

TANTRIC BUDDHISM IN BAUD AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

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The region Baud recently formed Boudh a district in 1994 is located in the central part of Orissa and lies between 20° 24' and 54' to North and 83° 34' and 84° 34' to East. It has an area of 3456 Sq. kms. And is surrounded by the river Mahanadi in the North. To its South is located Phulbani district. Its eastern boundary touches Nayagarh district and Western touches Sonepur district. Existing in the central part of Orissa, Boudh was the central part of Khinjali Mandala which was established in the middle of eighth century A.D. It had flourished in between the Ang and the Brahmani with the Mahanadi flowing in the middle. In the charters the kingdom is described as Ubhaya Khinjali Mandala which indicates that it consisted of two divisions with the river Mahanadi as the mark of demarcation. On the northern bank of the Brahmani close to Khinjali there was Kodalaka-mandala ruled by Sulkis as feudatories of the Bhaumas. The Bhanjas of Khinjali mandala and the Sulkis seem to have maintained good relations between them. The Baud region was a great center of Mahayanic and tantric Buddhism in the medieval period. Prof. R. D. Banerji has made a partial excavation at the site of the palace in 1934 and is of the opinion that Buddhism lingered longer in Baud than in any other parts of Orissa. When the Bhauma-kara rule started in Orissa with Guhesvarapataka (Viraja) as the capital city, the early rules viz. Laksmikara Paramopasaka, Kshemmankaradeva, Paramatathagata Sivakaradeva and Parama saugata Subhakaradeva were all ardent Buddhists who were known to have exerted themselves for the cause of Buddhism in their extensive kingdom. The Dhenkanal plate of Tribhuvana Mahadevi whose husband Sivakara III (882-890) was a devout worshipper of Buddha highly eulogises the activities of her preceding rulers “who exhausted treasure of their vast empire on religious works in order to enlighten their country and others who decorated the earth by constructing in unbroken continuity various mathas, monasteries and sanctuaries which were like the staircases to ascend to the city of Purandra”. Thus under the patronage of Bhauma-kara kings large number of religious institutions developed in many parts of Orissa. Mahayana Buddhism flourished side by side with saivism and Sakta cult because of the influence of Bhauma queens. The famous religious institutions of Mahayanic Buddhism were Udayagiri, Ratnagiri, Lalitagiri, Alitagiri.

Dhritipura from where all the charters of the Bhanjas during this time were issued was no doubt the capital city of Khinjali mandala. As there is no indication about the location of the city in the charters and no place is now found in this region resembling

the name of the city, it might be the town Baud suggested by Dr. N. K. Sahu. The rich antiquities of Baud town he observes warrant a strong supposition that this place was the head quarters of Bhanja kings of Khinjali Mandala before it assumed its Buddhistic significance. In fact Baud assumed its Buddhistic significance in the Bhauma-Bhanja period. Mahayanic Buddhism was divided into Madhyamika school, Yogachara Vijnavada school which continued till 7th century A.D. But in between early to 7th century A.D. there flourished tantric Buddhism (Vajrayana) by Asanga the founder and Indrabhuti patronized it in central and western Orissa. The word tantra, which is generally derived from the root “tan”—to spread, is difficult to define as it loosely admits of very wide latitude of meaning. The scriptures declare that “Hum” the formula perexcellence of the great void known as the thunderbolt because of its adaptability and hence adamant nature is the vital word of divine emancipation revealed in the vajrayana school of Buddhist thought & assimilated into Hinduism through the tantras. It is the key word designating the meditating Buddha “Aksobhya” because of his imperturbable nature. Quite early in the history of the great vehicle (Mahayana) feminine divinities found their ways in the pantheon. One such was prajnaparamita, the perfection of insight, the personification of the qualities of the Bodhisattva. Later the Buddhists and Bodhisattvas, who were thought of as males, were like the gods of Hinduism, endowed with wives who were the active aspect, the “force” or “potent” (sakti) of their husbands. The God was believed to be transcendent and aloof, while the Goddess was active in the world; thus the God might be best approached through the Goddess. The productive activity of the divine was thought of in terms of sexual union an idea as old as the Rig Veda with the spread of these ideas sexual symbolism and even sexual intercourse as a religions rite were incorporated into the schools of both Hinduism and Buddhism.

With these ideas was combined a new magical mysticism. The lesser vehicle (Hinayana) taught that release was obtained by the gradual loss of individuality through self-discipline and meditation; the Great vehicle (mahayana) added that the grace and help of the heavenly Buddha’s and Bodhisattvas assisted the process. The followers of the new teachings taught that it could be best attained by acquiring magical power, which they called vajra (“Thunderbolt” or “diamond”). Hence the new school of Buddhism was called Vajrayana the vehicle of the Thunderbolt. In the 7th century Hiuen sang found certain monasteries permeated with magical practices.

The chief divinities of the new sects were the “Saviouresses” (Taras), the spouses of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. There were also a host of Lesser divinities, many called by the names of demons, such as “out caste women” (matangis) “demonesses” (pisacis) “Sorceresses” yoginis and “she-ghouls” (dakinis). The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with their Taras were approximated to the less amiable members of the Hindu pantheon, and were often depicted with many arms in ferocious poses.

As in the days of Brahmanas, it was though that these deities should be compelled rather than persuaded. The text books outlining the means (Sadhana) of doing this were

called Tantras and hence the new cult is often referred to as tantric. By pronouncing the right formula (mantra) in the correct manner, or by drawing the correct magical symbol (Yantra), one might force the gods to bestow magical power on the worshipper and lead him to the highest bliss. Among the many formula of tantric Buddhism, one is specially famous- the "six syllable" (sadaksara) OM MANI PADME HUM- "Ah ! the jewel is indeed in the Lotus !" may be sexual in its original significance, mystically repeating the divine coitus of the heavenly Buddha and prajnaparamita and of Avalokitesvara and his Tara.

Tantric Buddhism did not neglect the techniques of mental training which were part of all chief religions of India, but their direction was altered. Their primary purpose now was to obtain super normal power. The meditations of the Vajrayana were often positively psychopathic. The practitioner of the system might so hypnotize himself as to imagine that he was reborn from the womb of a Tara, or he himself might become Tara, to kill his father the Buddha and take his place. In sexual union with a female devotee he and his partner would become Buddha and Tara or he himself might become Tara. In the sexual rites of tantric Buddhism all taboos were lifted. Even incest was permitted; for what was sin to the ignorant was virtue to the initiate and so as well as ritual copulation meat and alcohol were indulged in at the tantric covens. These things were however done under strict control and only by initiates at sacred ceremonies.

The tantric Buddhism (Vajrayana) flourished in the time of Bhauma-karas. The Bhanjas of Baud (Khinjali mandala) were their feudatories who showed their loyalty to Bhauma rule. Therefore this cult was extended to Khinjali mandala with Baud as its chief center. The findings of Buddhist antiquities and monuments in Baud region clearly indicate the existence of tantric cult.

The seated Buddha near the palace: - The most important Buddhist antiquity in Baud is the colossal image of Buddha near the palace of Baud. The sculpture of Buddha is exquisitely carved out on khondolite stone sitting cross-legged (Vajra-paryankasana) on the lotus petals exhibiting his right hand the attitude of calling upon the Earth to witness his thunderbolt and his victory over mara or temper. A female divinity is standing by its side. The brickbats, stone pieces, and broken pieces of deities clearly mark the indication of a Buddhist monastery in the medieval age.

Seated Buddha in Bhumisparisamudra at Samsundarpur

The village Samsundarpur is located in 84° 20' to east of Baud town at a distance of about 25 kms. The colossal image of Buddha is carved on a mound facing South seated on lotus petals in Bhumisparisamudra. Its height is 5 ft. The artists used khondolite stone.

Below the lotus seat there are the following miniature representation containing from proper left—

1. Yaksha
2. Elephant
3. Lion
4. Elephant
5. Yaksha

There are no instances of female divinities with Buddha here as is observed presently. But the falling brick-bats and stones give the indication of a medieval monastery. The brick size is 12" x 7" x 6" and are as hard as stones !

Seated Buddha in Bhumisparsamudra at Pargalpur

The village pargalpur is located in 84° 20' to East of Baud town on the river bank of Mahanadi at distance of 25km. The sculpture of Buddha is carved out on khondolite stone seated on lotus petals in Bhumisparsamudra facing East. Its height is 3 & 1/2 feet. But presently the image is found in a half form due to the erection of a temple by the villagers in 1978. The upper parts from head to the waist and from shoulder to elbows (left and right) are visible perhaps the lotus petals and the rest parts of hands and legs are under the earth. But most attractive feature is that a number of female divinities i.e. Tara Gandharvas, Yakshas are carved out in the same quality of stones around the image. Even an inscription on the backside of a small Tara image is found. The scripts are not legible but most probably are kutila scripts. The debris was certainly center of Buddhist learning in the medieval age. The fallen pieces of stones brick- bats warrant an excavation to trace out the culture of the age.

These two images close to each other are in Vajraparyankasana exhibiting an indelible mark of supreme enlightenment and the historic unprecedented triumph over Mara calling upon the earth to witness their thunderbolt Vow.

Ramesvara temple the seat of Tantrayana

Ramesvara temple is located at the west of Baud town, which was built by the Bhanja king under the patronage of Bhaumva queens. The unique feature of this shrine is that it was a great center of Saktism. Tantric icons signifying numerous manifestations were carved out. The concept of sakti or energy was a principal bond of union of numerous ideas connected with male and female principles. This shrine symbolizes the amalgamation of Hindu deities with Buddha in Bhumisparsamudra. Even the Buddhist icons are depicted on the wall of the shrine. Thus this shrine has its greater significance among the tantra pithas sprang up in Orissa in the medieval age. At present a numerous sakti pithas are found in different parts of Baud region. The deities like Durga, Kali, Dakshina Kali, Bhadrakali, Bhairavi, Mahesvari are being worshipped at present.

These antiquities indicate that the place was a popular center of tantric Buddhism in the medieval time and the name 'Baud' carries with it today the reminiscences of the Buddhistic heritage of the past.

Danda Nata, the ritual folk dance of the region traces its origin to Tantrayana during the Bhauma rule. It is indeed the product of sakticult which amalgamates the worship of Kali, Bhadrakali, Bhairavi, with the principal God Hara (Siva). Baud was the chief center of Danda Nata which gradually was extended to Angul, Sambalpur, Sonapur, Athamallik and parts of Ganjam and it is still a living force in these areas. Danda Nata the folk-cult of central and western Orissa exhibits the synthesis of Saivism and Saktism.

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