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THE

HISTORY OF INDIA

FROM THE EARLIEST AGES.

BY

J. TALBOYS WHEELER,

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VOL. III.

HINDÚ. BUDDHIST. BRAHMANICAL REVIVAL.

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HISTORY OF INDIA UNDER THE MUSSULMANS AND MAIIRATTAS, INCLUDING THE RISE OF THE BRITISH POWER. 8vo.

This Volume will be complete in itself, and will also form Vol. IV. of the 'History of India from the Earliest Ages.'

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HINDÚ, BUDDHIST, AND BRAHMANICAL.

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TO THE MEMORY OF

RICHARD SOUTHWELL BOURKE SIXTH EARL OF MAYO

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR HENRY M. DURAND

AND

PROFESSOR THEODOR GOLDSTÜCKER

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

THE present volume is complete in itself. It tells the history of India from a Hindú, Buddhist, and Brahmanical point of view. It starts from the remotest antiquity, and reaches right down to the appearance of the English in It does not deal with the Mussulman the Eastern seas. conquest or the Mussulman empire; as those subjects can scarcely be treated thoroughly, until the Hindú people have been well brought upon the stage; and although the history of Mussulman India has an intrinsic value and importance of its own, which entitle it to separate consideration, it throws little or no light upon the religious and social development of the Hindús. Whilst, however, the present work is complete in itself, it also forms the third volume of the history of India, the publication of which was begun as far back as 1867.1 It may therefore be advisable to describe more precisely the plan which was originally adopted for preparing a complete history of India, and the progress which has since been made towards its completion.

The principal materials from which to construct a purely

¹ History of India from the Earliest Ages, Vol. I., comprising the Vedic period and Maha Bharata. Trübner & Co., 1867. *Ibid.*, Vol. II., comprising the Ramayana and Brahmanic Period, i. e. the Laws of Manu. Trübner & Co., 1869.

Hindú history are to be found in the four Vedas, the two epics of the Mahá Bhárata and Rámáyana, the laws of Manu, and the eighteen puranas. Of these the most important are the hymns of the Rig-Veda, the two epics, and the laws of Manu.2 Accordingly an effort was made to form a basis for the history of Hindú India by preparing a critical analysis of this vast mass of semi-historical literature. The results were incorporated in the first two volumes of the socalled History of India. It has, however, been asserted by friendly critics, that these two volumes, however interesting in themselves, ought not to be called history; that properly speaking they are not history, but prolegomena to history. Possibly such criticisms are correct.8 But still the Mahá Bhárata and Rámáyana are accepted by the people of India as history; and the two former volumes have enjoyed an extensive popularity amongst Hindú readers, as well as amongst those Europeans who are familiar with India. At the same time some knowledge of the Vedic hymns, and especially of the laws of Manu, is essentially needful to a right understanding of Vedic and Brahmanic India.

Accordingly the present work meets both views. It is at once the third volume of the history of India from the earliest ages, and the first volume of the history of India properly so called. Both begin from the earliest ages, and it is intended that they should be ultimately brought

² The Vedas and Puranas are chiefly of a theological character. Occasionally statements appear, more especially in the puranas, which appear to possess a historical value, but after a critical analysis they are generally found to fade away into myth and fable. Sometimes, however, the puranas prove useful in illustrating religious and sectarian ideas. The author has compiled several folios of extracts, as well as a voluminous index, but has derived very few positive data from them. The Buddhist chronicle, known as the Mahawanan, is entitled to more respect; but it will be seen, by a reference to Appendix II. in the present volume, that its statements are far from reliable, unless confirmed by other authorities.

³ It appears, however, to the author, that the first two volumes of Mr Grote's History of Greece might be dismissed on a similar pretext.

down to our own days. But the larger work comprises critical analyses of the sacred books, as the internal evidence on which the author bases his history of the ancient religion and civilization of the Hindús; whilst the volume now before the reader comprises the general conclusions drawn from this internal evidence, illustrated by the evidence of external authorities. In a word, the present volume opens with retrospects of the Vedic and Brahmanio ages by the light of the materials already brought under review in the two former volumes. It then brings every other available authority, excepting that of the Mussulman historians, to bear upon the general subject. life and teachings of Gótama Buddha, the evidence of Greek and Roman writers, the edicts of Priyadarsi or Asoka, the Buddhist chronicles, the recorded travels of the Chinese pilgrims in the fifth and seventh centuries, the Hindú drama, the traditions of the Rajpoots down to the seventeenth century, the travels of Marco Polo and others between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, and Faria y Sousa's history of Portuguese Asia during the sixteenth and greater part of the seventeenth centuries, have all been laid under contribution for every variety of information, and have been further illustrated by the experience derived during fifteen years' official residence in India and Burma. In this manner the attempt has been made to throw every light upon the history, the religion, and the civilization of the people of India before the coming of the English upon the scene.4

Two works have been just published by Messrs Trübner & Co., which will form interesting illustrations of the chapters in the present volume which are devoted to Buddhism. Both are by Mr Mutu Coomara Swamy, Mudcliar, of Ceylon. The first is entitled,—"The Dethavansa, or the history of the Toothrelic of Gótama Buddha, translated into English with notes." The second is entitled,—"Sutta Napita, or the Dialogues and Discourses of Gótama Buddha, translated into English with notes and introduction."

The next volume, which is already in preparation, will be devoted to the history of Mussulman, Mahratta, and British India. The importance of the Mussulman annals cannot be denied; but that importance is due more to the part which the Mussulman religion has played in the history of the world, than to any light which it throws upon India in particular. This importance is increasing day by day; for few impartial observers will deny the fact that to all appearance the people of India are drifting slowly but surely towards the religion of the prophet of Arabia, rather than towards that Christianity which is freely offered, but which they are not prepared to accept. It is hoped that the volume on Mussulman, Mahratta, and early Anglo-Indian history will be published in November next.

Witham, Essex, 25th May, 1874.

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APPENDIX II.

BUDDHIST CHRONICLES.

THE Buddhist Chronicle, known as the Maháwanso. comprises all the historical data at present available respecting the ancient kingdom of Magadha, excepting what has been deduced from Greek writers. It is prefaced by some genealogical matter, which is apparently of small importance. It really commences with the accepted date of the death of Gótama Buddha in B.c. 543; and is brought to a conclusion, as far as Magadha is concerned, at the death of Asoka in B.C. According to tradition, the chronicles of Magadha, together with the Buddhist scriptures generally, were carried from Magadha to Ceylon about three centuries before Christ, by Mahinda, the son of Asoka, and were translated by him from Páli into Singhalese. Seven centuries afterwards, namely, in the fifth century of the Christian era, Mahánáma, an uncle of the reigning king of Ceylon, compiled the Maháwanso, or "great genealogies," from the materials then in existence, which may have included those brought by About the same time Buddaghosa, a Buddhist Mahinda. monk of Burma, proceeded to Ceylon, and procured copies of the Buddhist chronicle and scriptures, and carried them back to his own country.2 The subject matter of the chronicles

This is the date fixed in the Mahawanso calculating from the era commencing with the death of Gótama. Some scholars have assumed that there is a mistake of sixty years, because it was not Asoka who was a contemporary of Alexander of Macedon, but Chandragupta (i. e. Sandrokottos) the grandfather of Asoka. As, however, it is just possible that Chandragupta and Asoka are one and the same person, there seems no reason for the forcible introduction of a period of sixty years into the chronicle.

² The original Pali text of the Mahawanso, with an English translation and an Introductory Essay, was published by the Hon. George Turnour. Quarto. Ceylon, 1837. The most important portion of the commentary of Buddhaghosa

compiled by Mahánáma and Buddhaghosa are nearly identical. There may be some slight discrepancies as regards the dates of particular reigns, but in all essentials the story is the same.

The century in which Mahánáma and Buddhaghosa compiled their chronicles is of considerable importance in the history of Buddhism. The great expansion of Buddhism in the reign of Asoka and his successors had been followed by a re-action. Whilst Buddhaghosa was proceeding from Burma to Ceylon, Fah-Hian and other pilgrims were making their way from China to India to collect similar copies of the sacred books for the edification of the Chinese. It may therefore be inferred that in the fifth century of the Christian era the spirit of reform was abroad in the Buddhist world, having for its object the re-establishment of a purer doctrine and discipline by a reference to more authentic copies of the law.

As regards the sacred books or scriptures of the Buddhists, some information has already been exhibited in the form of notes, but it may be convenient, for the sake of reference, to briefly indicate their character in the present place. The canon of the Buddhists is known as the Tri-pitaka, or three baskets. The first basket contains the books on Vinaya, or discipline. The second basket contains the Sútras or discourses of Buddha, which comprise both religion and morality, and are called Dharma, or the law. The third basket comprises Buddhist metaphysics, and is known as Abidharma, or by-law.

The Buddhist chronicles, which form more immediately the subject of the present essay, may be considered under three heads, namely: the reign of Asoka; the three Synods; and the chronicles of Magadha generally from the death of Gótama Buddha to the death of Asoka.

is incorporated in the "Life or Legend of Gaudama," by Bishop Bigaudet. Rangoon, 1866. Professor Max Müller has reviewed the literary history of these chronicles in "Chips from a German Workshop," vol. i.; and in his Introduction to Buddhaghosa's Parables. The object of the present essay is simply to ascertain by a critical analysis how far the data embodied in the chronicle may be regarded as historical.

I. REIGN OF ASOKA, B.C. 325 to 288.

The most salient portion of the Buddhist chronicles is that which refers to the reign of Asoka. Indeed if there is any period respecting which a Buddhist annalist would be desirous of furnishing the fullest and most authentic details. it would be the reign of this particular sovereign. Asoka was the reputed grandson of Sandrokottos or Chandragupta. He was the hero saint of Buddhist tradition.3 He is generally identified with Raja Priyadarsi, and this identification may be accepted, for the measures which are recorded in the chronicles bear a grotesque resemblance to those which were promulgated in the edicts. So far, then, the monkish compiler must have been familiar with the leading events recorded Consequently a comparison of the chronin the edicts. icles with the edicts ought to dispose of their claim to be believed.

The most striking event in the edicts, and the one most likely to be preserved in tradition, was the proclamation against the slaughter of animals for food or sacrifice. affected the daily lives and established usages of millions. whilst it was attended with a pomp and ceremony which were calculated to create a lasting impression. But the episode of the death of Gótama Buddha from eating too much roast pork, plainly indicates that in the age in which the Buddhist scriptures were compiled such an authoritative prohibition as that involved in the great proclamation would be regarded with disfavour; and that attempts would be made to weaken its force, or disguise it altogether. Accordingly the compiler of the Buddhist chronicle refers to the proclamation recorded in the edict, but ascribes it to another and a very different origin. Asoka, it is said, had ordered eighty-four thousand viharas or monasteries to be constructed

³ The term "reputed grandson" is here used advisedly. It will appear hereafter that there is reason to believe that the names Sandrokottos and Asoka are applied to the same individual.

See ante, page 142.

as a memorial of Gótama Buddha's sermons, which are said to have been the same in number. After three years these viharas were all completed at the same time; and despatches were received by the Rajas on the same day from eighty-four thousand different cities, on announcing the happy consummation. Asoka is said to have been so overjoyed at these glad tidings that he at once proclaimed a great festival throughout the empire, which was to be celebrated with extraordinary pomp and rejoicings, and at which the people were to present alms and offerings to the priesthood to the utmost of their means. It is impossible to say how far this legend may be referred to Asoka. A description of the cultivation of the field of happiness at Prayága seems to have been grafted on to the myth; and the whole account is so confused and garbled as to be utterly unreliable.

Another important edict was the one which provided medical attendance for all sick persons and animals. This again has been manipulated into a pious fable by the priestly selfishness of the compiler. Asoka is said to have been informed that a holy monk had died from lack of medicine. In his deep sorrow he caused four great reservoirs to be constructed, one at each of the four gates of the city; and ordered them to be filled with medicine, saying:—"Let medicines be furnished every day for the priesthood." Here again the legend is so monstrous, that it may be dismissed without any further consideration.

The most interesting event, however, to the modern reader is a statement in the Buddhist chronicles that Asoka sent out numerous missionary monks to preach the religion of Buddha to the surrounding countries; and it is a relief to find a legend which bears an element of authenticity. Indeed this reference to Buddhist missionary operations approximates more nearly to the truth than any other which is recorded in these annals. The names of the missionaries are given, but it would be useless to repeat them, as they would convey no ideas, nor awaken any associations, and

⁶ Compare Mahawanso, chap. v. 6 See ante, page 275.

⁷ Mahawanso, chap. v., page 37.

they moreover bear an appearance of being mythical. The countries to which they were sent, however, are distinctly specified, and are more authentic. They include Cashmere, Rajpootana, Maharashtra, the Græco-Bactrian empire of Antiochus in the north-west, the Thibetan or Himalayan region, the eastern or golden peninsula comprehending Burma and Siam, and the remote island of Ceylon. These missionary operations are said to have been very successful. especially amongst the Nága people; and the number of converts are given, who are divided into the two classes of laity and priesthood.8 To crown all, the relics of two of the missionaries who laboured in the Himalayan region have been found by General Cunningham in a Buddhist tope at Sanchi, enshrined in a casket which bears their names. Other data might be quoted from perfectly independent sources to prove that these missions were actually undertaken.

Unfortunately the religious opinions of Asoka are grossly perverted in the Buddhist chronicles. The tolerant Raja of the edicts, who propitiated both Bráhmans and Srámans in order to reconcile them to the spread of Dharma, is represented in the chronicles as the bitter persecutor of the Bráhmans, and the liberal patron of the Srámans. According to the chronicles, Asoka was originally a follower of the Brahmanical religion. Like his reputed father Vindusara, he maintained sixty thousand Bráhmans, and gave them daily doles of food at his palace. Subsequently he turned them adrift, and entertained sixty thousand Buddhists in their room. The discarded Brahmans disguised themselves as Buddhists monks, and obtained admission into the Buddhist viháras. Here, however, they spread so much heresy, that the Buddhist monks refused to perform their religious ceremonies in the company of such heretics. An antagonism thus arose between the Bráhman and Buddhist priests which

⁸ Mahawanso, chap. xii.

⁹ Bhilsa Topes, p. 119, et seq. Relics, however, are not generally admitted as proof in this sceptical age; and there is nothing to show that the relics of the Himalayan missionaries were not fabricated in a later age of intense monasticism.

Asoka tried to suppress. He sent his minister to settle the dispute; but this led to a serious fray. The minister ordered the Buddhist monks to resume their religious, duties; and when they refused, he drew his sword and several of the holy men were slain.

This account demands careful consideration. There is an element of historical truth even in the distortion of the facts. The edicts prove that Asoka was no persecutor of the Bráhmans; but they also prove that he was no friend to either of the priestly orders. The incident recorded in the chronicles respecting the action of his minister thus seems to reveal a serious collision between the Raja and the priesthood generally, which is hushed up by the monkish chronicle. The blame is thrown upon the "ignorant minister," who had misunderstood the orders of the sovereign, and endeavoured to suppress the quarrel by force of arms, when he was only expected to investigate the claims of the conflicting parties. Asoka is said to have been in an agony of terror at his share in the slaughter of priests; but to have been at length relieved by a holy monk, who assured him that if the sacrilegious murders had been committed without his intention he had committed no sin. The story thus bears some resemblance to that of Thomas à Becket; and the remorse of Asoka may be likened to that of Henry II.10

¹⁰ Mahawanso, chap. v.

Further light will be thrown hereafter upon this incident by a consideration of the tradition of the third synod. There is a difficulty, however, in ascertaining the true period when the sectarian differences between the Brahmans and Bu-ldhists found expression in a violent antagonism. The Greek writers seem to indicate such an opposition, and do not blame the Brahmans so much as their opponents. (Compare Strabo, India, sects. 59, 70.) The philosophers who were opposed to the Brahmans, were called Pramnæ. These Pramnæ were a contentious people fond of argument. They ridiculed the Brahmans as boasters and fools for occupying themselves with physiology and astronomy. The Pramnæ of the mountains were deer-skins, and carried scrips filled with roots and drugs; they professed to practise medicine by means of incantations, charms, and amulets.

The Buddhist monks in Burma do not appear to practise astrology, which indeed is contrary to their religion. But there are Brahmans who profess astrology, and these men were often consulted by the king of Burma. Possibly the Pramnæ of the mountains were a tribe now extinct of medical Sramans.

There is no trace of any religious antagonism between Brahmans and Buddhists

II. THE THREE SYNODS.

The Buddhist chronicles of the Rajas of Magadha are not confined to the reign of Asoka. They profess to furnish historical data of the whole period from the death of Buddha to the death of Asoka, that is, from B.C. 543 to 288, comprising an interval of 255 years. 11 Their peculiar character may be inferred from the fact that the so-called annals mainly refer to three leading events, known as the three Synods or Convocations of Buddhist priests. These Synods are of small interest in dealing with political history, but they are regarded as of paramount importance in connection with religious history. They are alleged to have been convened at different intervals in order to maintain the authority of the canon of Buddhist scriptures, and check the efforts of heretics and schismatics to deviate from such authority. The annals are thus subordinate to the Synods, and are little better than framework by which the Synods are placed in chronological order. The first Synod was held in the year after Buddha's death, when Ajata-satru the parricide was Raja of Magadha. The second Synod was held exactly one hundred years afterwards, when a Raja named Kal-Asoka was reigning over Magadha. The third Synod was held in B.C. 309, or 234 years after the death of Buddha, when the celebrated Asoka was Raja of Magadha. Accordingly it may be advisable in the first instance to review the traditionary history of these Synods; and then to ascertain if any reliable data can be drawn from the remaining portion of the chronicles.

The first Synod is thus described: - "When Gótama

in the edicts, nor in the Hindú drama; but, as already shown, it finds expression in the Hindú epics, as well as in the Buddhist chronicles. It probably reached a climax in the early centuries of the Christian era.

¹¹ The Buddhist chronicles follow the Buddhist era, which commences with the year of Buddha's death. In the text it is adjusted to the Christian era; but it will be seen hereafter that the whole chronology prior to the reign of Asoka is wholly unreliable.

Buddha had entered Nirvána, Kasyapa the Bráhman hastened to the spot, and performed the funeral ceremonies, and distributed the relics.¹² At this time Kasyapa heard an aged monk rejoicing over the departure of Gótama, because henceforth the priesthood would cease to be troubled as to what was allowable and what was not allowable. Kasyapa was shocked at this disaffection, and determined to stop its further progress by holding a Convocation in the city of Rajagriha. Accordingly he selected five hundred monks to assemble together at the next religious season; and he also chose two disciples who were to declare before the whole Convocation what was Vinaya, and what was Dharma.¹⁴

"And it was told to Ajata-satru that the Convocation would be held at Rajagriha. So he built a splendid hall, and laid down five hundred carpets for the monks; and he set up a throne on one side for the high priest Kasyapa, and a pulpit in the centre for the two disciples to occupy in turn. When all had taken their seats Upáli ascended the pulpit, and was questioned by Kasyapa as to the Vinaya, precept by

¹² This has been already related. See ante, page 143, note.

¹³ The religious season has been called the Buddhist Lent. It lasted during the rains.

¹⁴ The terms Vinaya and Dharma are the key to Buddhism. Vinaya was the religion of the priesthood; Dharma was the religion of the masses or laity. Vinaya was supposed to comprise the precepts of monastic discipline which Buddha imparted to his disciples. Dharma was supposed to comprise the sermons or discourses which Buddha preached to the multitude, and which are known as Sutras. Thus the religion of the heart, which Raja Priyadarsi promulgated by means of his edicts, was known as Dharma. Whether the edicts were the result of the discourses, or the so-called discourses were a further development of the edicts, must be a vexed question.

In modern Buddhism Dharma means something more than the religion of the laity. A number of metaphysical discourses and speculations are added under the name of Abidharma. Accordingly the sacred canon of the Buddhist scriptures is known as the Tri-pitaka, or three baskets. It comprises the three classes of documents:—(1) The Vinaya, or rules of discipline. (2) The Sutras, or religious discourses of Buddha. (3) The Abidharma, or metaphysics and philosophy. The Abidharma is not mentioned in the Mahawanso, and was doubtless a later composition. The Buddhist monks explain that Abidharma is a part of Dharma.

It is stated in the chronicle that Upali recited the Vinaya, or rather replied to all the questions of Kasyapa respecting it. In like manner Ananda replied to the questions respecting Dharma. Both Upali and Ananda were disciples of Buddha during his life-time, and are supposed to have known his teachings by heart.

precept. Meantime the assembly of five hundred chanted the Vinaya, passage by passage, until they had learnt the whole. When Upáli had finished Ananda took his place, and was questioned by Kasyapa as to the Dharma; whilst the assembly chanted every passage, until they all knew it by heart as they had known the Vinaya. This Convocation lasted seven months, and was then brought to a close by Kasyapa, who declared that the religion of Gótama Buddha would last five thousand years." 16

The details of the first Synod are certainly surrounded with an air of unreality. It seems scarcely credible that the canon of Buddhist scripture should have been established so very shortly after the death of Buddha. It seems still less credible that it should have been accepted unanimously, without opposition or controversy of any kind, by a body of Buddhist monks who have been notorious for their disputatious and wrangling disposition from the days of Megasthenes downwards. The details are not drawn from any knowledge of public life, but from the narrow and petty experiences of the monastery. The assumed origin of the Synod is essentially a monastic idea. A crabbed old monk is supposed to have been impatient of priestly discipline, and to have pined for some petty indulgences which were contrary to the rules. The proceedings which followed are most suspicious. are strained and artificial. They bear no resemblance to any Convocation or Council, of which any historical record has been preserved. The settlement of a canon of scriptures by question and answer, whilst five hundred monks committed all the texts to heart, is the clumsy invention of a monk who has played the part of schoolmaster. To this day the Burmese boys in a Buddhist school learn their lessons in the same chanting fashion as that described in the Mahawanso. It is thus impossible to treat the account of the first Synod otherwise than as a myth, framed several centuries after the death of Buddha, for the purpose of investing the existing body of Buddhist scriptures with the highest authority.

¹⁵ Mahawanso, chap. iii., page 11. A profound belief in the truth of this prophecy still prevails in the world of Buddhism.

The details of the second Synod are of the same puerile character. One hundred years after the first Synod, a body of monks claimed ten indulgences, some of them so absurd that it is easier to believe that they were the invention of some later compiler than to accept them as the actual basis of a formidable heresy. However, a Convocation of seven hundred monks is said to have been held in the tenth year of a Raja named Kal Asoka, for the purpose of suppressing it. Ten thousand heretic monks were degraded for insisting on the indulgences; and the whole canon of scriptures was recited and chanted as before. This Synod lasted eight months. 16

The third Synod was held at the famous capital of Pataliputra, in the seventeenth year of the reign of Asoka, corresponding to the year B.C. 308 or 309. It was composed of a thousand monks, and is said to have lasted nine months. The details are somewhat confused, by being mixed up with the story of the sixty thousand Bráhmans, who were turned adrift by Asoka. This sovereign is said to have summoned all the priests in the universe to his great pagoda. There, in association with a holy monk, he interrogated each one in turn; those who expressed orthodox sentiments were passed on; those who gave heretical replies were expelled from the

¹⁶ Mahawanso, chap. iv., page 15. The story of this second Synod might have passed over in silence, had it not been accepted by some modern writers as historically true. Its character may be gathered from the following account of the so-called heresy:—

[&]quot;When Kal Asoka was Raja of Magadha the shameless monks of Vaisali asserted that ten indulgences were lawful. They declared that a priest might keep salt for any length of time, instead of for only seven days as prescribed by Sakya Muni; that he might eat food after the sun had gone down two inches, instead of eating nothing after noon as prescribed by Sakya Muni; that whilst abroad in the villages he might partake of indulgences that were forbidden in the monastery; that he might perform religious ceremonies in his own house instead of being required to do so in the public hall; that he might commit any act provided he subsequently obtained consent, whereas the consent should always precede the act; that he might commit any forbidden thing, provided that his superiors had set the example; that he might drink whey after mid-day, indulge in fermented toddy, use a seat covered with cloth, and accept gold and silver as alms, although all four things had been expressly ferbidden." Comment upon such puerihties is wholly unnecessary.

priesthood.¹⁷ The third Synod of a thousand priests was then held; the Vinaya and Dharma were recited and chanted as on previous occasions; and the holy monk who presided over the Convocation then brought the proceedings to a close, by preaching a discourse on the means of suppressing doubts on points of faith.¹⁸

It was immediately after this Synod that the missionaries were sent abroad, as already noticed, to preach the religion of Buddha.

It is difficult to arrive at the origin of these conceptions of ecclesiastical Synods. The idea of holding a Synod for free discussion is familiar to European forms of thought; although, as already seen, it has never been realized in the lifeless mode described in the Buddhist chronicles. Asiatic, however, cannot conceive of a free discussion in religious matters. If two parties dispute a question, one must be right and the other wrong; and the one who gains the victory must be universally accepted, whilst the one who is defeated must be universally condemned. The Asiatic can only conceive of a paramount authority to decide between the two; to prescribe what is orthodox, and to reject what is heterodox; and it is this conception of an over-ruling authority, so foreign to the idea of a free discussion, which finds expression in the Buddhist chronicles. The Synod was ostensibly convened to settle the canon of scripture, and yet there was no discussion. The president ascertained what was Vinaya and what was Dharma; and the result was unanimously accepted by the whole Convocation without a murmur.

Perhaps some clue to these Synods may be found in the statement of Megasthenes that king Sandrokottos held a Great Assembly at the commencement of every year, for the purpose of considering the various measures that were pro-

¹⁷ These questions were alleged to have been put in a round-about way which is customary amongst Asiatics. The priests were not directly asked respecting their individual views, but as to what doctrine was taught by Buddha. If they asserted that Buddha taught a doctrine which was heterodox, they were expelled; if they asserted that he taught a doctrine that was orthodox, they were passed on.

¹⁸ Mahawanso, chap. v., page 41.

posed for the improvement of the earth and its productions, or for the benefit of the State. It may also be inferred that some of the measures of Raja Priyadarsi, such as the introduction of medical establishments, and establishment of popular instruction, may have been debated at these Assemblies. But the monkish compilers of the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era appear to have belonged to a lazy and degenerate community; and are thus open to the charge of having falsified the chronicles for the purpose of concealing the practical philanthropy which prevailed in the reign of Asoka, and of representing their order as the special favourites of the pious and illustrious Raja.

. HL CHRONICLES OF MAGADHA, B.C. 543 to 288.

Apart from these so-called Synods, the Buddhist chronicles, from the death of Buddha in B.C. 543, to the accession of Asoka in B.C. 325, might be dismissed as a monkish jumble of myths and names. In the so-called annals there are only five Rajas of Magadha, who appear as representatives of particular dynasties; and they are the only sovereigns who appear to have the slightest claim to be regarded as historical personages. Their names are as follows:—

- 1. Ajata-satru the parricide, who was reigning when Buddha died, and also when the first Synod was held.
- 2. Saisu-naga the serpent-worshipper, and father of that Kal Asoka, who was reigning when the second Synod was held.
- 3. Nanda the freebooter.
- 4. Chandra-gupta the cowherd.
- 5. Asoka, or Priyadarsi.

Ajata-satru is chiefly famous for having murdered his father. Three Rajas are said to have reigned after him, but nothing is recorded respecting them beyond the years of their reigns, and the bare statement that each in turn murdered . his father. Thus a dynasty was created or invented known as the parricide dynasty. In Buddhist chronicles it occupies a period of half a century; in reality it is nothing more than the reign of Ajata-satru repeated over and over again. The four next sovereigns, who are supposed, more or less, to represent dynasties, may be really resolved into one man. In the case of the three first the legitimacy is said to be The mother of each of the three is represented doubtful. as of dubious origin, or low caste. Probably the mother of Asoka would have been degraded in the same way, only that it was deemed expedient to exalt him as a Buddhist hero.19 Each of the four Rajas is said to have acquired the throne by force. The Buddhist chronicle gives the years of their respective reigns, and also the years of the reigns of certain intermediate Rajas; but otherwise the so-called annals of all these dynasties are as bare of real events as the annals of the parricides.20

The Greek accounts of Aggrammes and Sandrokottos furnish the only clue to the real history. According to the Greek story already related, Aggrammes was reigning at Patali-putra when Alexander invaded the Punjab. He is said

¹⁹ There is something wrong about Asoka. In the commentaries translated by Mr Turnour (see Introduction to the Mahawanso) Asoka is said to have been on bad terms with his father, Vindusura, who was afraid of being murdered by him. This idea would bring Asoka in somewhat close association with Ajata-satru.

²⁰ In the commentaries on the Buddhist chronicles, which are translated in Mr Turnour's Introduction to the Mahawanso, and also in Bishop Bigandet's legend of the life of Gó:ama Buddha, there are a number of tedious mytha relating to some of these Rajas, which defy every attempt at interpretation, and yet seem to refer to real revolutions in Hindustan. The infant Saisunaga is said to have been born of a Vaisali princess, who had been carried away captive to the city of Raja. griha, and appointed to the post of chief courtesan. The babe was exposed outside the city, and preserved by a great snake or Naga; and then grew up and became Raja of Magadha. Another adventurer named Nanda joined some free-booters, and became Raja of Magadha. Lastly, Chandragupta is said to have been born of a Vaisali princess, and exposed in a cow-pen, where the infant was protected by a bull, and brought up by a cowherd, and ultimately became Raja of Magadha. To complicate the matter, similar details are introduced into the life of Krishna, This god, or hero, is said to have been brought up as the son of a cowherd named Nanda. Like Saisunaga, the infant Krishna was protected by the great Snake. See ante.

to have been an illegitimate usurper. He was born of the queen, but his father was not the reigning Raja, but a barber who was a paramour of the queen. The reigning Raja was put to death by the barber, and Aggrammes obtained the throne. This story in its main outline corresponds with that of Ajatasatru. According to the Buddhist chronicles, Ajata-satru had been instigated by the shaven priest Devadatta to murder his father Vimbasara, Raja of Magadha, and ascend the throne. Thus Ajata-satru is resolved into Aggrammes; and the amorous barber into the shaven priest Devadatta. padding of two centuries is then inserted between Ajata-satru and Asoka. Its object is unknown, but it is evident that a jumble of names of mythical Rajas and stories of mythical Synods has been engrafted in the chronicle.21 Thus Sandrokottos appears in Greek story as having made his appearance in the Punjab as a contemporary of Alexander and Aggrammes. He is said to have had an interview with Alexander, but ultimately made his escape. Subsequently he re-appears in the Punjab and expels the Greeks, and becomes Raja of Magadha. He is the ally of the Græco-Bactrian kings, and husband of the daughter of Seleukos Nikator. Thus the story of Sandrokottos also agrees in the main with that of Asoka. According to the Buddhist chronicle, Asoka was appointed when very young to be governor or viceroy of Ujain in the remote territory of Malwa. Whilst here he was ordered to subdue a revolt which had broken out in the Punjab; in other words, he expelled the Greeks from Taxila. He ultimately obtained possession of the Magadha kingdom, but his further proceedings have been perverted into religious myths. Curiously enough the Buddhist chronicle states that in his old age he lost his queen, and then raised her attendant, a vain and malicious creature, to the dignity of queen consort.29 Whether this incident refers to the marriage

²¹ The mythical character of these two centuries is further proved by the story, of Kasyapa, and his preservation of the relics of Gótama Buddha for a period of two centuries in a brazen vihara. Kasyapa prophesied that after two centuries a R ja would reign named Asoka, who would discover the relics. It is evident from the edicts that Asoka was not at all likely to venerate relics.—Bigandet.

²² Maháwanso, ch. xx., page 122.

of Sandrokottos to a Greek wife can only be matter of conjecture; but if it was Asoka who married the Greek lady, the event would in all probability be recorded much after the fashion in which it appears in the Buddhist chronicle.

These details are practically devoid of all value. not really affect the history of India whether they are true or whether they are false. Indeed they might be cast aside as worthless, did they not prove, once and for all, that Buddhist and Brahmanical traditions, whether related in Sanskrit Puránas or Páli chronicles, are alike unauthentic and unreliable. The salient points in the Buddhist chronicles have now been tested by the impartial and contemporary authority of Greek writers, and by what appear to be contemporary inscriptions; and the result renders it impossible to doubt that the chronicles have been falsified by the unknown compilers beyond all hope of redemption. The Bráhmans have only completed what the Buddhists began, and it may be safely asserted that for all historical purposes the Sanskrit Puránas are more wild and extravagant than even the Páli chronicles. Thus Buddhists and Bráhmans have done their best to blot out the remains of the past for the sole and selfish purpose of aggrandizing themselves; and by so doing they have justly earned the reputation of being more unscrupulous in the perversion of the annals of their empire. than any other body of literati which have been represented in historical times.

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