scribal tradition itself. In other words, when the tradition used a similar method of the comparison to that involved in establishing a modern critical edition, it is termed contamination.
- <sup>118</sup> Bizot notes that a history of the reforms of Lao writing and orthography is in preparation by James R. Chamberlain (p.87, footnote 1).
- <sup>119</sup> 1938, reprint 1996.

- <sup>20</sup> Confusingly, the text identifies of the eight keys as the noble eightfold path, *samatha*, *vipassanā* and *bhāvanā*.
- <sup>21</sup> On the placing of Buddhas around the body, cf. the *Mahādibbamanta*, a Cambodian Theravāda text mainly in Pali on the same theme, translated by Jaini 1965.
- <sup>22</sup> Bizot 1996: 220.
- <sup>23</sup> *baddhasīmā* — a term appropriated from the monastic context where it refers to a ritual boundary. Bizot explains this application of the term in the light of a the pan-S.E. Asian belief that the Buddhist monastery is a symbol of the body.
- <sup>24</sup> In my view, this suggests a concern on the part of the tradition that produced this text regarding the level of scribal corruption in Pali manuscripts and a move towards trying to reassert Pali learning. This reminds me of the legend of the division into book-preserving and meditation-preserving monks in Sri Lanka in response to the feared loss of the word of the Buddha in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. Here, the reverse, a combination of the two traditions, seems to be advocated.
- <sup>25</sup> On the conflation of the Buddha's disciple, Mahākaccāyana with the grammarian Kaccāyana, see below.
- <sup>26</sup> Bizot and von Hinüber 1994: 55-56.
- <sup>27</sup> Crosby 1999.
- <sup>28</sup> 1996: chapter 1.
- <sup>29</sup> The tendency among some western scholars to see in this the influence of Protestant Christianity is misplaced in my view. While Rāma IV did have contact with American missionaries, his drive for reform preceded this and was due to larger factors.
- <sup>30</sup> 1997.
- <sup>31</sup> Bizot 1996: 40 note 3.
- <sup>32</sup> de Bernon 1996, my translation.
- <sup>33</sup> Bizot discusses this problem with the example of A. Leclère in Bizot 1989: 14-15.
- <sup>34</sup> E.g. Bizot and von Hinüber 1994a, appendix 2, Mettanando 1999.
- <sup>35</sup> Also not discussed in this essay, which primarily focuses on the *yogāvacara* tradition, are Bizot 1970 and Bizot 1971.
- <sup>36</sup> Carrithers, 1983: xi-xii, 233ff. and 246.
- <sup>37</sup> Woodward 1916: xix.
- <sup>38</sup> Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 360. I am grateful to Richard Gombrich for pointing out the similarity between Jayasuriya's practice and the *yogāvacara* tradition.
- <sup>39</sup> I would like to thank Professor B. J. Terwiel, Hamburg University, who supervised the thesis, for his kindness in making it available to me.
- <sup>40</sup> Mettanando 1999: 2.
- <sup>41</sup> Mettanando op.cit. 5.
- <sup>42</sup> These diagrams, which relate to the order and placing of meditation subjects within the body are also found in Sri Lankan manuscripts of the *Amatākaravaṇṇanā* which teaches the same practices for soteriological purposes. They appear as circles either within other circles or in a pattern, e.g. as a set of five. The circles are then labelled with the *kammaṭṭhāna* in question, such as the *pīṭi*, or with sacred syllables, e.g. *na mo bu ddhā ya*.
- <sup>43</sup> Mettanando op.cit.: 8-10.
- <sup>44</sup> See the discussion of *yogāvacara* texts from Sri Lanka, below.
- <sup>45</sup> Bizot 1992.
- <sup>46</sup> Bechert in Bizot 1988.
- <sup>47</sup> The *Abhidhamma* commentary is also attributed to Buddhaghosa, but this attribution is disputed.
- <sup>48</sup> Cousins 1997: 193.
- <sup>49</sup> 1994: 157.

- <sup>50</sup> 1994: 237-240. Gethin briefly mentions the existence of a non-Mahāvihārin tradition that is studied by Bizot (1998: 257).
- <sup>51</sup> While it does not use Bizot's material, Swearer 1995c is an admirable departure from the standard Sri Lankan—centred monolithic presentations of Theravāda.
- <sup>52</sup> See references to the views recorded by Carrithers above. Similar views are also expressed elsewhere, e.g. by Wickremasinghe as quoted by Caroline Rhys Davids in her Preface to Woodward 1916. While the views of these authors are understandable given the state of our knowledge at the time of their writing, the view that the *yogāvacara* material represents an artificial, isolated and insignificant expression of Theravāda has been repeated to me verbally only last year by an established U.S. scholar of Theravāda.
- <sup>53</sup> I do not mean to suggest that there is a relationship between the *yogāvacara* tradition and the system of *upaniṣads* ('parallels') in Brahmanical Hinduism. I see it as entirely possible that the similarity results from convergence. (When I use the terms 'relationship' and 'convergence', I do so in the sense in which they are applied in evolutionary theory).
- <sup>54</sup> These abbreviations are listed here since they are often used in the publications reviewed above without any explanation being included in the volume in which they appear.
- <sup>55</sup> For a fuller brief history see Bruguier 1996, from which these details are taken.
- <sup>56</sup> de Bernon 1996 and Bizot 1992: 15-16.
- <sup>57</sup> de Bernon 1996 and Bizot 1992: 16-17.