in the new genre of historiography that was evolving, implied the discarding of the concept of bodhisatta kingship. It is clear that during the Fourth Reign the king was attempting to distance himself from the ideal of bodhisatta-kingship. One of the clearest signs of this was in the change to the king’s official name, which was ceremonially inscribed onto a plate of gold (suphanabat) at the start of each reign. The title signifying bodhisatta status, ‘maha phuthangkun’, which had been part of the official title of each of the first three Chakri kings, was conspicuously absent from Mongkut’s own royal title.35

One finds in Mongkut’s writings several disparaging references to Rama III’s assumption of the status of bodhisatta-king. For example, in faintly disguised sarcasm he writes that,

King Nang Klao [Rama III]...was a very conscientious giver of alms. He used to listen to many old stories like the Jataka tales, and desired that the monks and laity praise and worship him as a great, enlightened bodhisatta, more marvellous than other kings. So he consciously acted in the manner of a bodhisatta, as it is described in the Jatakas, which relate how the bodhisatta was a king, ruling in Benares and other cities in Machimapraphet, where the people ate milk and butter and sesame seed. The king dwelt on how, in the past, the bodhisatta-king had shown mercy to the forest animals, the birds, and the fish, and would not let any one do any injury to them. So he decided that he also would follow this practice...36

In another disparaging reference to the bodhisatta-kingship ideal popularised by King Rama III, Mongkut writes disapprovingly about monks in the previous reign who had deceived the king by sycophantically praising the king’s barami. Monkut wrote that the former king had himself participated in the deception, encouraging the monks to travel the length and breadth of the kingdom proclaiming the king to be a bodhisatta, who was on the path to achieving Enlightenment.37

35 For the full official names of the kings of the Chakri dynasty see Somphong Kriangkraiphet, Prapheni thai lae ruang na ru (Thai Customs and Things Worth Knowing), Bangkok, Phrae Phithaya, 1964, pp. 613-27. ‘Maha phutthangkun’ is also one of Vessantara’s titles in the Thai version of the Vessantara Jataka, see Maha wetsandorn chadok chabap sip sam kan, Bangkok, Khurusapha, 1988, passim.


Elsewhere Mongkut wrote in a similar vein about King Taksin, whose overthrow had brought the Chakri dynasty to power:

From the time that the Emerald Buddha image was obtained and brought to Thonburi, the king of Thonburi [Taksin] began to have delusions of grandeur. He became mentally deranged, claiming that he was a being of great merit, a bodhisatta, who would achieve Buddhahood by defeating Mara, and that he was Mettrai [the prophesied future Buddha]. His thoughts, words and actions showed that the king had become insane.38

As shown in the previous chapter, there is ample evidence in the documents of the period to prove that the man who overthrew Taksin, ostensibly on the grounds of the latter’s insanity, exhibited during his reign similar signs of bodhisatta status, and moreover was represented in official records of the period in precisely such terms.39

It is also revealing to look to the chronicles written in the early ratankosin period and compare the image of kingship they portray with chronicles written subsequently.

Similar elements of the bodhisatta-king motif can be observed in the accounts of the reigns of the Ayuthaya kings contained in certain versions of the royal chronicles of Ayuthaya. In one vivid example from the phanchanthanumat version of the royal chronicles, believed to have been compiled in 1795 during the reign of Rama I, King Chethathirat, an early seventeenth century king, is likened to a certain incarnation of the bodhisatta, who, as helmsman of a trading vessel, guides its passengers safely through a storm which had threatened to sink the boat.40 Elsewhere in the same chronicle a Mon monk compares the determination of the Burmese king Tongu, rival of the great Thai king Naresuan, to that of the bodhisatta in another incarnation.41

In subsequent versions of the Ayuthaya chronicles, however, there is a significant alteration to these passages to downplay the idea of the bodhisatta king. In the Royal Autograph edition compiled by Mongkut and his half-brother in the Fourth Reign, the same passages are modified to present a comparison on the basis of the


39 Thus Wyatt (in David J. Steinberg, ed., In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1987, p. 112) and Keyes (in Charles F. Keyes, Thailand: Buddhist Kingdom as Modern Nation State, Duang Kamol, Bangkok, 1989, p. 39) both appear to misrepresent Rama I’s coup against Taksin in 1782 by referring to Taksin’s claim of bodhisatta-hood as a factor precipitating the coup.


41 Ibid., p. 258.
‘tales’ (nithan) of the bodhisatta, rather than with the bodhisatta himself, as in the 1795 version. That is, it is as if the bodhisatta has started to lose his status as a ‘real’ figure and is being transformed into one found in - and confined to - certain ‘tales’. Moreover, by Mongkut’s time this category of literature referred to as ‘tales’, or nithan, was being characterised more and more as one of dubious credibility. For example, royal references to the Jatakas - one of the prime examples of nithan - are increasingly informed with a spirit of facetiousness which one would expect when treating stories of no historical basis. For example, on the issue of the kingdom’s revenue base Mongkut once remarked that he did not have the power (bunyarit) to summon a shower of jewels to fall all over the city as Vessantara (of the Vessantara Jataka) had done.

That the ideal of the king as a bodhisatta had been abandoned in official representations of the Thai kings is however most obvious in Chaophraya Thiphakorawong’s chronicles of the first four kings of the Chakri dynasty, composed by royal command between 1869 and 1870. Thiphakorawong, a senior figure at the Thai court in the Third and Fourth Reigns involved in trade and foreign relations, and a close associate and ally of Mongkut, presents kingship more as a ‘state institution’ rather than as an attribute of the bodhisatta. References to the kings as descendants of the Buddha are done away with, as are incidents of kings displaying ‘superhuman’ qualities, victories being attributed to the ‘accumulated perfections’ of the king, and kings making pledges to achieve enlightenment at some time in the future. In denying any claim to being a bodhisatta Mongkut stated that the king was ‘also human’.

42 Cf. Phraratchaphongswadan chabap phrraratchabhatthalekha (the Royal Chronicle, the Royal Autograph Version), lem 2, Bangkok, Khlang Withaya, 1973, p. 6; and ibid., lem 1, p. 322. The same passages are also found in the ‘Phra Phonarat’ and in the ‘Chakradhiphong (chat)’ versions of the Ayuthaya chronicles, both of which appear to date from before the Fourth Reign (cf. Phraratchaphongswadan krung si ayuthaya chabap phra phonarat, Bangkok, Khlang Withaya, 1971, pp. 338, 258; and Phraratchaphongswadan krung si ayuthaya chabap phanchanhanumat (choem) kap phra chakradhiphong (chat), pp. 860, 780). The exact dating for both these works is, however, a question of some uncertainty.

43 Cf. Mongkut’s disparaging treatment of ‘nithan’ in Prachum phra ratchaputcha, p. 245: ‘In the scriptures there is no end to such nithan. They relate how so-and-so did such and such a deed, and how they were rewarded with happiness or suffering....yet in these stories there is not so much as a mention of ‘moral conduct’, mental development, or wisdom...’


Whether in the rejection of the stories of the bodhisatta's deeds as told in the Jatakas, in the new 'biographical' story of the Buddha, in the new genres of historiography employed at the Thai court, or in direct pronouncements on the institution of kingship, from the reign of King Mongkut the idea of the king as a bodhisatta is increasingly discredited at the Thai court. Let us now look at some of the reasons behind this change.

Politics and Intellectual Change at the Thai Court

Foremost among these reasons were political considerations. Intense rivalry had existed between Mongkut and his predecessor, Rama III, his older half-brother, since the latter had managed to seize the throne despite Mongkut's more legitimate claim to the succession by virtue of his superior ranking mother. Mongkut's own accession to the throne in 1851 took place amidst opposition from supporters of one of Rama III's sons, and his powerful brother, Prince Chudamani, was another potential threat. Mongkut and his supporters (primarily the Bunnag family) therefore had a political interest in emphasising his dynastic legitimacy. Furthermore, the Chakri dynasty had been in power long enough for it to be expedient to emphasise the importance of dynastic legitimacy over and above royal merit based on bodhisatta-hood and the possession of the Perfections.  

Whereas in the previously fluid and unstable situation of Thai politics rulers could justify their seizure of power (in official court documents, and religious and historical writings) through their bun barami, their accumulated merit and Perfections, in the new geopolitical situation with colonial powers ready to take advantage of any internal instability, it was essential for the Chakri rulers to avoid such domestic disturbances. Challenges to the monarchy from phu mi bun figures - both near the Thai court as well as in distant regions of the kingdom - needed to be minimised. In a court text of the Third Reign there is a moral dictum, ya kluu phu mi bun mak kwa chao - 'Do not fear men of merit (phu mi bun) more than your lord', which sums up the court's changing conception of authority.

Mongkut's rejection of the bodhisatta ideal and the theory of the Perfections also helped him win respect and crucial political support from the increasingly influential Western figures in the Thai kingdom. The doctrine of the Perfections, reincarnation, and the bodhisatta were alien to the Christian intellectual tradition which viewed them as backward and 'irrational'. Mongkut's opposition to this doctrine thus contributed to his reputation among many Western observers of the time as progressive and reformist, not

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47 Attachak, op. cit., pp. 36ff, p. 64.

48 Ibid., p. 36.
only in the religious sphere but also in government. The political situation in the Thai kingdom was increasingly viewed by the Western powers as divided between the conservatives and the progressives, between the old and new Siam.

Mongkut’s political motivations took place in a time of considerable intellectual ferment. Two major strands of this change affected this older ideology of authority and the Jatakas: firstly, the turn to the canonical scriptures and criticism of the commentary literature in religious scholarship; and secondly the development of ‘rational’ thought.

The issue of canonicity was increasingly affecting the status of the Jatakas, and by association the doctrine of the Perfections. In Theravada Buddhist scripture there were two basic divisions of scripture: the canonical literature of the Tripitaka, held to be the original teachings of the Buddha; and the later commentary literature known in Thai as attakatha. It is a distinguishing feature of the Thai Buddhist tradition that before the ratanakosin period the Buddhist canon seems to have played a relatively minor role in the explication of Buddhist doctrine in the Thai kingdom, and in any case seems to have peacefully coexisted with other species of religious text.49 Although the three books of the Tripitaka, the Sutta, Vinaya, and Abhidhamma, represented the essence of the dhamma, or the corpus of the Buddha’s teaching, and the chronicles note that pious Buddhist kings almost always made sure they produced at least one copy of the Tripitaka to ensure the health of the dhamma, among the Tai peoples the explication and dissemination of the dhamma seems to have been carried out on the whole not by the Tripitaka but by commentaries. During the nineteenth century, however, a significant change occurred. The Tripitaka came to be regarded more and more as the sole criteria of religious truth. Mongkut especially is known to have paid great attention to the issue of which scriptures were actually uttered by the Buddha, and which were the product of later commentators.50

While scholars of religious change in the nineteenth century have traditionally attributed the new emphasis on the Buddhist canon to Prince Mongkut and the new Buddhist ‘sect’ he founded as a monk, the Thammayut, in an important study Nidhi has argued that increasing attention to the Tripitaka was apparent even from the First Reign.51 The earliest reference to the issue of canonicity in connection to the Jatakas seems to date from the Third Reign, when the ‘Front Palace King’ presented a ‘royal inquiry’ to senior monks on the subject of whether the thotsaphothisat (‘Ten Bodhisattas’) text - an obvious reference to the book of the last ten Jatakas - had been

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preached by the Buddha or not. By the second half of the nineteenth century Mongkut’s Thammayut sect, which by that time had become an instrument of royal power in the Sangha, had abandoned recitations of the Vessantara Jataka on the grounds that it was not strictly speaking a canonical text; no references to previous incarnations of the Buddha, the Thammayut argued, could be found in the ‘authentic sacred texts’ such as the Vinaya. As will be explained at greater length in the following chapter, the situation came to a head at the turn of the century when the king published an article broadly denying the Jatakas’ claim to canonicity.

How did this turn to the canon as the arbiter of religious authority affect the Jatakas? The Jatakas were a special category of scripture, in that they were a somewhat complex mixture of canon and commentary. While in the text of the Jataka it was the Buddha who narrated the story of his own former incarnation, scholars began to argue that this may have been the addition of a later commentator. As such the Jatakas became targets for critics of the authority of the commentary scripture. Moreover, a great number of other texts which contributed to the popularity and authority of the Jatakas also fell under the category of commentary, or were based on commentaries. For example, the whole genre of narratives on the theme of the quest of the bodhisatta, which provided the framework for the Jatakas’ relationship to the Buddha; the Phra Malai story, which was a ‘millenarian’ exhortation for people to listen to the Vessantara Jataka in return for a better future life and the chance to meet the future Buddha; the ‘anison’ genre of religious literature, which expounded the rewards in the next life due to people who piously listened to religious texts like the Jatakas; and even the Traiphum and related cosmological texts which described the ‘world’ in which the events recounted in the Jatakas took place. Once the foundations of these texts were undermined by the attacks on the commentaries, the whole edifice of the Jatakas’ authority was also weakened.

The second major impact on the status of the Jatakas was the development of ‘rational’ thought at the Thai court. The emergence of ‘rational’ thought, or a system of thinking based on empirical reality, has been commonly attributed to Western influence:

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52 Atthachak, ‘Khwam plian prae khorng sannuk thang prawatisat’, p. 20.


54 This will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4.

55 Traiphum manuscripts include graphic images of the Vessantara Jataka and the other Jatakas in the overall representation of the Thai Buddhist universe; see Thongchai Winichakul, Siam Mapped: A History of the Geobody of a Nation, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1994, pp. 25-6.
the presence of Christian missionaries from the 1830s; a growing interest in Western science;⁵⁶ the political dominance of the progressive or liberal faction at the Thai court (in particular Prince and later King, Mongkut and the Thammaprath);⁵⁷ and to increasing contact with the outside world as a result of the trade treaties the Thai court had been forced to make with the Western powers. However, this apparently Western origin of ‘rational’ thought (sometimes rendered in modern Thai as ‘hetphonniyom’⁵⁸) in the Thai kingdom has been challenged by Nidhi’s work, which sees the roots of these cultural and intellectual changes going back to the period before Western influence. Nidhi points to the increasingly ‘bourgeois’ character of elite Thai society as early as the late eighteenth century, a result of the growth of trade, urbanization, and the development of an export oriented economy under the early Bangkok kings.⁵⁹ Bourgeois literary culture of the early Bangkok period shows a number of characteristics indicative of ‘rational’ thought. For example, concern for the ‘other-worldly’ gives way to interest in this world, the human individual starts to emerge and replace the superhuman, people’s present lives are given precedence over past incarnations, and explanations of events are presented in a ‘rational’ way based on the writer’s own actual experience.⁶⁰ Even the turn to the canon in religious thinking could be interpreted as a side-effect of the increasing rationalism in Thai thought; according to Nidhi the Tripitaka is considerably more ‘rational’ than the commentaries.⁶¹

All these elements can be seen in increasing influence in successive works on the life of the Buddha written during the nineteenth century, which, as outlined above, were taking the place of the Jatakas.⁶² The culmination of this genre is Prince Wachirayan’s ‘Phutthaprawat’ written in the early twentieth century, in which the Buddha, Nidhi

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⁵⁶ Mongkut was later to become known in Thailand as the ‘Father of Thai Science’.

⁵⁷ Cf. Reynolds, ‘Buddhist Cosmography in Thai History’

⁵⁸ The term used by Nidhi, Pak kai lae bai run, passim.


⁶¹ Nidhi, ‘Phrapathomsomphothikatha kap khwam khluan wai thang satsana’, pp. 392, 415-6; ‘Lok khorng nang nophamat’, p. 371. This of course suggests that ‘rational’ thought was not exclusively the product of the Western enlightenment.

poignantly remarks, is portrayed as a ‘completely historical figure’. Phutthaprawat begins by giving a geographical and ethnographical description of the region where the Buddha was born, and discusses in considerable detail themes such as the Sakya clan, the Buddha’s birth, his becoming an ascetic, enlightenment, travels and teaching. Throughout the biography Wachirayan gives considerable attention to the geographical detail and particularly to the correspondence of ancient sites from the Buddha’s time with places in modern day India, thus providing evidence of the modern-day existence of these sites, rather than mere scriptural references. Another significant feature is Wachirayan’s attempt to write a completely ‘rational’ account of the Buddha's life, and to interpret miraculous events where they appear in the sources in a metaphoric rather than literal sense. For example, in the episode of the Buddha’s confrontation with the demon Mara and his hordes immediately preceding his enlightenment, Mara is said to be a personification of the defilements (kilesa) which assailed the Buddha’s mind; the defeat of Mara is similarly understood as the overcoming of these defilements. In Wachirayan’s own words his narrative differs from previous accounts of the Buddha’s life in that his is written in the style of an ‘historian’ (nak tamnan). And it is significant that Wachirayan bases his work almost exclusively on canonical sources.

How did the rise of ‘rational’ thought in the nineteenth century affect the Jatakas? Much of the criticism of the Jatakas during the nineteenth century was directed at their failure to adequately display sufficient criteria of rationality. That is, the material in the Jatakas which could be defined as ‘irrational’ - the abundance of miracles, supernatural events, marvellous creatures, and so on - was (now) beyond the bounds of the credibility of many leading figures at the Thai court. This was behind Thiphakorawong’s and Mongkut’s labelling of the Jatakas as ‘fables’, or nithan. From Mongkut’s reign through to the end of the century, criticism of the Jatakas on the grounds of their apparent irrationality grew louder and louder, both from Thai and Western commentators. In the Thai religious and historical tradition a sharply defined line was being drawn between fable and ‘history’. Had the Jatakas originally been understood as mere folktales, criticism on these grounds would, of course, have been meaningless. What did it matter if a fictional character displayed supernatural powers? But it was precisely because the Jatakas had


65 Wachirayan, Phutthaprawat, pp. 45-6.


132
possessed (and for much of the kingdom’s subjects continued to possess) the status of true stories - stories that had a basis in historical fact, which had actually happened at some time in the old Buddhist temporal schema - that the issue of their ‘irrationality’ (in the opinion of the ‘ progressives’ at the Thai court) - presented such a problem.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that from around the middle of the nineteenth century the popularity of the Vessantara Jataka and the genre of the Jatakas as a whole experienced a loss of intellectual and religious status at the Thai court. The Jatakas were coming under increasing attack from the king himself and his court allies. This attack was ostensibly motivated by the Jatakas’ ambiguous canonical status among the Buddhist scriptures, at a time when the Tripitaka was becoming the exclusive basis of religious authority; as well as by a growing perception of the ‘irrationality’ of the stories themselves, which brought them into conflict with an increasingly rational thinking Thai elite.

Yet the diminishing influence of the Jatakas at the Thai court was indicative not merely of the fading of a literary genre. Their rejection mirrored the court’s gradual detachment from a certain culture of authority which the stories had helped disseminate to the Tai peoples since the first Tai states had begun to form six centuries earlier. The decline of this ideology of authority was apparent in the new biographical style narratives of the Buddha’s life which omitted the bodhisatta’s accumulation of the Perfections before the Buddha’s enlightenment. The decline was visible also in the sphere of royal historiography, where older historiographical genres such as the ‘great lineage’ chronicles concerned themselves more with a succession of ‘great men’, men of merit, who had accumulated barami in previous incarnations, the new phrataratchaphongsawadan style of chronicle played down this factor in favour of a renewed emphasis on the legitimacy of an authority based on a dynastic line.

The ideal of the ascetic ruler possessed of the Perfections and thereby endowed with supernatural powers had become untenable in the new socio-economic and geopolitical situation in which the Thai kingdom found itself. Whereas the Vessantara Jataka had seemed to go hand in hand with the expansion of the Thai state, such expansion now threatened to bring the Thai kings into conflict with the colonial powers. A new, more delimited as well as a more centralised kind of authority was needed. There was also increasing pressure on the Thai court from a new source. The period of high imperialism in the latter half of the nineteenth century was producing a new class of Western scholar-administrators, whose researches into Buddhism were beginning to have an impact on the Thai court’s own understanding of Buddhism. The next chapter
will look at both these problems and how they were handled by the court of King Rama V.
CHAPTER 5

THAI AND WESTERN BUDDHIST SCHOLARSHIP
IN THE AGE OF IMPERIALISM: THE THAI COURT REDEFINES THE JATAKAS

Today the Jatakas, which originated in India some two and a half thousand years ago, are known almost universally as religious parables or folk tale. While this interpretation of this hugely popular genre of Buddhist literature is widespread, its origin is recent indeed. In earlier chapters I have argued that of all Buddhist scripture it was the Jatakas, and in particular the Vessantara Jataka, which had been the major source among the Tai Buddhist peoples of ideas about the nature of authority, and of social organization. The Jatakas, moreover, were fundamental to the particular historical conception which accounted for the origin of Tai Buddhist rulers and their states. A discontinuity would seem to exist, therefore, between the role the Jatakas once played in the Thai kingdom and that of today. In the previous chapter I discussed how, from around the middle of the nineteenth century, the Jatakas had fallen out of favour among the leading sections of the Thai court. In this chapter I will describe how the court of King Chulalongkorn at the turn of this century took steps to address the matter of the Jatakas directly. The court attempted to formally redefine the Jatakas as mere ‘folktales’, valuable purely for the moral that could be gleaned from the story. In the history of the influence of the Jatakas among the Thai this was a pivotal moment.

It is difficult to understand today how a body of literature could so preoccupy the attention of a country’s government. And it would seem extraordinary that at the height of Western imperialism in Southeast Asia the Thai king would invest his mental energy in researching and publishing an article on the Jatakas, which, as modern scholarship would have it, are little more than fables. The question is all the more pertinent to ask of Chulalongkorn who, more than any other figure, is responsible for the great transformation in the governing apparatus of the Thai kingdom. What then was the impetus behind the king’s actions?

There were two major reasons. First, it was the era of high imperialism in Southeast Asia. In 1893 a serious dispute broke out between Siam and France which resulted in the French sending gunboats up the Chao Phraya River towards Bangkok. Siam was later obliged to comply with a treaty containing a number of humiliating provisions, including the ceding to France of the kingdom’s Lao territories east of the Mekong river, huge reparations, and the occupation by French troops of Siamese territories in the Southeast part of the kingdom, pending Siamese compliance with the French demands. In 1904 Siam lost more of its Lao territories to the French, as well as some of its areas of jurisdiction in Cambodia. In 1907 it lost the rest of its Cambodian
territories to France. Finally, in 1909 Siam ceded its southern tributary states, Kelantan, Trengganu, Kedah, Perlis, Raman, and the Langkawi islands to Great Britain.¹

The threat of imperialism was also influencing the sphere of religion. For several decades Western scholars had been studying the Buddhist scriptures of the countries which professed that religion. The Buddhist scriptures seemed to be a sign of ‘civilisation’, in stark contrast to the generally negative light in which the political regimes and peoples of the region were held by the colonising powers. The research conducted by Western scholars into the Pali scriptures was creating a new religious orthodoxy, which resulted in existing religious practice being seen as a very corrupted form of the original purity of the religion. The Thai court developed close relations with many of the leading Buddhist scholars of the day and it seems to have been considerably influenced by this new Western Buddhist scholarship. The court’s attitude was shaped by their constant struggle to be accepted by the Western powers, culturally and intellectually, as well as politically. Western scholarly interest in the Jatakas, the most popular of the Buddhist scriptures in the Thai kingdom, was to be particularly influential at the Thai court.

The second reason behind the king’s essay is linked to the first. While the political conceptions associated with the Jatakas had declined in elite circles along with the popularity of the Jatakas themselves, in the vast rural hinterland of the Thai kingdom the Jatakas maintained their popularity unabated. But now the risk of this political culture which thrived in these remote regions had become apparent to the Thai court. The political conceptions deriving from the Jatakas, including the ideal of the phu mi bun, the so-called ‘man of merit’, who was believed to command supernatural powers through the strength of his barami, risked provoking a confrontation with the colonial powers which threatened the very existence of the Thai court. A new centralised, bureaucratic administrative model was being developed to ensure the court’s authority over the entire kingdom. The court’s control over its outer provinces required not only political reform but also a transformation of the kingdom’s religious and cultural traditions. Up until now it was these traditions that had provided the major source of political thought.² The timing of Chulalongkorn’s essay on the Jatakas is instructive: the


² One has only to look at the catalogues of extant literature in the provincial regions of the Thai kingdom for the pre-nineteenth century period, where religious, cultural, and folk-literary sources make up around 90% of the total, and where documents which could be defined as ‘secular’ are virtually non-existent; see Rai chu nangsu boran lanna ekasan microfilm khong sathaban wichai sangkhom, mahawithayalat chiang mai phor sor 2521-2533 (Catalogue of Ancient Lanna Literature on Microfilm, University of Chiang Mai Social Research Institute, 1978-1990), Chiang Mai, 1990, pp. 297, 386; Banchi samruat ekasan boran (Catalogue of Surveyed Ancient Literature), 14 Vols., Northeastern Teachers Colleges and Khorn Kaen University, led by Maha Sarakham Teachers College, Maha
essay was published in 1904, just over two years after the court’s firm suppression of the phu mi bun uprisings in the kingdom’s northeast.

This chapter, then, will examine the king’s essay on the Jatakas, showing the new way in which the king desired the Jatakas to be understood. It will look at the impact of Western Pali scholarship which had so influenced the substance of the king’s essay, as well as the relationship between the Western Pali scholars and the Thai court. Finally it will return to the situation within the Thai kingdom, remembering that outside the capital the Jatakas still enjoyed much of their traditional influence in social and political life. The chapter will examine the problem this popularity posed for the Thai court.

King Chulalongkorn’s Essay on the Jatakas

In 1904 the King of Siam published a collection of thirty Jatakas translated from the Pali into Thai, together with an introductory essay he had written himself called Phra borom rachathibai ruang nibat chadok or "His Majesty’s Explanation of the Nipata Jataka", which explained how the Jatakas should be read.³ The king’s ‘Explanation’ of the Jatakas was in response to a short book titled Buddhist India published the previous year by the British Pali scholar Rhys Davids. This work had contained a chapter on the Jatakas. So impressed was he by this piece of Buddhist scholarship that at one stage Chulalongkorn had thought of simply translating and publishing Rhys Davids’ work unchanged in Thai. However, it seems that it was the de facto head of the Sangha, Chulalongkorn’s half-brother Prince Wachirayan, who suggested that Chulalongkorn rewrite the essay as if it were his own work, rather than to praise Rhys David’s writings on the Jatakas. This would avoid the risk of upsetting the older generation who would object on the grounds that Rhys Davids was not himself a Buddhist.⁴ Thus nowhere in his essay does Chulalongkorn mention his source beyond the general term nak prat (scholars).

³ Contained in Prraphat Trinarong, ‘Khong di nau chadok’, (Good Things in the Jatakas) in Warasan Wathanatham Thai, 23, 5, 1984, pp. 32-40. ‘Nipata Jataka’ was the name given to the Jatakas in the Pali Jataka Commentary. There were two other major collections of Jatakas: the ‘Panyat Chadok’ (Fifty Jatakas), which was a non-canonical collection of Jatakas popular throughout mainland Buddhist Southeast Asia, composed possibly in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries; and the ‘Jataka Mala’, a much older collection of Jatakas from the first millennium AD written in Sanskrit.

⁴ Letter from Wachirayan to Chulalongkorn, 30 October 1904, "Rueng plaek nibat chadok" (On the Translation of the Nipata Jatakas), Prampus phra niphon somdet phra maha samana chao krom phra ya wachirayan waroro: phra ratcha hatthalekha - lai phra hat (Prince-Patriarch Wachirayan’s Collected Writings: Correspondence between the Prince and the King), Bangkok, Mahamakut, 1971, p. 80.
The influence of this short essay by King Chulalongkorn has been enormous, to the extent that it has become in Thailand the definitive explanation of Jatakas literature. It was disseminated to the Thai reading public of the time - consisting mostly of the aristocracy, nobility, and senior Buddhist monkhood - via the powerful new technology of print. It was republished again and again with the official edited translations of the entire Nipata collection of Jatakas which came out from 1904 to 1931. It was referred to in Prince Damrong’s introduction to the Panyat Chadok (another collection of Jatakas), which accompanied the successive publications of this other collection of Jatakas during the same period. Damrong’s introduction was still reproduced in reprints of the Panyat Chadok at least as late as the 1960s. Chulalongkorn’s essay is used in several well-known university textbooks on religious literature, and is quoted in academic journals. A recent scholarly edition of the Pali Jataka Commentary printed the essay in its entirety. The Channel Seven nightly news in Thailand has even made reference to it in its regular cultural segment, when explaining the significance of the thet maha chat, the annual recitation of the Vessantara Jataka. Thus it could be said that even today, Chulalongkorn’s essay provides the orthodoxy in interpretations of the status of the Jatakas in the Thai kingdom.

Chulalongkorn began the essay by stating that he was addressing three groups of people: those who enjoyed listening to stories (nihan) but who were not interested in the dhamma or suphasit (‘moral’) that might be contained in the Jataka; those who sought dhamma in their reading, but considered the Jatakas to be mere ‘tales’ (ruang lao niyai) in which there was so little dhamma that it was not worth the effort reading them; and those who saw the Jatakas as stories without any truth in them whatsoever, since they


6 For example: Chua Satawethin, Wannakhadi Phutthasatsana (Buddhist Literature), Part 1, Bangkok, Khurusapha, 1971, (pp. 130-134); Thawisak Yanaprathip, Wannakam satsana (Religious Literature), Ramkhamhaeng University, Bangkok, 1975, p. 95; Sap Prakorpsuk, Wannakhadi chadok (Jataka Literature), Srinakharinwirot University, Pathumwan Campus, Bangkok, 1984, p. 102.

7 For example, ‘Khwam ru ruang chadok’ (Knowledge about the Jatakas), Thanit Chakharataphong, in Aksorasan, Bangkok, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 1972, p. 36; and Prapat Trinarong, “Khong di nai chadok” (Good Things in the Jatakas), Warasan Wathanatham Thai (Journal of Thai Culture), 23, 5, 1984, which prints the entire essay (pp. 32-40).

8 Chadok athakatha - athibai chadok (The Jataka Commentary - Explanation of the Jatakas), Part I, 1st Academic Report, Project for the Transcription of the Khorm and Ancient Regional Scripts, and Editing and Translation of Buddhist Texts into Thai, with the Support of the Ecclesiastical Council and the Religious Affairs Department, the Education Ministry and the Phuminphalopphikkhu Foundation, Bangkok, 1976.

9 ‘Khao Chorm Chet Si’ (Channel Seven Colour News), October, 1992.

138
contained such absurd elements as animals being able to speak, and because the characters in the Jataka were identified as previous incarnations of characters who lived in the time of the Buddha. Moreover,

The old belief that those who doubted those books which were said to be the word of the Buddha would go to hell, thereby forcing people to believe in them, made people resent the Jatakas even more.10

Chulalongkorn stated that the way all three groups approached the Jatakas was too ‘narrow-minded’,11 and proceeded to demonstrate how and why the Jatakas were still worthwhile reading.

What then made Chulalongkorn’s explanation of the Jatakas so different?

Previously the Jatakas had been generally understood as stories which the Buddha had himself told about his former lives. This is in fact stated in the text of each Jataka, which begins by describing the circumstances in which the Buddha related the story (the so-called ‘prarop’ section), and ends with the Buddha identifying himself with the bodhisatta (‘buddha-to-be’), who is usually the main character of that particular story (the so-called ‘prachum chadok’ section). Now, according to Chulalongkorn, the Jatakas were to be understood as mere ‘tales’ (nithan) which, moreover, were ‘pre-Buddhist’ in origin. This new interpretation of the Jatakas represents a remarkable shift in interpretation. How could stories narrated by the Buddha about his own former lives now be explained as having originated before the Buddha himself?

First, Chulalongkorn denied what the Jataka text explicitly stated, that is, that it was a story narrated by the Buddha about one of his former lives. But in order to make such an argument the king had to bring the text of the Jataka into question. Chulalongkorn wrote that according to the research by ‘scholars’ (nak prat), the two crucial parts of the Jataka which referred to the Buddha as narrator of a story of a former life - the prarop section in the introduction, and the prachum chadok section in the conclusion - were not in fact the words of the Buddha (phutthawochana) but part of a commentary (athakatha) added to the original text some time later. Only the verses which each Jataka contained were considered as having been uttered by the Buddha.12 The result of this dissection of the Jataka text into separate sections, and the classification of these sections according to what were the Buddha’s words (the verses) and what was commentary (the prose), had the effect of transforming the Jataka. It could not be denied that the Buddha had uttered the actual verses that were preserved in the Jataka text as it

10 Praphat, op. cit., p. 32.


12 Praphat, op. cit., p. 36.
appeared today. But the exclusion of those parts of the Jataka considered to be post-canonical additions meant that the Jataka could no longer be interpreted as a story actually narrated by the Buddha about a former life. In other words, it was no longer a Jataka, since the literal translation of the Pali term jataka, and indeed the popular understanding of the word, was a story about one of the Buddha’s former lives.

Fig. 1 Jataka Structure according to Chulalongkorn’s Explanation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION OF TEXT</th>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>ATTRIBUTED ORIGIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Prarop (Introduction)</td>
<td>Describes the circumstances of the Buddha’s narration of the Jataka</td>
<td>Composed by later commentator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Main Text</td>
<td>The narrative, consisting of (i) verses and (ii) prose</td>
<td>(i) verses held to be uttered by the Buddha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) prose text composed by a later commentator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Prachum Chadok</td>
<td>Describes who the characters in the story are reborn as in the Buddha’s lifetime; with the bodhisatta, usually the hero of the story, being identified with the Buddha himself</td>
<td>Composed by later commentator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One problem remained. How could one reconcile the fact that the Buddha had told stories which on the face of it appeared unlikely to be true, given the supernatural events which occurred in most of the stories? The answer, according to Chulalongkorn, was that the Buddha had most probably used these stories as parables, allegorical tales which illustrated some moral or point he wanted to convey to his audience. The need for such parables was explained by Chulalongkorn as due to the fact that

people understand the dhamma with differing degrees of difficulty. With some people it is not possible to get them to understand just by raising various teachings of the dhamma. But if one uses a parable (nithan priah)

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13 Ibid.
with the same content as the dhamma it will be easy for them to understand...14

The stories contained in the Jatakas were thereby deprived of their status as historical fact. Yet not content with interpreting the Jatakas as mere ‘tales’, Chulalongkorn referred to other evidence which seemed to reinforce the idea that the Jatakas were not especially ‘Buddhist’ either. For example, it turned out that stories similar to those found in the Jatakas could also be found in other ancient literatures of the world - Arab and Persion tales, and Aesop’s fables for example. These stories were also mostly of the parable genre.15

Moreover, according to other evidence referred to by Chulalongkorn, it appeared that the origin of the Jataka stories was actually in pre-Buddhist Indian folklore. This conclusion was made possible by the textual dissection of the prose commentary from the canonical verses (ie. the Buddha’s words) noted above, as well as textual evidence by ‘scholars’, which will be referred to below. The significance of the use of such a term as ‘pre-Buddhist’ was that it implied a different notion of time to the one implicit in the Jataka text. In the Jataka text the Buddha begins his narration of each story with the equivalent of the phrase ‘once upon a time’ (Pali: ariya). The story is not located in what might be called ‘historical’ time. It does not state how many years before the time of the Buddha the story took place. This is of no importance. The crucial temporal relation here is between the subject of the story - one of the Buddha’s past incarnations - and the person of the Buddha himself. In this context, then, time before the Buddha is meaningful only in terms of the stories about the bodhisatta as recounted in the Jatakas, or in those lesser known scriptural accounts of the other Buddhas who had achieved enlightenment before the better-known Gautama Buddha.16 On the other hand, in the context of ‘historical’ time, it became possible to talk of a pre-Buddhist past which was not actually ‘Buddhist’. In the older conception of time the dhamma was timeless, whereas in the new historical time the dhamma commenced when it was taught by the Buddha. Chronological history, therefore, becomes the benchmark by which the Jatakas are judged. If the origins of the Jatakas were ‘pre-Buddhist’ (in historical time) it followed that their status as Buddhist stories was also in question.

14 Ibid.

15 Chulalongkorn had actually himself translated some of Aesop’s Fables; Prphat, op. cit., p. 34. Some of these translations appeared in the early Thai literary magazine Wachirayan Wiset, in 1886, cf. Wachirayan Wiset, Thursday 15 July 1886 and Sunday 22 August 1886 (wan 5, duan 8, khun 15 kham; wan 1, duan 9, raem 8 kham, chor sor 1248). My thanks to Dr Anthony Diller for calculating these dates for me.

16 Accounts of the former Buddhas appear in the canonical work, the Buddhavamsa (Th. Phutthawong); as well as in the long Introduction (Nidana katha) in the Jataka Commentary.
In Chulalongkorn’s essay the influence of this notion of historical time is also apparent in the way different texts are classified in terms of their dates of composition. Historical analysis of texts could determine which texts had been composed earliest and which followed later. The implicit assumption in the essay is that the older texts had the greatest claims to truth or orthodoxy while the later texts were more open to question. Chulalongkorn pointed out that not only were the introduction and conclusion to each Jataka part of the commentary, but that this commentary had also been composed well after the other scriptures. This evidence further supported the argument against the authority of the Jatakas in Buddhism scripture.

The idea of historical time, new to the Thai kingdom, also carried with it the notion that time could separate historical periods quite different from each other. The Jatakas were by implication the product of a ‘by-gone age’, rather than stories with relevance to the present. For example, the king wrote,

You must understand that the Buddha died almost two thousand five hundred years ago. The thoughts, expressions and ways of explaining things in that time are very different from those of today.

Chulalongkorn included an example so his readers might appreciate this point more easily.

If one were to read a book from the Third Reign, sixty years ago, and compare it with a book written today, one would find that the thoughts and expressions in those books are different from those of today...

One could imagine, therefore, how different they would have been two thousand five hundred years ago.\(^{17}\) The Jatakas were presented as belonging to a time very different from the present. Near the conclusion to the article Chulalongkorn offers a piece of advice which reveals how remote the Jatakas had become from the life of the modern reader: ‘the reader [of the Jatakas] must imagine himself to have been born at that time’.\(^{18}\)

Not only did historical time separate the modern reader from the world of the Jatakas, but also geographical space. Chulalongkorn pointed out for those who were not already aware, that the Buddha did not in fact live in ‘our country’ (prathet raq), but in another country. Different countries had different customs and behaviour, and an obvious example of such differences could be seen by comparing Siam with its close

\(^{17}\) Ibid., p. 33.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 40.
neighbours, Burma and Vietnam. This was an attempt to delocalise the Jatakas, to classify them as stories of foreign origin. Yet the notion of the foreignness (or ‘Indianess’) of the Jatakas was quite recent. There is no evidence to show that this was an issue of any importance, at least before the Fourth Reign. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that most people implicitly believed that the Buddha had lived in the same country as they did, as evidenced by temples housing footprints of the Buddha and local legends recounting the Buddha’s presence in the region. Indeed, the anthropologist Tambiah refers to a monk in northeastern Thailand who believed that the forest in which Prince Vessantara had lived in exile was actually located in Khon Kaen province.

The overall objective of all these arguments was to remove the Jatakas from orthodox Buddhism. The application of the new discipline of textual studies, which strictly divided the scriptures into canon and commentary, the allied discipline of history, which gave new significance to that distinction as well as judging the Jataka stories to be pre-Buddhist, and geography, which considered the stories to be ‘foreign’, all contributed to give the Jatakas a new meaning. No longer acceptable as stories of the Buddha’s former lives, the Jatakas were now to be read either as parables with a moral, or for those with more scholarly interests, as folktales (nithan boran), containing a wealth of information about how ancient peoples of foreign countries lived.

**Western Buddhist Scholarship and the Jatakas**

What, then, was the impetus behind this re-interpretation of the Jataka literature, which delocalised, dehistoricised and, in effect, devalued the genre? Who were the ‘scholars’ Chulalongkorn refers to intermittently in his ‘Explanation’?

Documents of the Thai court show that in writing the essay the king had consulted with senior members of the court, foremost among whom was the de facto head of the Thai Buddhist Sangha, Prince Wachirayan. But in fact, for the most part Chulalongkorn had relied on the work of a group of Western scholars who, since the middle of the nineteenth century, had been working in the new field of Pali textual studies. This field had been opened up because of the increasing exposure of the West to the Buddhist religion as a result of the expansion of European imperialism, in particular

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19 Ibid., p. 33.


21 "Ruam plae nihat chadok", (On Translating the Nipata Jatakas), Pramuan phra niphon somdet phra maha samana chao krom phraya wachirayan wororot: phra ratcha hathalekha - lai phra hat, pp. 80 - 109.
King Chulalongkorn in Western academic gown; from a 1992 Thai postage stamp.
the British acquisition of the colonies of Ceylon and Burma. In the West Buddhism was being brought to the public’s attention with works such as Edwin Arnold’s hugely popular *The Light of Asia* published in 1879, a work which presents a very sympathetic portrait of Buddhism - in stark contrast to the negative view of Asian moral and philosophical systems generally held in the West.22 The point was made by a number of Buddhist scholars that an estimated three to five hundred million people could be classified as Buddhist, making Buddhism the world’s second most popular religion after Roman Catholicism.23 There was also a growing collection in the West of Pali manuscripts, obtained initially from Ceylon, later from Burma, and later still from the kingdom of Siam. Whereas previously most Western accounts of Buddhism had been the work of missionaries,24 from the mid-nineteenth century Buddhism began to be taken up as a subject of formal academic study, sometimes by scholars who had been former colonial administrators.25 The new scholarship on Buddhism was characterised by a much greater emphasis on the Pali texts themselves. Indeed, there was remarkably little interest in the contemporary practice of the religion in Buddhist countries. It was generally perceived by Western scholars to have been so corrupted from the religion’s original purity as to be almost worthless.26

The history of Western scholarly interest in the Jatakas can be said to have begun in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Accounts of the religious systems and practices of Buddhist countries by Westerners before this time had not placed so much attention on the Jatakas in particular. There are several reasons why the Jatakas later became the subject of such attention. First, between 1877 and 1897 the Danish scholar

22 Edwin Arnold, *The Light Of Asia: or, the Great Renunciation* (Mahabhinishkramana), Being the Life and Teaching of Gautama Prince of India and Founder of Buddhism (as Told in Verse by an Indian Buddhist), London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1925. By 1925 this work had been through sixty-five editions.


24 Some of the better known missionary scholars on Buddhism included Rev. D.J. Gogerley and Rev. R. Spence Hardy in Ceylon; Rev. P. Bigandet in Burma; Bishop Pallegoix in Siam.


Fausbøll published his transcription of the original Pali Jataka Book in its entirety into Roman characters.²⁷ Up until then the Jataka Book had only been available for scholars in manuscript form, written in the native scripts in Ceylon, Burma and Siam. Once this transcription became available in the West the Jatakas began to gain a wider scholarly audience. As the stories contained in the Jatakas became more widely known it was noticed that many of them bore a marked resemblance to fables and folk-tales found in Western literature. Folk-lore had, by this time, become an area of great scholarly interest among the young nations of Europe eager to discover their national roots, and this resemblance intrigued many scholars. Besides their value as folk stories it was claimed by scholars that the Jatakas also contained a wealth of historical information about the peoples of ancient India. Moreover, because studies in philology were identifying an historical link between the Indian and European peoples, the Jatakas were perceived by some scholars as an historical source for the origins of the European races. The rise of the discipline of history in the nineteenth century, then, was the other stimulus to Western interest in the Jatakas.

The scholar Chulalongkorn relied upon most closely in his essay on the Jatakas was T.W. Rhys Davids.²⁸ A former colonial administrator in British Ceylon, Rhys Davids was an important figure in Western Pali scholarship, and was influential in bringing Buddhism to the public’s attention. In 1881 he founded the Pali Text Society, an organization which arranged the publication of much of the work going on in Western Pali textual scholarship and to which most of the leading Pali text scholars of the age belonged. In the Pali Text Society’s ‘Prospectus’ published in the initial volumes of the Society’s Journal, Rhys Davids outlined the historical nature of the Society’s endeavour:

This Society has been started in order to render accessible to students the rich stores of the earliest Buddhist literature now lying unedited and practically unused in the various MSS. scattered throughout the University and other Public Libraries of Europe.

The historical importance of these Texts can scarcely be exaggerated, either in respect of their value for the history of folk-lore, or of religion, or of language. It is already certain that they were all put into their present


²⁸ Cf. "Ruang plaean nibat Chadok" (On the Translation of the Nipata Jatakas), Pramuan phra niphon somdet phra maha samana chao krom phraya wachiravan warorot: phra ratcha hatthalekha - lai phra hiti, pp. 80-109. Rhys Davids’ work was also extensively drawn upon by Prince Damrong; see Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, Tamnan phra phuttha chedi (History of Buddhist Stupas) in Prachum phra niphon kiao kap tamnan thang satsana (Collected Writings on Religious History), Cremation Volume, Phra Thep Khunathan (Phon Chinputo), Bangkok, Phra Phiren, 1971, p. 2 & passim.
form within a very limited period, probably extending to less than a century and a half (about B.C. 400-250). For that period they have preserved for us a record, quite uncontaminated by filtration through any European mind, of the every-day beliefs and customs of a people nearly related to ourselves, just as they were passing through the first stages of civilization. They are our best authorities for the early history of that interesting system of religion so nearly allied to some of the latest speculations among ourselves, and which has influenced so powerfully, and for so long a time, so great a portion of the human race - the system of religion which we now call Buddhism. The sacred books of the early Buddhists have preserved to us the sole record of the only religious movement in the world's history which bears any close resemblance to Christianity. In the history of speech they contain unimpeachable evidence of a stage in language midway between the Vedic Sanskrit and the various modern forms of speech in India. In the history of Indian literature there is nothing older than these works, excepting only the Vedic writings; and all the later classical Sanskrit literature has been profoundly influenced by the intellectual struggle of which they afford the only direct evidence. It is not, therefore, too much to say that the publication of this unique literature will be no less important for the study of history, - whether anthropological, philological, literary, or religious, - than the publication of the Vedas has already been.29

This concern for the historical clearly informs Rhys Davids’ work on the Jatakas. Most of this work appeared in two books; Buddhist Birth Stories, in 1880, and Buddhist India in 1903, the latter being ‘an enlarged restatement’ of the views he had put forward in 1880.30 In Buddhist Birth Stories Rhys Davids claimed that the Jataka Book was important as ‘a record of the every-day life and every-day thought, of the people among whom these tales were told: it is the oldest, most complete, and most important collection of folk-lore extant’.31 Drawing on the work of contemporary folklorists (Benfey, Müller and others) he found in the world’s great collections of folktale literature an astonishing number of stories similar to those of the Jatakas. Similar stories could be found in such works as Aesop’s Fables; Biblical stories, including the Judgment of Solomon in the Book of Kings; the Syriac collection of tales called Kalilah and Damnah, and its Arabic translation Kalilah and Dimnah; the later Hebrew, Latin and eventually European language translations of this work; the popular medieval religious


31 T.W. Rhys Davids, Buddhist Birth Stories (Jataka Tales), London, Truebner’s Oriental Series, 1925 (1st ed. 1880), pp. iii-iv, author’s emphasis.
romance Barlaam and Joasaph and its many translations into European languages; another medieval work called the Gesta Romanorum; the Sinbad the Sailor stories; the Arabian Nights; Jean de la Fontaine’s folktales; as well as the works of Poggio, Boccaccio, Gower, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and many others.33

The similarities between the stories in the above collections and the Jatakas were not coincidental. It was argued that the presence of the Greeks in the East during the time of the Buddhist ascendency in Northern India in the fourth and third centuries B.C. facilitated the transmission of stories from Buddhist to Greek culture. While it may have been that the transmission of stories had gone in the other direction, the ‘internal evidence’ was against this hypothesis.34 Largely on the basis of such historical reasoning Rhys Davids argued that in the collection of Indian tales found in the Jataka Book lay the real origin of much of the folk literature current in the West.

This claim had significant implications, for the Jatakas were more than just literature. As folk-lore they were an important record ‘of the beliefs and habits of men in the earlier stages of their development’, and contemporary research had shown this to be the key to a correct understanding of the habits and beliefs of men in the present.35 But this record was not only relevant to the history of ancient peoples of Northern India, nor only to the history of the Buddhists. For Rhys Davids there was another factor:

...in the Jatakas we have a nearly complete picture, and quite uncorrupted and adulterated by European intercourse, of the social life and customs and popular beliefs of the common people of Aryan tribes closely related to ourselves, just as they were passing through the first stages of civilization.

For Rhys Davids the Jatakas were ‘a priceless record of the childhood of our race’.36

32 Joasaph or Josaphat was said to be a corruption of the word Bodisat [bodhisatta], the common epithet of the main character in the Jatakas who was eventually to become the Buddha. The popularity of the character Josaphat among medieval Christians was such that he was eventually canonized. The Catholic Church had thus unwittingly recognising the Buddha as a Christian saint!; Buddhist Birth Stories, pp. xxxiv-xxxix.

33 Ibid., pp. ii-xlvi.

34 Ibid., p. xli.


36 Ibid., pp. lxxviii - lxxix. For Rhys Davids’ linking of Buddhism with the ‘Aryan’ peoples of North India, see T.W. Rhys Davids, Buddhism: Being a Sketch of the Life and Teachings of Gautama, the Buddha, pp. 22-26; Buddhist India, passim; see also Wickremeratne, op. cit., pp. 163-4, 198, 208.