

of the mysterious figure of Vajrapāṇi, which we see so often in the different representations of scenes from Buddha's life. Nearly the same explanation (without, however, leaving purely Indian ideas) of Vajrapāṇi as "guardian angel" was indicated by myself fifteen years ago in my article "Buddhist Art in India" (written in Russian in the Bulletin of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, vol. xiv, pp. 223-4, 1901).

Buddhist legends tell us of a "sahajā sahadharmikā nityānubaddhā devatā".¹ Persons living in India and well acquainted with the large pantheon of the minor deities could probably give us interesting details about this Indian guardian angel. As far as I know, the Buddhist literary sources give us no help in this matter. Still, the epithets of the "sahajā devatā" are quite sufficient to show us what is really meant; it is clearly the same idea which we have in the Fravashis and the guardian angels. The best weapon for such a devatā would be, of course, the magic weapon *par excellence*, the vajra; the attribute, as in many other cases, has been the origin of the name: such was the birth of Vajrapāṇi.

The conception of Vajrapāṇi in Mrs. Spooner's article agrees on the whole with mine; I remain only on Indian soil, although, of course, I am quite ready to admit the possibility of Iranian influences. More details about the "sahajā devatā" would be very welcome.

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ASURA MAYA

Dr. Thomas, commenting on Dr. Spooner's recent discoveries and theories based thereon (JRAS., April, 1916, pp. 362-6), ventures to make certain conjectures

¹ *Divyāvadāna*, ed. Cowell-Neil, p. 1440. Lakṣmī is also often a sort of "sahajā devatā".

regarding the mutual contact and conflict between the early Mesopotamian civilizations and the Indo-Aryan waves passing from Europe south of the Caspian on their way to ancient Persia and India and the influence of the former upon the latter. With due deference to his scientific caution, I should like to refer him to my *Comparative Studies*,¹ wherein (pp. 38-42) I had, perhaps rashly, made the same conjecture and derived the word *Asura* in the same way, that is, from the name of the great Assyrian god. I am exceedingly glad to find now after seven years, that if I erred I erred in good company.

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NOTE ON THE ABOVE

Upon a perusal of Mr. K. Rama Varma Raja's *Comparative Studies* I certainly agree that on pp. 38-42 the Sanskrit *Asura* is identified as "one and the same deity" with "the *Ahura* of the Zoroastrians and the Assyrian *Assur*". I do not feel sure that the course of events is conceived by Mr. Rama Varma Raja quite in the same way as by me, since he considers that *Asura* found his way into India in pre-Aryan days.

I am glad to have made the acquaintance of Mr. Rama Varma Raja's interesting pamphlet.

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SRAHE

The use of the word *śrāhe* in Kanarese inscriptions was first noted by Dr. Fleet in *Ind. Ant.*, vol. 18, p. 38 f., in editing a Guḍigere record containing the phrase: Sa(śa)ka-varsha 998ney=Anaḷa-saṃvatsarada śrāheyoḷu, "in the *śrāhe* of the Śaka year 998, the cyclic year Anaḷa." Further notes by him appeared *ibid.*, vol. 19, p. 163, and vol. 22, p. 222, the latter referring to a record at Sūḍi; and Professor Kielhorn (*ibid.*, vol. 23, p. 224)

¹ A small pamphlet published in 1908.