MEMOIRS OF THE
ARCHÆOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

No. 20

THE ORIGIN AND CULT OF TĀRĀ

BY

HIRANANDA SHASTRI, M.A., M.O.L.

CALCUTTA: GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CENTRAL PUBLICATION BRANCH
1925
Government of India Publications are obtainable from
the Government of India Central Publication Branch,
8, Hastings Street, Calcutta, and from the following Agents:

EUROPE.

Office of the High Commissioner for India,

Ernest Leroux, 23, Rue Bonaparte, Paris
Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, Holland

and all Booksellers in the United Kingdom.

INDIA AND CEYLON.

Provincial Book Depots:

MADRAS—Office of the Superintendent, Government Press, Mount Road, Madras.


SIND—Library attached to the Office of the Commissioner in Sind, Karachi.

BENGAL—I Office of the Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Writers' Buildings, Room No. 1, Ground Floor, Calcutta.


CENTRAL PROVINCES AND BERAR—Office of the Central Provinces Secretariat, Nagpur.

ASSAM—Office of the Superintendent, Assam Secretariat Press.


COOCH—Office of the Chief Commissioner of Coorg, Bangalore.


The Book Company, Calcutta.

Pairs Book Club, Ltd., Rangoon.

Karasandas Narandes & Sons, Suri.


N. B. Mathur, Supdt., Nasir Kanan Hind Press, Allahabad.

The North India Christian Treat and Book Society, 15, Clive Road, Allahabad.

Ran Dayal Agarwals, 184, Katar, Allahabad.

Manager, Newa Khidoo Press, Lucknow.

The Upper India Publishing House, Ltd., 41, Aminabad Park, Lucknow.

Musashi Sona Bose, Managing Proprietor, Indian Army Book Depot, Jhul, Cawnpore.

Raj Nabab M. Golab Singh & Sons, Mufid-i-Am Press, Lahore and Allahabad.

Rams Khazsh & Sons, Booksellers, Anarkali, Lahore.

Pun Brothels, Booksellers and Publishers, Katchari Road, Lahore.

Manager of the Imperial Book Depot, 63, Chandray Chowk Street, Delhi.

Oxford Book and Stationary Company, Delhi.


Proprietor, Rangoon Times Press, Rangoon.


The International Buddhist Book Depot, Post Box No. 471, Rangoon.

Times of Ceylon Co., Ltd.,

The Manager, Ceylon Observer, Colombo.

The Manager, The Indian Book Shop, Bemara City.

R. C. Bhan, Ery, Proprietor, Albert Library, Dacca.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory remarks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tārā in Brahmanical mythology</td>
<td>1–9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tārā in inscriptions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tārā in Tantra literature</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tārā in Jaina mythology</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tāri of the aborigines</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tārā in sculpture</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tārā in Buddhism</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin of Tārā probably Buddhist and non-Indian</td>
<td>13–14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tārā goddess of navigation</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probable date when Tārā worship arose</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix giving forms of Tārā according to Buddhist texts</td>
<td>25–27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF PLATES.

Plate I.—(a) Mātrikā panel at Ellora.
    (b) Mātrikā panel in the Lucknow Museum.
    (c) Avalokiteśvara and Tārā: bas-relief from Kānheri.

II.—(a & b) Representations of Tārā (standing).

III.—(a, b & c) Representations of Tārā (sitting).

IV.—(a) Bhrikutī-Tārā from Chandi Jago near Malang, Java.
    (b) Bronze statuette of Mārichi from Central Java.
    (c) Tārā from Java in the Indian Museum.
    (d) Four bronze images of Tārā?
    (e) Bronze statuette of Śyāma Tārā from Chandi Loc near Nganjuk, Java.
TEXT ILLUSTRATIONS.

Figure 1. Ekajata
Figure 2. Sutaraka

Two Sasanadevas in Jaina mythology

Page 10
THE ORIGIN AND CULT OF TĀRĀ.

Introductory remarks.—While noticing a few sculptures which were added to the Provincial Museum at Lucknow when I was in charge of that Institution, in an article of mine that has appeared as memoir No. XI of the Archæological Survey Department, I incidentally made some observations regarding the question of the origin of Tārā, the well-known goddess in the Buddhist and Hindu mythologies. Those observations led me to develop the question further and the results of my further studies are embodied in this paper. My chief object is to find out whether Tārā had a Buddhist or Brahmanical origin, whether her cult arose in India or elsewhere, and what was her chief function originally. In connexion with these problems the dhyānas of the chief bhūdhas or varieties of the goddess mentioned in Buddhist texts have been given at the end of the memoir in the form of an appendix.

Let us see first of all how Tārā is represented in Hindu or Brahmanical mythology.

Tāra in Brahmanical mythology.—Brahmanical mythology knows of several Tārās, but here we are concerned with the goddess of this name who is known as the second Mahāvidyā and is sometimes called Dvitiyā or the Second; Kāli being known as Adyā or the First. Her dhyāna is given in several tantra works as will be noticed below. Her chief forms are three, namely, Ekajata, Nilasarasvatī and Ugrā, although several others are mentioned under various names. These designations do not mean distinct divinities. On the contrary, they indicate only the particular aspects of the deity which the votary has in view, the devatā being one and the same throughout. This is the case not only with Tārā but with other gods and goddesses as well, whether they be old or new, a fact which was recognised long ago by Yāska, the well-known etymologist of ancient India who in his comments on the Nighantu or the Nirukta1 said:—

'पञ्चवद्यमेचतुर्वि माणाभावाचत्वाय एक चाका वदुः गुणोत्ति

'Ve see actually that because of the greatness of a devatā or deity the one principle of life, i.e. the deity, is praised in different ways.' This oneness of a devatā

1 Chap. VII, pada 1, Kāraṇā 5.
THE ORIGIN AND CULT OF TĀRĀ.

is recognised by the Tantras also. For instance, the Tārātantra, while speaking of the bhedas or various forms of Tārā, clearly says¹ that the great goddess is but one and she is threefold in name only. एवेव र्तात देवी नाममार्थ दिवधा भवन्. But in the present case this oneness or ekatva, it seems to me, indicates rather the absorption of several originally diverse but similar cults into the one cult of Tārā—the cult of Tārā being so popular that it absorbed other cults of like nature with the result that the divinities of those cults merged into Tārā and their appellations became synonyms of her name. That a chelā or disciple is asked to worship a particular form and not the principal divinity and is initiated into the mantra and the mode of worship of that particular form alone, even in these days, tends to support this view. In some cases there may be suprersession, as, for instance, in the case of the Vedic gods Varuṇa and Indra, which is evidenced by the Rigveda² itself. The early Indo-Aryans, who in their advances became more and more warlike and wanted a warlike god to worship came increasingly to prefer Indra to Varuṇa, as the latter was rather a moral god busy in watching the sins of the people through his spies, the ēpats, whereas the former was so intent on killing his foes in the battle-field that in consequence he became the national hero, while poor Varuṇa, assuming a minor position, had to content himself with his abode in the waters! Another instance of the absorption of cults is shown by the case of Śiva, whose cult has now practically absorbed all the minor cults with their godlings, the bhūtas, the pretas, the gods and goddesses of sickness or disease, who were enrolled as the host or gauṣ of Śiva, Śiva himself taking the title of Bhūtanātha or Bhūtapati. The worship of the chief divinity or the principal form would propitiate all the rest, as the chief divinity represents them all. The bhedas or different forms are differentiated in order that a worshipper may keep one form in view for meditation or worship.

To advert to our deity Tārā. The appellation of Ekajatā is given because of her one chignon. She is called Nilā or Nilasarasvati because of her blue colour and her being an embodiment of wisdom. She is fierce, or she saves from dire calamity, and is consequently known as Ugrā ुद्गपातारिरिणो वणतु. Taking the various representations or dhyanas of Tārā as found in works like Tārārahasya, Tārātantra, Tantrasāra, Mantramahodāhi and others, I find that she is primarily a saviour, either riding a corpse lying on a lotus, or standing in the attitude of an archer (the pratyalidhā pose), is generally of blue colour, bears Akshobhya in her head-dress, and holds a lotus in her hand besides various ornaments and emblems.

References in Brahmanical literature.—In the praise or stuti of the goddess Durgā by Yudhishthira, the eldest Pāṇḍava, which occurs in the great epic, the Mahābhārata, we find that the goddess is extolled by the name of Tārini. Tārā and Tārini are identical terms both signifying तर्कवनयाः ³ ‘saviour’, i.e., the goddess who enables one to swim across the waters of tribula-

¹ Patabala 5: st. 19.
² Hymns 82 and 83 of the VII Book.
³ Bānumji Dīshāṣīt on the Amarakosā under Tārā, i. 21.
tion. Besides this name, we find several appellations in this eulogy which seem to indicate distinct divinities, e.g., Kāli, Chaṇḍī or Sarasvatī. Apparently then, Tārīṇī also designates a distinct divinity. But when we remember that the traits mentioned in this stōtra are not uncommon to other divinities, we are constrained to wonder whether Tārī as conceived in later Tāntrika works, i.e., as the second Mahāvidyā, was at all in the view of the composer of this eulogy. Durgā, the devatā of this hymn, as we find her described in the Mārkaṇḍeṇya-Purāṇa, which is one of the chief books of the Śāktas, is the female principle in the universe. She is the embodiment of the tejas or energy of the gods, the other goddesses being regarded as her forms or rūpas:—

"... dīnāṃ māhāstōnalāṃ bhūtān āḥ..."

This might be an attempt towards monotheism but I doubt very much if the highly developed cult of the ten mahāvidyās was at all known to the author of this Purāṇa, far less to the author of the above-mentioned eulogy in the great epic. In the tāntra works I find these vidyās or 'muses' to be ten wherever-as in this Purāṇa the Mahāvidyā is only one as is clear from the following verses:—

' mādāvāya mādāvāya mādāvāya mādāvāya...'

Such verses go to prove that this cult was not known to the author of the Purāṇa. The cult of the mātrīs or divine mothers is no doubt very old and was evidently known to him as well as to the author of the Mahābhārata. This is clear from the fact that the mātrīs themselves are mentioned in the epic and in the Purāṇas. The divine mothers are named not only in the Koṣas but in the ancient Hindu literature as well. The antiquity of their cult is also evidenced by inscriptions. The Kadamba dynasty\(^1\) and the Chāḷukya\(^2\) kings worshipped the seven mothers, and a large temple was built for them during the reign of Viśva-varman,\(^3\) the king of Malwa, in the year 480 (423-424 A.D.). They formed a not unfamiliar theme of sculpture, for, we see them represented in different parts of India. The Gupta emperors, for instance Kumāra-Gupta and Skanda-Gupta, had their images set up for worship.\(^4\) Two of their representations\(^5\) are reproduced below in plate II where they are marked

1 Indian Antiquity, Vol. VI, p. 27.
3 Fleet, Gupta Inscriptions, p. 70.
5 Plate LXXII in the Cave Temples of India (Burgess and Burgess) and plate XXXIV in the Ellora Cave Temples (Burgess) represent two other panels of the mātrīs in the Caves.
THE ORIGIN AND CULT OF TĀRĀ.

(a) and (b). One is early and the other late medieval. But it is very doubt-
ful if the Tāriṇī of the Mahābhārata is identical with the Tārā of the Tantras.
It is true that the Tantras also make Tārā one of the forms of Pārvatī or
the divine sakti, but that is only an attempt towards the Vedāntic notion
which we find fully developed in expressions like 'सम्व खविरवट व्रजः'. This is
clear from verses like the following which we find in the Mahānirvāyatanastra:—

"The great Lord, the god of gods and lord of Pārvatī, on hearing these words
thus addressed Pārvatī with great affection.........You are the origin of all the
sciences, you are the origin of us all as well. You know the universe but none
comprehends you. You are Kāli, you are Tāriṇī, Durgā, Śoḍaśi, Bhuvaneśvari,
Dhūmavatī, Bagalā, Bhairavi, and Chhinmasastakā. You are Annapūrṇā and
the goddess of speech and you are Lakṣmī (who resides in the lotus). You are the
embodiment of all energy and your body is made up of all the gods."

Here the cult of the Mahāvidyās is fully developed and evidently this
tantra is posterior to the Mārkandeya-Purāṇa and a fortiori to the Mahābhārata
eulogy of the goddess Durgā, alluded to above. The fact of the stotra being
vague as compared to the description in this tantra shows the former to be
earlier. Still I do not think there can be any great difference in age or that
the 'stuti' is so old as I first thought it to be. "Mr. Utgikar" as has been
pointed out by Prof. M. Winternitz, "has found that the best manuscripts
of the Vīrāṭaparvan do not contain the Durgāstotra at all." Consequently
it has to be treated as a later addition.

Attempts towards monotheism we find in some of the oldest Brahmanical
works, for instance, in the Rig-veda itself, as in the verse—

which is so often quoted. Still, I think, the fact that the personality of the
divinity is highly developed and quite distinct in the Tantra while not so in

2 I. 164. 46.
the sotra makes the difference in their age self-evident. If we compare the
Prakritiikanjya of the Brahmanavaitratta-Purana and the Durgasaptasati of the
Maraṇḍeya-Purana, both giving the episode of king Suratha and the
merchant Samadhi, we shall at once find that the goddess Durga, the visible
personification of the active principle, is not so distinct in the one as she is
in the other, for, in the former the Sāṅkhya view of the Purusha and the Prakriti
is not yet materialized. A comparison of the earlier and the later Brahmanical
literature shows how gradual the personification or materialization of the
Prakriti or the active principle had been. In the earlier works, like the
Sāṅkhayana-Tirihyasutra, we do find, for example, a goddess Bhadrakali,
but how different she is from the Adiṣya or Kali of the Mahāvidya cult of the
Tantras! Similarly, the Uma-Haimavati of the Talavakāra or Kenapanishad
is not identical with the Uma of the Kumara-sambhava of Kalidāsa or that
of the Purāṇas. Going to still eariler sources, we find how dissimilar is the
‘Divine Vāc’ or Logos personified in the Vāgāmbhrinīya-sūkta of the Rig-veda
from the Sarasvati of the later ages. While recognizing, therefore, that the
worship of the female principle or energizing activity, i.e., Śakti, was known to
even the Vedic Aryans to say nothing of the authors of later works, I find
that there seems to be no trace of the highly developed Śakti-worship of the
Tantras in the Purāṇas and the books which came into existence before the
third or fourth century A.D. This ‘silence’ can hardly be explained or
accounted for unless we admit that the cult was unknown to that period. To
say that this pertains to the ‘Vāma-mārga’ and the lower-class people whereas
these books were written by those who followed the dakshina-mārga will not
hold good, for the Purāṇas themselves treat of the tāntric practices without
any reservation. But for this one could hardly expect such sayings as ‘गणेव गर्ज घरं स्वते
सुध यानुदृष्टिप्राप्तम’ attributed in the Maraṇḍeya-Purana to the goddess Durga herself.
The only reasonable explanation seems to be that the development was gradual. That
it has been so we find not only from the Purāṇas but from other works
as well. I have just alluded to the differences we notice in the personality
of the Durgā of the two Purāṇas, namely, the Brahmanavaitratta and the Maraṇḍeya
and the Tantras or other works. The same is the case with other
deities. Some were superseded while others became more and more popular
and consequently their personalities as well as their cults were much more
developed.

The tāntrika cult of the Mahāvidyās does not appear to be very old. I
am not aware that it is known to the eighteen principal Purāṇas. The Brahma-
maṇḍa-Purana in its Lalitopakhyāna not only alludes to but fully describes the
goddess Tara as a distinct divinity.

‘तारा नाम महाशक्तिः’

but she is not the Mahāvidyā. In the description, it gives, she is called Tārā
āndā, or ‘Tāra’ the mother like her Mongolian name ‘Dara-čhe’ and is
represented as the chief of the countless saktis or nāvikis (boat-women) con-
trolling the navigation in ‘the lake of nectar’ or ‘Amritavāpi’ who can suppress the flooded waters:

"Tārā, the mother, who can control the rush of waters, is the chief of those saktis who navigate or guide the boats and have dark complexion." This Tārā though not yet the second Mahāvidyā of the tantras is, I think, her prototype. As this is a highly interesting reference with very strong bearing on my thesis, I quote the text containing the description of the deity and give a rendering thereof:

"There is a great hall called ‘manas’ whose middle enclosure comprises the nectar-lake. There is no way to go into it save the conveyance of a boat. There is the great sakti, Tārā by name, who controls the gate. There are many attendants of Tārā by name, who are dark like the blue lotus and are sporting in the waters of the lake with thousands of boats of jewels. They come to this shore and go back to the other shore. There are millions of boat-women under Tārā who are in the prime of youth. They dance and sing the most
sacred fame of the goddess. Some hold oars and others conches in their hands. They are drinking the nectar-water (of the lake) and going hither and thither on hundreds of those boats. Of these śaktis who guide the boats and have dark colour the chief one is Tārā, the mother, who can calm the floods. Without the permission of Mantraṇī and Daṇḍamanātha, Tārā does not allow even Śiva to come in the waters of the Vāpikā or lake. The union of Tārā and the ‘Powers controlling the boats’ (tārāṇi-sakti) is indeed very charming. Thus Tārā, the mother, surrounded by various boats and herself occupying a large boat shines exceedingly.”

After this comes the description of Varunī and then of Kurukullā, who like Tārā herself, have their subsevient śaktis, occupy bejewelled boats and guard their kākshās or enclosures. Kurukullā is described as follows:


“Midway between the two halls there is a lake called Vimarśa where there is the goddess called Kurukullā who lords over the boats. She is dark like the Tumāla tree and wears a dark bodice. She is surrounded by other mistresses of boats who are also like her. She holds an oar of jewels in her hands and is powerful owing to her ever increasing intoxication, or exhilaration. She moves all around, O Sage! occupying the boat of jewels.”

That Tārā of the tantras was not known to the earlier Brahmanical literature will be best evidenced by the Agni-Purāṇa for, while describing the images of the devīs or goddesses, it mentions Tārā only as a Yojini. Here I may point out the fact, which looks significant, that when enumerating the sixty-four yoginiṣ it names two, namely, Akshobhya and Sarvajñā, which cannot fail to remind us of Buddha—Buddha the unperturbed or calm and Buddha the omniscient. Akshobhya we know is one of the Dhyāni Buddhas and Sarvajñā is one of the recognized names of Buddha.1 This Tārā and the Tārā of the Mayādipikā, referred to elsewhere,2 are evidently one, but Tārā, the Mahāvidyā, is different. Besides, the Yojinīṣ are of a far lower rank than a devatā though they are worshipped at every auspicious occasion. Whether the Tārā of the Lalitopākyāna or the Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa is known to the tantras I am not certain. Possibly she is not. The Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa may be regarded as one of the earlier Purāṇas for, as pointed out by Bühler long ago, the account

1 Cfr. Amuruksha 1, 13.
2 Memoir No. XI, p. 3.
THE ORIGIN AND CULT OF TĀRĀ.

of the kings given in it stops with the Imperial Guptas and their contemporaries, which could not have been the case had the Purāṇa been composed after the fifth century A.D.

The next reference to Tārā in a work which, strictly speaking, may hardly be termed ṭāṇtrika is perhaps in the Laghuśrutī ‘the little or short eulogy,’ a good edition of which with the commentary of Rāghavānanda has been brought out by M. M. Ganapati Sastri of Trivandrum. It has been quoted elsewhere and I need not repeat what I have already said there.¹ This beautiful little poem was, according to the commentator Rāghavānanda, composed by an author who was called Laghubhaṭṭaraka. The name Laghubhaṭṭaraka, however, seems to me to be more like a tokḥullus or nom de guerre than a real name and a reference to the last stanza of the poem would suggest that it was taken by the author in consideration of his ‘laghuṭraṇa’ or smallness evidently out of kusavatī or modesty. The name of the poem, too, would lead to the same inference. What his real name was I do not know. Nor am 1 aware of his date. Still, I do not think the work is earlier than the seventh or eighth century A.D.

In the Brahmansical tantra works Tārā is well known and is one of the chief divinities if not the principal one. In some cases she is regarded as unequalled in so far as she is ‘quick in granting boons’ or success—

¹ Memoir No. XI, p. 5.

The true Brahmansical tantra-books do not appear to be very old. Perhaps they do not go back farther than the 6th century A.D. and owing to this reason, Tārā, as represented in them, is not to be found in older literature. How she is described in these Tantras we shall see presently.

The inscriptions known to me do not mention the Brahmansical Tārā though they speak of Tārā the Buddhist divinity. The earliest mention of the Buddhist Tārā in an epigraphical document, so far as I am aware, is in the Nāgari inscription of Java which is dated in the Śaka year 700 (A.D. 778). The next in date is the Chālukyan inscription of the reign of Tribhuvanamalla Vikramāditya, VI, whose reign began in the Śaka year 1017, i.e., 1095-6 A.D.

Tārā is a very important and popular deity in the tantra literature current in Northern India. According to the Samayācāratantra she belongs to the Uttarāmnāya or the sacred texts of the north. It is owing to this fact that she is not so well known in Southern India. Tradition, recorded in the Epigraphia Indica, would indicate that she was not known there before the 8th century. It says that during the reign of king Himāśītaladevā of Kāśichī (cir. 8th century A.D.) there arose a serious quarrel for supremacy, between the Jainas and the Buddhists. The latter wanted to establish themselves in Southern India but were overcome together with their goddess Tārā who had then secretly descended into a pot, by the Jaina teacher Akalarakadevā.
at Kāñchī. Rao Bahadur H. Krishna Sastrī tells me that it is rumoured that the goddess at Kāñchī, called Kāmākṣī, is worshipped on certain days in the week with all the ritual of Śaṅktaism, much condemned by the Brahmans, and it is not improbable that the goddess Kāmākṣī is the Buddhist goddess Tārā of this Jaina-Buddhist dispute. That Tārā never gained ground in the south is further evidenced by the Tatvānidiḥī, a very useful collection of highly interesting quotations from various works and utterances by famous persons or authors bearing on the Hindu pantheon, which was compiled by Śrī Mummadi Krishnarāja Odaya, the ruler of Mysore. It gives a dhyāna of Ugra-Tārā but instead of naming any authority simply says āmnāye "in the sacred texts." This will show that the author of the work and his group of learned pandits, 'प्राचीनविरामसमूहसुवर्णप्रकरितमयस',

were not quite familiar with the books or tantrās bearing on the cult of the goddess and this could not have been the case had she been a popular divinity in the south. The Uttarāmnāya seems to be hardly known there even in these days. The late Mr. Gopi Nath Rao in his learned book on Hindu iconography, which was based on the principal āgamas known in the south, leaves out Tārā altogether!

Tārā is perhaps known to all the chief tantrās of the north. The dhyāna of Tārā is given in some of these as well as other tantra works as has been noticed by me already and need not be recapitulated here. The description of the goddess in these works presupposes, apparently, a prototype which, as will be shown later on, was the Buddhist divinity of that name. Leaving aside other considerations this fact alone is a sufficient proof of the late origin of these works. The legend according to which Vasishṭha went to Mahāchāna to learn the mode of worshipping Tārā from Buddha himself as it was not known to anybody else and was different from the Brahmanical method of worshipping gods and goddesses would lead us to the same conclusion. The comparison of the traits in the dhyānas, as shown below, will lend an additional support to this hypothesis.

A goddess Tārā is known to the Jaina pantheon also, though there she does not seem to hold a chief rank. Hemachandra in his Abhidhānachintāmaṇi mentions Sutārakā or Sutārā as the Sākṣarācārī of the ninth Jina, namely, Svādhinātha. According to the Śvetāmbara view, Sutārā and Sutārakā are identical, ku being a mere svārtha suffix, and I doubt if there is any difference

---

1 The priests in charge, however, denied it when I made a personal enquiry at the time of my visit last year.
2 This dhyāna runs as follows:

प्राचीनविरामसमूहसुवर्णप्रकरितमयस परा ||
खङ्ग नौप्रमुखस्यपर्वयुः कुचाकरेकोऽवस्थान ||
खरो नौकहस्तस्यप्रत्ययादित्यवापि स्वार्थः ||
स्वाधिकारलक्षणान्तर्गतोऽवत्ततां स्वयं ||

3 A. K. Maithra, Introduction to the Tārā-Tantras, one of the publications of the Varendra Research Society.
4 Memoir No. XI, p. 4.
between these terms and the name Tārā. This identification is supported by the fact that Bhṛikuṭi, who is another Buddhist form of Tārā, is, according to the Śvetāmbaras, the Śāsanādevi attendant on Chandraprabha, the 8th Jina. To find a divinity of the Brahmical or Buddhist pantheon doing duty as an attendant on a Jina in the Jaina cult should cause no wonder for this is only an attempt to show the superiority of the latter over the former. Similar things we find in Mahāyāna Buddhism as well. How far back this cult of Śāsanādevi goes cannot be said definitely, still, analogy would show that this conception of Sutārā or Sutārakā arose after the cult of Tārā.

We know that the Jainas also placed the divinities of the Hindu pantheon in positions subordinate to those of their own. It may be noted here that it is the Śvetāmbaras who know these two names, the Digambaras call Bhṛikuṭi 'Jvālāmālini' and Sutārakā 'Mahākāli.' The dhyāna of these two Śāsanādevis, as given by Burgess in his article on the Digambara Jaina Iconography, which appeared some years ago in the Indian Antiquary, is:—

'Jvālāmālini or Bhṛikuṭi, the Yakṣini of Chandraprabha, has eight arms, bearing various weapons and two snakes. Flames issue from her mukuta. Her lāńchana is the bull.' The following figure reproduced from the said article shows how she is represented in the Digambara iconography.

Fig. 1.
Mahākāli or Sutārakā,¹ the Yakshiṇī of Suvidhinātha has four arms with rod and fruit(?) but no cognizance, as would appear from the following copy of the drawing also given there.

A goddess of the name of Tārī is known to some of the aboriginal people, e.g., the Khonds, but she appears to be neither Brahmanical nor Jaina nor Buddhist. In the account given by Prof. Avery in the Indian Antiquary she is shown as the earth goddess and since she presided over fertility, human victims were immolated, chiefly at the time of sowing, to propitiate her. The Khonds say that the goddess Tārī lives in heaven with her beneficent husband Bara Pennu. This blood-thirsty goddess has nothing in common with our Tārī, the 'Saviouress,' though the beneficence of her husband may remind us of the great compassionate Avalokiteśvara. The resemblance of the names can hardly be taken as a proof of identity especially when we remember the maxim that sound etymology does not depend on the similarity of sound.

It is difficult to say which is the earliest image of Tārī known to us, but so far as I am aware, no representations of her are known dating before the sixth century A.D. I believe, moreover, that early statuary knows only the Buddhist Tārī and not the Brahmanical Tārī, indeed I do not remember to

¹ Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson; The Heart of Jainism, p. 312 (chart).
have seen any really Brahmanical Tārā figure which may with certainty be ascribed to even the late medieval period. The testimony of Yuan Chüan shows that Tārā—not the second Mahāvidyā but the Bodhisattva—was very popular in his time. In the eighth century her worship extended to Java as is evidenced by a Nāgarā inscription recording the date of the construction in the year 1700 of the Śaka era (=A.D. 778) of the sanctuary called Kalasan Chandi which, as is shown by the remains, must have been one of the most remarkable temples of the island. In this epigraph we find a Śailendra, prince, the founder of the sanctuary, doing homage to Tārā, the saviour of men, as the noble and venerable one whose smile made the sun to shine and whose frown made darkness to envelope the terrestrial sphere. This temple was dedicated to Tārā herself whose image it enshrined and that image is, perhaps, as would appear from the account given by Scheltema, the one which lies in the Residency grounds at Dīkṣṭakarta. Later on, i.e., about the twelfth century, she became still more popular and we are told that there was hardly a household altar in North India in those days without a statue of Tārā.

Tārā holds the same place in Buddhism which the goddess Durgā has in Brahmanism. She figures as the counterpart of Śakti of Avalokiteśvara just as Durgā is the Śakti of Śiva. The latter, namely, Durgā, is depicted as the mother of the gods—the highest in the Brahmanical mythology. Similarly in the Buddhist or Mahāyāna pantheon, Tārā is represented as the mother of the Buddhas as well as Bodhisattvas. Then she appears as practically independent—a Bodhisattva not inferior to any other, rather superior, who could be approached directly without the aid of any intermediary, which is not the case with other divinities of the first rank and consequently accounts for her great popularity. How she is chiefly represented by the Buddhists and how she compares with the Brahmanical Tārā I have already shown.

From what has been remarked above, it can be inferred that the goddess Tārā was Buddhist originally. Let us see how far this surmise is correct. I have tried to show that this goddess is practically unknown to the earlier Brahmanical books where if any distinct personality is mentioned under the name of Tārā it seems to be more Buddhist than Brahmanical. The āṇtras themselves show that the cult of Tārā must have been Buddhist in origin or in other words the Brahmanical mythology took it from the Buddhist pantheon. They admit that it is by chināchārā, i.e., the Chinese mode of worship or the Mahāyāna rites that Tārā is to be propitiated. This chināchārā is highly praised and described at length in works like the Nilāntāra and is mentioned in the Tārā-vahasya-vṛttikā of Śaṅkarāchārya, the son of Kamalākara and grandson of Lambodara. The legend of Buddha and Vasishtha is given not

---
1 See J. F. Scheltema: Monumental Jain, p. 181.
2 Ibid., pp. 182, 201.
3 Miss Getty: The gods of Ceylon, p. 105.
4 Chapter 15 of the manuscript in the Varendra Research Society which is dated 1626 of the Śaka era, and which I got for examination through Mr. A. K. Maitra, the obliging director of the Society.
only in the Achāratantra, but in the well-known tantra works like the Rudra-yāmala or the Brahma-yāmala. Some of the tantric treatises, like the Tārārājaśāryavṛtti, call Tārā as Prajñāpāramitā, which is decidedly a Buddhist appellation. Besides this, the fact that Akshobhya, as I have shown already, is placed on her head will lend a very strong support to the hypothesis that Tārā must have had a Buddhist origin. The term Akshobhya ‘the unmovable’ as an attribute may be applied to Śiva or to any other Brahmanical god. But it is not a familiar name in the Hindu mythology. On the other hand, it is very common in Buddhism or Mahāyānaism. The Hinayāna also knows it as an epithet of Buddha. In the tantras, for example the Tōdālatantra, I find that Śiva is called ‘Akhshobhya’ and Tārā is his wife—

Samudramone dévī kālaṇḍe samudrátmam.
Sārṇā dāna śēvamākṣhsevevaśya.
Cāmādirājita vikāra pātō īkāthāl vikām.
Bhūt eva māṁśaya pariśetti.
Tena bāre śaśtvam ātāriyaṃ dhānat tad.

‘At the time when the ocean was churned there arose a deadly poison, O Goddess! and all the gods and goddesses felt very much disturbed. But as Śiva drank the deadly poison without any tremor, therefore, O Goddess! he is called Akshobhya and with him Mahāmāyā ‘the great Illusion’ Tāriṣi always enjoys herself.

In the Śivaśaktisaṁyogatantra, a manuscript copy of which was kindly lent to me for examination by Mahāmahopādhyāya Pandit Jagadisha Chandra, the Guru of His Highness the Mahārāja of Kashmir, some time ago, Akshobhya is put down as a synonym of Śiva and Tārā a synonym of Śakti, for it sometimes gives dhatu vānataḥ svālayānām ātāriyaḥ in place of guhyānāmānām. In the portion dealing with Tārā herself this tantra expressly says that it is by the Chināchāra-krama or the Chinese mode of worship only that Tārā can be propitiated. That the Brahmans adopted this mode is clearly shown by this book, for it says—

Śaṭṭhānānaṃ dévi hīrdivant pariśetti.
Sukhāni niṣkālacakrānī sanskarāḥ pariśetti.

‘The Mahāchīna mode, O Goddess! is twofold, namely, sakala and niṣkāla. The former is familiar with the Buddhists and the latter with the Brahmans. In the Sakala system there is no regard for śōc or ‘cleanliness’ (नाथ शेषापर्वार्थ) or for bathing (क्षिप्रांत वक्ष्या त्व वात्स—‘what is the use of bathing or who is to be bathed?). As this idea is averse to Brahmanism the Brahmans naturally had to modify the system according to their propensities or temperament and the aṭṭhāra in the Brahmanic garb was called niṣkāla.’

1 Cf. A. K. Maitra, Introduction to Tārātantra.
THE ORIGIN AND CULT OF TĀRĀ.

Akshobhya is, therefore, Śiva in the tantras and Śiva, we know, is Avalokiteśvara in the Mahāyāna pantheon, with Tārā as his recognized Śakti. That the Śakti of Śiva is called Tārā we have just seen in the Śivasaktisaṅgama-tantra. All other points showing similarity in the two cults I have brought out in my former note already. That Akshobhya is the seer or Rishi of the mantra of Tārā, though, apparently, a Brahmanic idea, is quite in the fitness of things a Buddhist feature: Akshobhya is Buddha and Tārā is Prajñāpāramitā or the highest knowledge revealed to him—he indeed is the veritable seer or Rishi who got the bodhi or enlightenment while sitting in the adamantine posture unmoved and undaunted by the hosts of Māra, the Evil Spirit.

Now the question which presents itself for solution is where did Tārā originate—in India or outside India? What has been stated above about the fate of the goddess in Southern India precludes the possibility of her having a South-Indian origin. The Tantras call her northern or a deity of the Uttara-mārga thus showing that she originated in the north. Let us see which tract gave birth to her. The Śūdhanaśāstra as quoted by M. Foucher would show that Nāgarjuna revived the worship of Ekajaṭā, a principal form of the goddess, amongst the Bhojas or the country of Tibet, for it says:

एकब्राह्मणम् ममाष्यम्-पार्वतियान-वामधूर्युष्ण-द्रुतम्

meaning 'The end of the manual of worship of Ekajaṭā—Ekajaṭā was revived in the Bhojas or the country of Tibet by the Rev. Nāgarjuna.' This revival (or uddhāra—उ + ह्र—to lift up) would, obviously, imply that the worship of the goddess had already existed in Tibet—the people there had given it up and it was again raised or resuscitated by Nāgarjuna like the Aśvamedha sacrifice, which, as we learn from numismatic or epigraphical evidences, was resuscitated by Samudragupta, the Napoleon of India. How far are we to rely on this statement of the Śūdhana we shall see presently. In any case it confirms the view that Tārā worship originated in the North.

The Buddha-Vasishtha legend alluded to above would show that her worship was brought from the country of China or Māhāchina where the seer Vasisṭha was sent by Brahman, his father, to learn it, evidently because it was not known in India. The identity of the sage does not matter much. He might be a man of the gotra of Vasisṭha, but the country called China-deśa or Māhāchina in the tantras does not appear to have been identical with China. The Māhābhārata, the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya, the dramas of Kālidāsa and other texts would all point towards China, which exported the classical Chinā-māṣāka, as the Chinā-deśa. But the tantras like the Rudra-gāmala would make us locate the country nearer home close to the great Himalaya. The following verse of this Tantra quoted in the Tārātantra would show that it lay by the side of Himalaya.

ततो गवधवरी महाराजसिद्धिः भास्मयो गृहीतः ।

दुर्याहितवर्गी माधवेक्षितो विविददिपिते ॥

This condition, however, is not fulfilled in the case of China proper. That we have to look to the other side of the mountain is suggested by the Brahma-gāmala,
which says that Vasishtha first repaired to the Kāmākhyā hills or Assam and practised austerities there. Failing to propitiate the goddess he had to proceed to Chīna-deśa. It would appear that the term Chīn or Sauvāṅeṣu was used comprehensively to include the country bordering on the northern side of the great snowy mountain, especially Tibet. China is known for her silks and the Chīnāśākha did come from China or China proper. But the term Chīna-deśa or Mahā-chīna of the tantras designates the great Chinese Empire which included, as it does even now, the countries called Tibet and Eastern Turkistan as its dependencies. Vasishtha proceeded to that part of Mahā-chīna which lay by the side of Himālaya and which was probably identical with Tibet where Tārā is very popular even now while her worship is practically unknown in China proper. Tibetan Lamas, we know, worship her deities by the āntric rites using wine.

Regarding the place of origin of Tārā or Tārā-worship I am of opinion that we should rather look towards the Indo-Tibetan borderland or Indian Tibet than any other region. Why I am led to hold this view is that the Svacchātra-tantra speaks of her origin in a great lake called Cholana. As quoted in the Archaeological Survey Report of Mayurabhanja, it says:—

भैरव: शिक्षमणु त्र चोलनांश्य जुली मराणु।
तत्त कं न्य तारा देवी मोक्षवर्धी॥

'On the Western slope of Meru there is a great lake called Cholana (or Cholana). There the goddess Tārā Nilasacavatī was of herself born.'

Meru or Sumeru is a mythical mountain believed to be standing at the centre of Jambudvīpa or Asia. Taking Eastern Turkistan or the Indian-Tibet to be at the centre of this continent and remembering that the Indo-Tibetan borderland, as we find from the account given by Dr. A. H. Francke in his book on the antiquities of Indian Tibet, has got several large lakes like Thsomo Riri and M'Thso-l-kar on whose shores ancient monasteries are still to be seen, it is not impossible that the author of this book had some such region in his mind. There is no wonder if the people of such a tract thought of a deity who would help them to cross the lakes. Dr. Francke tells us that near Khaltose, on the right bank of the Indus there is a rock below the village called Tar "on which people believe they can see twenty-one figures of the goddess Tārā (8 Grol-ma) which have come into existence of themselves." He also says that "these Svaśambhu figures of Tārā may account for the name of the village which was probably called Tārā originally, the name having become abridged to Tar." This account becomes much more interesting when we find a place called Meru, pronounced Miru, and a very ancient monastery on the top of a hill there above the trade road, which reminds us of the Meru mentioned in the quotation from the Svacchātra-tantra. These facts lead me to surmise that Tārā-worship originated somewhere towards Ladakh. History knows well the sway Buddhism held over

1 Vol. XXXVIII of the Archaeological Survey of India, p. 61.
2 Ibid, p. 94.
3 Ibid, p. 69.
these tracts and the regions around including Chinese Turkistan. Evidences of it have been brought to light in abundance by Sir Aurel Stein and other scholars. The itineraries of the Chinese pilgrims, Fa-hien (A.D. 399-415), Song-Yun and Hwei-seng (A.D. 518-521) and Yüan Chuang (A.D. 629-645) afford ample testimony of it. About the seventh century Buddhism reached here its culminating point, for, in Khotan alone there were not less than 100 monasteries and 500 monks and Indian sacred literature was widely diffused—though tokens of decay were already there. It penetrated into these regions at an early date and began to flourish by the 5th century of the Christian era. Apparently then Tārā originated about that epoch. From Ladakh she travelled to Tibet where she became the most popular deity. The manual of her worship, namely, "S Grol-mdzad phyag-brtsa rdzod-pa gzun" or the praise and dhāranī of the Pure and Original Tārā, Waddell tells us, is in the hands of nearly all laymen in Tibet and is perhaps the commonest book there.

Whether she is Aryan or Mongolian or say Non-Aryan by birth, like Mañjuśrī, I cannot say for certain because although at the dawn of history this part of Asia was inhabited by the Aryans yet by the beginning of the Christian era it had a mixed population of Aryans and Ural-Altaïns. That she is not exactly Indian by birth seems to be fairly certain. She is very popular in Nepal and it is not unlikely that she was introduced into India through Nepal.

The Nature of her origin.—As her very name would show Tārā (from tri—to swim across) is primarily the saviorress or deliveress, who carries her votaries across waters or troubles. The names by which she is chiefly known in Tibet, China, Korea or Japan all give the same meaning. It is true that the chief function of every deity in whatever mythology we see is to deliver the votary from distress. Still we find that each deity has a particular function for which he or she is specially invoked. For instance in Hindu mythology Mrityuṣṭijaya Śiva is invoked for longevity, Maṅgala for removing debts and Śītalā for getting rid of small-pox. In Muhammadanism the aid of Khwāja Khızir is invoked at the time of troubles caused by waters. He is also invoked by travellers who lose their way. The aid of Ali Murtaza is sought for at the time of dire distress in consequence of which he is called Muskil Kushā, Ali the saviour from distress. So Tārā is the deity who safely carries the worshippers across the waters. Some of the texts quoted above are quite clear on this point, for instance, the Laghustūti which expressly says that she is to be invoked to cross flooded waters. The deity connected with swimming or crossing of waters can easily be taken as one who controls navigation. The description of Tārā or Kurukullā given in the Lādiṇāṭa or the Brahmāṇḍa-Parāṇa, quoted above, indisputably proves that she is the goddess of navigation. She is the Naukeśvarī, the mistress of boats, has oars of jewels and occupies the boat of jewels. It is she who is capable of suppressing floods, 'जनकायमलमम' and has countless boat-women under her who

1 Buddhaism of Tibet (Lamaism), p. 339.
move about with hundreds of boats, evidently to watch and save people in distress. The latter are the śaktis of boating or navigation with whom Tārā looks resplendent—

`तारात्तरिकोत्सवः ममवायवरिसवरः'.

Their colour is the colour of the ocean and apparently they are the personification of oceanic waves whom Tārā controls. Verily she is the goddess whose aid an adventurer will seek for when he goes out in search of wealth to distant lands plunging his boats into the wide and deep sea. It is true that the tantras do not call her a goddess of navigation nor do they connect her with it, but her dhīyāna describing her as seated on a white lotus rising above the all-pervading waters goes to favour this view. In the tantras she is at times invoked for gaining control over speech or knowledge and her aid is sought for feats of learning. In fine, people will worship her for ‘quick’ success. This is due to their connecting the name Tārā with tvardā, meaning haste, as would appear from the mantras like the following which is engraved on the back of one of the images excavated at Nālandā:—

अः तारी तुनारी दूरे बाहा.

The same is the case, perhaps, with the Buddhist books, for, they do not supply, as far as I know, any clear statements connecting Tārā with waters or navigation. Their Kurukullā, too, is different from the goddess of that name who figures in the Lalitopākhyāna as a sea-goddess. Still, I think, proofs are not wanting to show that even the Buddhists sought her aid for overcoming the distress caused by waters or oceanic storms. Epigraphical as well as sculptural evidence is in favour of this view. For instance I may mention the inscription of the reign of the Chāluṅga king Tribhuvanamalla Vikramādiya VI belonging to the Śaka year 1017 (A.D. 1096) which goes to prove the point. This inscription is incised on a stone tablet which bears the figure of Tārā herself. The very first and the last verse of this interesting record will supply the proof. They read, respectively, as follows:—

(a) द्विवरिक्षितविनिन्मवानः निविन्मवानविशाखोऽवधानिः
śaśaśāsāsāśaśāsāśaśāśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśa śaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaशaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśaśा।

Fleet rendered these verses thus:—

(a) ‘Reverence to Thee O Holy Tārā who dost allay the fear of lions, elephants, and fire and hooded snakes and thieves and fetters and water and the ocean and demons and who dost bear a splendour like that of the rays of the moon.

1 The Tāḍāvatntra (IV Chapter) will also favour this view.
(b) May the goddess Tārā, who is anxiously busied with her exercise of tenderness entailed by preserving (persons possessed of) souls who are distressed by the notorious fear of water and kings and volumes of fire and wind; who takes away the dread of bold thieves and oceans and elephants and lions and snakes, etc., and who quickly confers the rewards that are desired,—always preserve saṅgama.'

In these verses, as was remarked by Burgess, she is no doubt addressed as delivering her votaries from the very eight forms of evil which Avalokiteśvara is represented as saving from, for example, in a very fine bas-relief at Kānheri which is reproduced here from a drawing published in the Cave Temples of India. It is marked (c) on plate 1.

But this, I believe, is merely due to henotheistic ideas according to which each divinity reigns supreme in his or her sphere. Here Tārā is regarded as powerful enough to ward off every evil to seek security against which a worshipper will sometimes, as in the above-quoted Laghuśutti, invoke several sakās like Lakshmi, Jayā, Kshemākari, Śavari, Mahābhairavi, Tripura and Tārā, though each of them can individually grant all the boons to the upāsakas, who, as a rule, will invoke their iṣṭadevata and no other deity. Still this epigraph in which the calamities caused by waters or ocean are mentioned twice (pāthas and jala both meaning water and sindhu and arṇava both signifying ocean)—in one and the same verse and Tārā is praised as removing them and at the same time, 'the notorious fear of water' is named first and Tārā is described as very anxious to preserve her votaries from it—I think it stands to reason that the composer of the prakāti thought Tārā to be the chief deity concerned with the safe crossing of waters.

The sculpture, representing Avalokiteśvara and Tārā, which is reproduced above, symbolizes the fear of ship-wreck like other fears and depicts it just at the foot of the figure of Tārā which is significant and suggestive—Tārā holds this fear under her feet. The belief, that Tārā is the saviouress or deliveress from the ocean of existence, to be met with in the Buddhist mythology, looks to be secondary or later—to cross an ocean is after all a trifling worldly bliss compared with the crossing of the ocean of existence or bhavasāgara, i.e., final emancipation which brings on eternal beatitude. Why invoke her for such a small or trifling affair which can be managed by skilful boatmen or sailors? Her worship can hardly be meant for such a preysā or worldly pleasures, her aid should be sought for the real āreyas or freedom from transmigration, that dreaded 'Chourāsī' the boisterous and terrible ocean of birth and re-birth. Thus, Tārā is the goddess who ensures safety in crossing the real ocean or is Tārini, the saviouress. She sprang from the ocean of knowledge—

'प्राणायामित्राक्षयकमुदिता'

and allays the misery or affliction of existence 'भवतायतःकम्यमानि'. She is the real knowledge or prajñā and it is knowledge which alone can give salvation 'चतुर्मे प्राणायाम लक्ष्यिण'. We thus find that Tārā came out of an extensive lake and was

1 Similarly, Durghā is praised in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa or Durghā-saptatattā, Chap. XI. st. 107, as protecting people from all these evils.
thought of as seated on a lotus emerging from water. She controls flooded waters and enables her votaries to cross them safely. She is Tārīṇī or the personification of power that takes us across waters. Verily it is she on whose mercy success in sailing will depend. By her very nature she becomes the goddess of navigation. Originally she was invoked for safe swimming and for taking small vessels or boats across the lakes in the regions where her worship arose. In course of time, however, she began to be worshipped for safe and successful navigation in the sea. To a votary, on the other hand, whose goal is emancipation all this becomes an allegory. For him the human body is the vessel and the miseries of the world the tempestuous waters. He invokes the compassionate Deliveress to cross the ocean of existence and get rid of the miseries which overwhelm him from all sides as do the mighty oceanic waves the man who has fallen off the board. The very conception or dhūyāna of the goddess in both the Buddhist and Hindu mythologies would favour this view.

After attempting the question of her probable origin let us see when she was first thought of, or the probable date when people began to worship her for the first time. That she was Buddhist originally I have tried to demonstrate above, and that she is a Mahāyāna deity does not require any proof. That she is the sakti of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is also well known. When the cult of this Bodhisattva came into existence cannot be stated definitely at present. In all probability, it does not go back beyond the early centuries of the Christian era. In any case this is certain that originally he had no saktis attached to him. At least this is known by the earliest representations of the deity known to me, for example, the one on the railing figure in the Lucknow Museum mentioned elsewhere, where he is shown single. Tārā seems to be unknown before the 4th century of the Christian era. I think she is unknown to the Graeco-Buddhist school of Gandhāra. The earliest representations may be those in the well-known Buddhist caves of India like those at Nasik, Ellora, and Kānheri. These, as far as we know, cannot be anterior to about the 6th century A.D., for, they belong to the temples which are certainly of Mahāyāna origin and which in all probability belong to the 6th or 7th century A.D. The earlier caves of ‘grandiose design’ and ‘simple detail’ are of the Hima-

1 Memorie No. XI.
2 Cave Temples (Fergusson and Burgess), pages 278, 384, 391, also page 308, plate LV, reproduced above.
emigration seems to have largely taken place towards Java and other islands, and it was this time when a deity like Tārā was needed for help. As a goddess, who saved her votaries from floods and enabled them to cross waters safely, she was soon connected with navigation. Images of Tārā are found in Java which belong to the same period, for example, the one spoken of by M. Foucher or by Scheelatama, which has been noticed above, or some of those illustrated below, i.e., figures marked (b) and (c) on plate IV.

I believe there is a general consensus of opinion among scholars that it was the male principle which was chiefly worshipped by the Indo-Aryans and that sakti-worship came in later. The female divinities, like Ushas (or the Dawn), are no doubt known in the Vedas but they are hardly of the first rank. There is no mention of the sakti as conceived in later times in the earlier literature. The legends like the one given in the Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa, which has been alluded to above, would indicate that originally a goddess was the 'divine energy' or devate, i.e., the god-head of a god. Later on, this idea of energy was transformed into that of a consort. The same thing occurred in Buddhism which probably borrowed the idea from Brahmanism or Hinduism where the wife is regarded to be one half and the husband the other half, as is represented by the figures of Ardhanārīśvara Śiva.

The association of Nāgarjuna, the well-known Buddhist patriarch, with the worship of Tārā or Ekajatā is not convincing. Whatever be his exact date it seems to be certain that Nāgarjuna belongs to the very early centuries of the Christian era. He was looked upon as one of the greatest magicians or tāntrikas. People connected his name with the worship of Ekajatā or Tārā for obvious reasons. In the Śādhana, quoted above, he is said to have revived Ekajatā amongst the Bhotās or Tibetans. If it is so happened in reality, then, the worship of Ekajatā, or for that reason, of Tārā also must have existed long before his time and this will carry Tārā to an epoch prior to the Christian era. But the evidence available, as seen already, goes against such a possibility. Besides, I do not think female divinities were introduced into the Mahāyāna school so early. It was the male principle and not the female which was worshipped by the Mahāyāna school in the beginning. We know Buddha himself was averse to the admission of women-folk into the sāṅgha and it was at the strong intercession of Ananda that he, almost reluctantly, allowed his aunt and her female companions to be taken in, declaring at the same time that the dharma or sāṅgha will not survive long, a prophesy which was fulfilled, if only partially, as Buddhism has indeed died out in the country of its birth. Such ideas could not but exert great influence on the minds of the people. How could they ignore what Buddha said and begin to worship female divinities so soon? The fact that the Graeco-Buddhist school of Gandhāra has remarkably few female images would lead to the same inference. That Tārā is a late comer into the fold of Buddhism is further shown by the fact that the Gandhāra sites which have been so far explored and which are

1 Buddhist Art, page 265.
2 Monumental Java, page 181.
not later than the fifth century A.D. have not yielded any of her images. Apparently, I think, the name of Nāgārjuna was associated with Tārā to make the cult more attractive and important, if he is to be taken as identical with the well-known founder of the Mādhyamika school. If he is a different personality his association with the cult will hardly matter much unless, of course, he is shown to be equally old. The other Nāgārjunas known to me, however, are certainly not so old as the founder of the Mādhyamika school. Sakti worship was probably introduced into Mahāyānism about the 6th century A.D.

'The idea developed to such an extent that in countries like Tibet and Mongolia people thought that a god was more disposed to listen to them and grant their requests when worshipped in company with his Sakti.' As a result nearly every god was given a Sakti or female energy represented with him in the so-called 'Yab yum' attitude which was the final sign of the degradation of the Mahāyāna School.'

As remarked above, the worship of Tārā came to India possibly through Nepal and migrated to Kalinga through Magadha whence it not only went to other parts of India but to distant lands like Java, the ancient Yavadvipa. She appears to have been one of the principal deities worshipped at Nālandā, as will be borne out both by the finds recently made during the excavations and by the testimony of Yiian Chüang whose itinerary mentions a large figure of the deity worshipped at Nālandā by the kings and ministers and great people of the neighbouring countries who on every first day of the year made offerings of perfumes and flowers holding gem-covered flags and canopies while music was going on, the ceremony lasting for seven days. Of the sculptures that have been excavated a good many represent this goddess. They show a marked affinity with the figures found in Bengal and adjoining places. Though without any documentary evidence it is not safe to fix dates yet I may say that it is not unlikely that the myth of Tārā arose about the 5th century A.D. and that about the 7th century, when the Tantra influence was at its zenith, she was Brahmanised as the second Mahāvidyā and became very popular not only in India but in other countries also.

Representations of Tārā according to Buddhists:—Waddell 3 says that there are twenty-one Tārās. As is apparent from the titles or names of these twenty-one Tārās I do not think they should be taken as distinct forms of the goddess. They are rather the attributes which a votary has in view while worshipping the divinity who is one throughout. Still her forms may be considered to be two-fold, the pacific and the angry one, according to the aspects. Or she may have five forms, in accordance with the five sacred colours, namely, the white, the blue, the green, the yellow and the red. Her pacific forms will be either white or green in colour but the angry forms will be represented either red or yellow or blue. The former is characterised by a smiling expression, long and wavy hair, and the Bodhisattva ornaments. If she accompanies Avalokitesvara she will be represented as standing, if not, she may

---

1 Compare Miss Getty: The gods, etc., page 104.
3 The cult of Avalokites and his consort Tārā; in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, January 1884, pp. 31 ff.
either be standing or seated, as will be seen in the illustrations on the plates Nos. II, III and IV which accompany this article. The figure marked (a) on the second plate lies at Jethauri in the Hazaribagh district of Bihar while the other, which is marked (b), is kept in the Indian Museum at Calcutta. The representations shown as a, b and c on the third plate are now exhibited in the Government Museums at Lucknow, Calcutta and Patna respectively. The images illustrated on the fourth plate are all Javanese. The one which is marked (c) is now deposited in the Indian Museum at Calcutta. The rest are, I believe, in Java, i.e., the country of their origin and I got their photographs through the courtesy of Dr. F. D. Kan Bosch, Director of Archaeology in Netherland-India, who has very kindly permitted me to publish them along with this memoir. The bronze statuettes, marked (b) and (c), according to this scholar, respectively belong to about the year 800 and 850 of the Śaka era while the stone image of Bhūkruti Tārā, marked (a) on the plate, is to be ascribed to about the middle of the 13th century A. D. Dr. Bosch identifies the figure (b) with Mārichi and refers me to the dhyāna—aśokavrniksha-sākhāvulagna-rāma-kara-vara-dakshina-kara, which M. Foucher has quoted in his Iconographie bouddhique. The figures (a) and (c) he takes to be Bhūkruti-Tārā and Śyāma-Tārā, respectively. For the remaining four bronzes which are marked (d) on the plate he refers me to Waddell’s note on Tārā to which I have alluded above, and says that they are not yet sufficiently determined. In her angry aspect she is shown as having dishevelled hair, the tāntric attributes and ornaments and a third eye.

The dhyānas of the chief forms of Tārā of which I have just spoken are appended to this article for ready reference and to facilitate identification. Here I should like to point out that as far as I am aware only Nepalese and Tibetan paintings conform to these dhyānas in every detail. The lithic or metal icons of the Goddess, such as are found in excavations or otherwise, mostly represent Śyāma-Tārā or Sīta-Tārā though images of other forms like Vajrā or Bhūkruti-Tārā are also to be met with occasionally.

Brahmanical Tārā.—The comparison of the dhyānas given in the appendix or elsewhere shows that the Brahmanical Tārā is the angry form and closely resembles the blue Tārā or Ekajata of the Buddhists. In other words, I may say, that it was the blue Tārā who was introduced into the sakti-cult of Hinduism.

The borrowing of divinities, if I can so call it, was mutual. The Buddhists took some from the Hindus and adapted them to their worship or beliefs, and so did the Hindus also. Possibly the Buddhists took more than the Hindus. The reason perhaps was that they had become weakened and their faith in their own divinities began to waver. Tārā was taken over by the Hindus for they saw that her worshippers were very prosperous and successful in their adventures—they came back from their expeditions laden with treasures and their voyages to distant countries like Java proved successful. The Hindus attributed this success to the might of their goddess whom they at once in-

---

1 II, p. 91 Sq.
introduced into their own pantheon in order to gain her protection. The moment a votary thinks that the worship of a particular divinity ensures increased prosperity, he begins to lose faith in his own ḍīvānā and goes over to the other side. How such ideas work may be illustrated by the fight which took place between the armies of some faqirs and of Aurangzeb in which the latter were twice routed because the Muslim soldiers lost courage thinking that the faqirs were sorcerers, till at last, Aurangzeb came and wrote some verses from the Qurān on the swords of his soldiers and sent them back to the battlefield. The result was that the faith of these soldiers was strengthened and they fought with full vigour winning a complete victory over the enemy. A person who has many gods can have more according to his requirements or as he finds their worship to be more fruitful than that of his own gods or goddesses. But there can be no such manipulation or multiplication of gods or goddesses for one who adheres to the maxim so beautifully expressed in the Muhammadan Kalama La ilaha illalah or the śruti एकमेवाचितोव चतु र तृति एकमेवाचितोव चतु र there is no god but one and none like him.

Conclusion—

To sum up my conclusions: I have shown that the goddess Tārā probably had a Buddhist origin and possibly was first thought of in Indian Tibet whence she was introduced into India via Nepal. Her worship seems to have spread through the Gauḍa country to other parts of India and to distant lands. Originally she seems to have been the goddess who was invoked for safe crossing of waters and who saved her worshippers from the calamities caused by floods. As such, she began to be worshipped as the goddess of navigation and finally became the deliveress from the ocean of existence or bhavaśāgara. Her worship began probably about the 5th century and she became very popular in the early mediaeval period, i.e., about the 7th century when she was introduced into the Hindu pantheon, where in the beginning she was only a minor divinity but subsequently became one of the principal deities who was worshipped as the second Mahāvidyā and the deliveress or saviouress from the troubles of the world, unrivalled in the quick granting of boons.

Postscript.—Dr. J. Ph. Vogel, after going through the first proof of this memoir, has kindly drawn my attention to Monsieur Godfroy de Blonay’s book on the subject, named Matériaux pour servir à l’histoire de la déesse bouddhique Tārā. I wish I could make use of the valuable material contained in it when I was writing the memoir. However, I may remark here that, while going through the book with the help of Rev. P. Craysax, m. ap. of the French Mission at Ootacamund, who very kindly translated for me the concluding portion of it into English, I have not been able to find much, if at all, that would go to controvert or alter my views about the goddess. On the other hand, I notice in it some data which will rather support my hypotheses. For instance, the verse.

तारिक्षमयमो नाय! नामात्मयमयिन्यावर्त!  
नेन नरिति मां खोके नामं तिनमुक्त्।।
meaning "The eminent sages in the world call me Tārā, because, O Lord! I take (my worshippers) across the ocean of various dangers". which occurs in the Ārya-Tārā-bhaṭṭārikā-nāmāṣṭottaraśataka-stōtra quoted in full in this book, would bear out what I have stated above regarding the etymology of the name of Tārā. Monsieur Godefroy de Blonay, while pointing out the mixing up of the Brahmanical and the Buddhist view of the goddess, says that Tārā saves her followers from or by water giving them landing on a safe shore and that she is the faithful guide or the sailors' star, who is invoked by sailors. This remark of the savant amply supports my hypothesis as to Tārā having been the goddess of navigation.
APPENDIX.

THE CHIEF FORMS OR EKADAS OF TĀRĀ.—The foremost form of Tārā is the white or Sita-Tārā who symbolizes perfect unity and represents श्री श्रावनसिन्ह or Transcendental Wisdom incarnate. When alone or surrounded by acolytes, she is represented in the veṣāme or the ‘adamantine pose,’ her right hand in the vāraṇavāra or ‘gift bestowing attitude’ and her left hand, holding the stem of a full-blown lotus is shown in vīrakamudrā or the ‘attitude of argument.’ She generally has the third eye of knowledge or she may have seven eyes, one eye being shown on each sole and hand. As the sakti of Amoghasiddha she holds the stem of a lotus flower in each hand which will be shown in the ‘argument’ and ‘charity’ attitudes and the lotus flower supporting the viṣṇua or double thunder-bolt. In the Mṛtyupañcikhrana-Tārā-Sākāra quoted by M. Foucher she is thus described:—

सतारविन्दस्यख्यां तां भूतां चन्द्रविन्दस्यरूपम्।
भाष्टिबचपर्यायं वरदीवामधारिणी।
श्रवणकलाकारं उर्ध्वमहामांकितम्।
सर्वींवासवस्तुवृणा योगयाद्वपु-करस्।

The Janguli Tārā is her Tantra form. She may be two or four armed. This is her abhayā as given in the Sākāra—

श्रवणीं चतुर्मुखं जटामुकुटविभीं शक्तियोक्षरवल्लो श्रवणकलाकारीं श्रवणकलखो मांकितां सच-पर्यायवासवस्तुवृणा श्रवणकलखो वहिणां श्रवणिं विशेषावासवल्लो श्रवणकलखो सच-पर्यायवासवस्तुवृणां भाविता।

She has white colour, four arms, a diadem of braided hair, a white upper-garment, white ornaments, is decorated with white snakes and is sitting on a sofa in a sattva pose. By the two original hands she plays on a flute. Of the two other hands, the left holds a white serpent and the right is extended in the abhayā-mudrā or the ‘pose of security.’ She wears a garland of the rays of the moon.

Then comes Śyūma-Tārā or Tārā the green. She differs from the white Tārā in her symbol which is sitālpala or the blue-lotus and is usually shown as closed wholly or partially. She is represented seated on a lotus throne, the right leg pendulous, with the foot supported by a small lotus, the stem of which is attached to the lotus throne. Sometimes her lotus-throne is shown as supported by roaring lions and her head-dress has a small image of Amoghasiddha in it. Usually she has the śrīlī on the forehead. If shown in company with Avalokiteśvara she generally figures on the left side. Sometimes she is accompanied by eight green Tārās, or her manifestations, Ekajāta and the goddess Mārichi, or by Janguli and the goddess Mahāmayuri. In the latter case she is called Dhamara or ‘the giver of treasures’ and has four arms, the upper one having the usual mudrā and the lower one holding a lasso and elephant goad or aṣkūta. The Śākārana describe her thus:—

तारा यामरणिमांव्रजां, दृष्टिर्वर्णं, शानि-समाक्षीरभारं, सर्वभवन्मुखि, पञ्चचत्तुर्णे
प्रमणिष्ठ:. चिन्तितेत्।
The *Sootanratanam* quoted by N. N. Vasu gives a slightly different description—

'She is black in complexion, she has three eyes, two hands with one of which she holds a lotus and with the other she gives boons; she is surrounded by Sakris, having various colours and forms; she has a smiling face; she is adorned with bright pearls; her feet are put in shoes set with jewels.'

The third is the yellow Tārā called Bṛjikstā, or the goddess that frowns. Evidently she is the angry form of Tārā. She has Amoghasiddha in her diadem. Her right hand is extended in the vara-mudrā and the left hand holds a blue lotus . . . Mārīchī and Ekajātā sit to her right and left respectively, and she is represented as a celestial maiden adorned with jewels.' The *Śādhana* thus describes her:

![Śādhana quoted by N. N. Vasu](http://example.com/quotes)

The Khadimvarni Tārā and the Vajra-Tārā are the forms of this Tārā. She is represented as seated in the midst of the Mātrikās (divine-mothers), having eight arms and four faces, decorated with all sorts of ornaments, having the colour of gold, looking benign and showing the features of a maiden, seated on a moon placed on a lotus representing the universe, having faces of yellow, black, white and red complexion consecutively from left to right; having three eyes in each face; she is seated on a diamond throne, has a red-coloured body, having on her crown the four Buddhhas, and holding in her right hands a vajra, an arrow, a conchshell and vara, and in her left hands a lotus bow, diamond-goad, a diamond pāśa and with the forefinger of the other left hand she points above.'

The fourth is the blue Tārā or Ekajātā ('she who has only one chignon') or Ugratārā (the 'fearful Tārā'). She is one of the most terrifying deities of the Mahāyāna pantheon. Her *dhyāna* given in the *Mahāchānokrama-Tārā-śādhana* runs as follows.—


'She stands in the archer's attitude, is fierce, has a long necklace of human heads, is of short stature and has a protuberent abdomen, is terrible and adorned with a blue lotus, has one face and three eyes, is resplendent because of her wild laughter, is very happy, riding a corpse, decorated with eight snakes, has red and round eyes, wears the skin of a tiger round her waist, is

---

1 The *Archaeological Survey of Mayurakshana*, Vol. I, page LXXXV gives the following *dhyāna*—

in the prime of youth, is decorated with five mudrās, has a protruding tongue, looks dreadful because of the jaws which are protruding; her right hands hold a sword and scissors, and the left hands hold a blue lotus and a skull; she has one tawny chignon and her head is adorned by Akshobhya.'

The fifth form is the red Tārā or Kurukullā. According to the Śāhavanās her colour is red, she is seated on a red lotus, wears a red garment and a red crown, has four arms, gives assurance of protection with one of the right hands and holds an arrow with the other, holds a quiver of jewels with one of the left hands and with the other an arrow made of red lotus-buds set on a bow of flowers which is drawn up to the ear.
INDEX

C
Cholana or cholana—a lake 20, 14
Cults—absorption of— 20, 2
supersession of— 20, 2, 5

D
Durgā—personification of the active principle 20, 3, 4

K
Kurukullā—goddess 20, 7, 18, 25

M
Mahāvidyā—cult of— 20, 4, 5, 19
Mātrīs—Cult of— 20, 3, 19
Meru—Mountain 20, 14, 15
Miru—village in upper Indus valley 20, 15

N
Nāgārjuna 20, 18, 19, 20

S
Śakti—worship of— 20, 19, 20

T
Tārā—in Brahmanical mythology 20, 5, 9
in Buddhist mythology 20, 11
in Jaina mythology 20, 9, 10
as conceived by the aborigines 20, 11
second Mahāvidyā 20, 1, 5, 11, 22
in inscriptions 20, 8
in śāstras 20, 8
a deity of the north 20, 8
hardly known in the south 20, 8, 9
in sculpture 20, 11
in Java 20, 11, 19
Association of—with Nāgārjuna 20, 13, 19
Origin of— 20, 13, 13
goddess of navigation 20, 16, 18, 19, 22
originated in Indian Tibet 20, 14, 15
Tar—a village having self-born Tārās in Upper Indus valley 20, 15
Thsomo-Ri—a lake in Indo-Tibetan borderland 20, 16
a. Bhairuti-Tārā from Chandi Jago near Malang, Java.
b. Bronze statuette of Mārichi from Central Java.
c. Tārā from Java in the Indian Museum.

d. Four bronze images of Tārā?

e. Bronze statuette of Śyāmatārā from Chandi Loh near Ngarai, Java.
Central Archaeological Library,
NEW DELHI. 21919.

Call No. R 912.03 I.D.A.KHA

Author—Chandra Prabha

Title—The Origin and Cult

"A book that is shut is but a block"

CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL LIBRARY
GOVT. OF INDIA
Department of Archaeology
NEW DELHI.

Please help us to keep the book clean and moving.

E.R., 148, N. DELHI.