

Burmese Buddhism, Polity and underlying Ecology

Michael Madha¹

¹ Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge, Life Member Clare Hall College, Cambridge, UK

Abstract

The passage of History is determined by and is a manifestation of the struggle between Order and Disorder (or Chaos). This is a materialist interpretation which discards the Idealists' 'Cogito ergo Sum' (I think therefore I am: Descartes, Discours sur la Methode 1637) in favour of the materialist perspective as summed up by Neitzsche's 'Sum ergo Cogito' – (I am therefore I think). The Materialist understanding is that a body must 'a priori' exist, matter is primary, and resolution of the struggle between the forces of Order and Disorder determines everything. This happens on a very grand scale at the birth of the universe (the Big Bang), at formation of the galaxies, and at every other level. At resolution a new equilibrium is established which in time develops into a new struggle: the process is endless. Linked as they are in continuous opposition to each other Order and Chaos form a pairing, a unity of opposites, interacting and competing. Simply put, now one is dominant, now the other: this is the theory which is known as Dialectical Materialism. I propose to examine historical Southeast Asia, focussing especially on pre-colonial Burma (now Myanmar) with the intention of ascertaining the dialectics of its situation, specifically, to what extent material conditions have determined the socio-political structure, and how the two interact. It should be possible then to correlate the analysis to other periods of history and other parts of the world.

Keywords: History, Materialist, Ideology, Society and Civilisation, Burma

“kinship solidarity’ is here an image of the pattern of landholding and not vice versa”



Bagan (Pagan). Burma

develops into a new struggle: the process is endless. Linked as they are in continuous opposition to each other Order and Chaos form a pairing, a unity of opposites, interacting and competing. Simply put, now one is dominant, now the other: this is the theory which is known as Dialectical Materialism. I propose to examine historical Southeast Asia, focussing especially on pre-colonial Burma (now Myanmar) with the intention of ascertaining the dialectics of its situation, specifically, to what extent material conditions have determined the socio-political structure, and how the two interact. It should be possible then to correlate the analysis to other periods of history and other parts of the world.

Para 2

The term Southeast Asia traditionally comprised only the mainland states, but the southern islands - Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, Kalimantan and many more which now make up Indonesia - should also be included in the term. The

countries of this larger area have sometimes been referred to as 'The Indianised States of Southeast Asia' (George Coedes 1968) but the term is misleading, suggesting as it does that Indian principles and ideology defined these polities. A relatively more accurate description was 'Indochina', which acknowledged Chinese as well as Indian influences but again attributed the dynamics of Southeast Asia primarily to external forces. Instead I would emphasise and wish to examine the internal dynamics of Southeast Asia. That is to say, how the material conditions of economy and ecology within those territories affected every aspect of ideology: religion, kinship and political systems, plus all social production including architecture, art, crafts, horticulture, cuisine and the absence of family names. The dominance or otherwise of a civilisation is also the result of material conditions and I additionally wish to examine how such dominance arises; why it should be but a passing manifestation in humanity's history, a transitory phenomenon which arises because of chance events, occurring now in one part of the world now elsewhere, depending on the ecology and other historical forces existing at the time.

Para 3

Burma is bordered by mountains except where it meets the Indian Ocean to the south. From the highest peak Mt Hkakabo (5,881m) in the extreme north, and ranges running north to south on each side, the terrain slopes to the Ayeyawady (Irrawady) and Sittoung (Sittang) river deltas. During the rainy season mountain run-off floods the plain and replenishes the soil with nutrients, creating ideal conditions for the cultivation of wet-rice (paddy) –the foundation of Burmese society and civilisation. Though wet-rice cultivation involves an initial input of labour no great input of organisation or materials is required, and even the high plateau regions of the Shan states can support its production where the valleys are sufficiently wide. However, in the mountains dry-rice (swidden) is cultivated using 'slash-and-burn' techniques, and the yield per seed sown is much lower than the yield for wet-rice. As the name suggests the mountainsides have to be cleared (often of virgin forest) by slashing down trees and all vegetation, burning the residue, then making holes so that seeds can be safely sown and not washed away by the monsoon rains. (Madha 1980). In mountainous areas there is no alternative to swidden cultivation if manpower and the organisation to build and irrigate terraces is unavailable. But on the plain, besides having abundant land for rice-growing, Burmese villagers had productive gardens and were usually close to forest which provided most other necessities: hardwood trees and bamboo for building; an enormous variety of flora and fauna; cotton for clothing, and plant dyes; even occasionally honey. The enterprising captured and trained elephants from the forest to use for transport and hunting, while waterways, lakes and village ponds provided freshwater prawns and many kinds of fish. Consequently, Burma was sometimes fancifully described as a paradise, where the inhabitants had merely to stretch a hand from their hammocks to harvest the bounty which nature provided. Even so this description is incomplete. The southeast, and the milder northwest monsoon rains cover the country with water for long periods, and in the warm stagnant water mosquitoes breed rapidly. Consequently, malaria was endemic, which historically kept the population at a low level relative to resources: the dialectic of Burmese history.

Para 4.

In fact, the population of mainland Southeast Asian countries has historically been very low. (For further information on early Burma see Michael Aung-Thwin's excellent 'Pagan: the origins of modern Burma' and for general history of Burma see Aung Thwin and Aung Thwin 2012). In 1900 the population of Europe (excluding Russia), was over 300 million, whereas despite its land area being comparable, Charles Hirschman estimates that 'the whole of the population of Southeast Asia was probably around 80 million people, with almost one third of that in Java alone' (Journal of Southeast Asian Studies September 1994). Keeping to the date of 1900, the population of Burma was probably around 10.6 million (M Ismael and K Maung:1979) – although twice that of a century earlier – and the land area about 653,500 sq km. Corresponding figures for India were population 238.4 million, land area 2,973,000 sq km: i.e. in an area 4.5 times that of Burma the population was 22.4 times greater. The differential in China would have been yet more marked: in 1900 the population is believed to have been about 400 million (nearly 40 times that of Burma). As the land area was considerably less than at present (9,326,410 sq km) some three times that of India, and eleven times that of Burma using today's land areas (as given in Encyclopedia Britannica) the pressure on land would have been much greater than in any part of Southeast Asia, especially as the topography of China often necessitates terracing before land can be productive.

Para 5

Consequently, in Burma, where land was plentiful relative to population size, labour was always the critical (limiting) factor of production, whereas the opposite was true in China, India and Java where the population was much larger. Land being readily available in Southeast Asia generally, (Java excepted), individuals could not appropriate large tracts and force landless farmers to work it for them, therefore no landed aristocracy developed and relatively few class divisions. Relationships in Burma were, and often still are, lateral: while parents and grandparents are greatly respected, kinship emphasises '*doh maung nhamat*', literally 'we brother and sisters'. Family names were not used in Cambodia until introduced by the French in 1910, they were only introduced in Thailand during the reign of Rama VI (1910-1925) and in Burma the use of family names is only now being

gradually accepted primarily by the elite. Dumont (1977) has suggested the term 'Homo Aequalis' to indicate the egalitarianism of such societies, but perhaps a more suitable term could be 'Homo Lateralis', because lateral relationships dominate even though society is not acephalous, as shown below. Family ties are strong: at critical phases of the agricultural cycle, also when building houses and maintaining village roads and amenities, and at any other time of family need, reciprocal labour exchange takes place in an established and accepted manner. In Burma and Thailand village life is uxori-local (males marry into the village, bringing mobile means of production such as buffaloes, harrows and their own labour), a system which does not occur where land is in short supply. The position of men is therefore less secure than the position of women, who can depend on the immediate support of their relatives throughout their lives. Most secure of all are the children, labour being in short supply both sexes are equally valued.



Shwegyigone stupa

subsequent Burmese Buddhist temples constructed in a simple bell shape.

However, his son Chansittha/Kyansittha (1084-1113) built the ornate Ananda temple, also in Bagan, which is a more rectangular and involuted structure. It closely resembles Hindu temples in India, and reveals the tendency of monarchs in lateral societies to give themselves legitimacy by adopting features representative of Hindu ideology.

Para 6

Burma's present boundaries were more-or-less established during the reign of King Anawryetha of Bagan (1044-1077) who conquered the Mon state in southeast Lower Burma, Yakhine state in the southwest, and to the northeast large parts of the Shan states: he can therefore be called the first king of Burma. Anawryetha is a prominent figure in Burmese history, and the magnificent Shwegyigone phaya he built in Bagan became the prototype for



A modern oil painting of the Ananda Temple, showing King Kyansittha supervising its building

It was a constant struggle for monarchies to survive as their influence tended to progressively degenerate beyond the palace and its environs. They therefore not only sought confirmation of their status by copying icons from the established Hindu hierarchy of India, (see also below) but also often adopted Hindu nomenclature, again revealing the monarchy's search for legitimacy from exogenous sources. When assuming the throne both the above, and many subsequent kings, chose to adopt Sanskrit names despite the letter 'R' existing in Sanskrit but not in the Burmese alphabet. (Thus the Hindu 'Anu Radha', 'Karan Sethra', and 'Arakan' are pronounced respectively 'Anawryetha', 'Kyansittha/ Chansittha', and 'Yakhine'. Similarly 'Rangoon', the capital city of 19th century British Burma, and the Irrawaddy river, are pronounced 'Yangone' and 'Ayeyawady' by the Burmese themselves).

Para 7

*Angkor Wat*

agriculture in all three countries involved the extensive input of labour. This 'involution' is to be found not just in agriculture, as described by Geertz in his work on Java (Clifford Geertz 1963), but is found in many other spheres, where the contrast between the lateral and hierarchical is of plain and simple versus elaborate, ornate and rich - or 'involved'. Socially and materially, categories and boundaries are sharply defined in hierarchical systems, for instance between house, garden and forest, and each person has an ascribed social role with specific limitations. One category of person is allowed a certain employment, another is not: one category is given access to sacred areas, to others the area is restricted. In India residence is also specific, and it is considered inauspicious by some to catch sight of certain persons (especially the '*dalits*' and the 'untouchables') anywhere other than in their allotted area.

Para 9

In China the mode of production resembles the Indian rather than the Southeast Asian, as land rather than labour is the critical factor, and accordingly when we examine the superstructure of China we note a similar political hierarchy. The Emperor ruled over the local warlords and large landowners, who were deferred to by diverse classes of civil servants, priests, teachers, artisans, merchants and craftsmen. Rebel and revolutionary movements understood how this hierarchy of classes was underpinned by the vast peasantry, who being landless were forced to yield control over the product of their labour to landlords and merchants. Consequently, the Maoists, during their political campaigns, offered as one of their political objectives land for those who worked it. As in India the architecture of Chinese temples is elaborate and involutioned: different in texture and tone but equally richly detailed, and the terraced land shows that agriculture too had benefitted from a substantial input of labour.

Para 10

Though part of Southeast Asia, the island of Java (now part of Indonesia) historically had a much higher level of population than the mainland, and fields were extensively terraced. Geertz has shown that Mahayanist Buddhism

As in many ancient civilisations, water was the basis both of Bagan's prosperity, and of the Khmer civilisation which built Angkor Wat over approximately the same period of the 10th and 11th centuries. The complex construction of reservoirs for water storage, plus sluices and irrigation canals, could only be possible within a centralised system capable of organising the population. There were royal households in most Southeast Asian countries, and occasionally local aristocracies (in the Shan states for example), but a privileged class is something of an alien phenomenon in Southeast Asia, and Tambiah (1976) points out that both Thai and Burmese royalty required the presence of a Hindu priest within the palace to give them legitimacy. Especially at Angkor bas-reliefs and statues illustrate royal involvement and strong Hindu connections: everything is ornate and Shivaism is prominently displayed in the form of the Shiva Linga and Nandi, the sacred bull of the important Hindu deity Shiva. But these hierarchical ideologies were not adopted by the general population, neither as Shivaism nor the slightly less hierarchical Mahayana Buddhism. The Hindu priest's role was more or less limited to the court, functioning as he did only there, and despite his presence Thai and Burmese kings were normally only Dharma Rajas (law givers) unlike the Deva Rajas (god kings) of India. In both Burma and Cambodia society adopted Theravada Buddhism when the hierarchies based on hydraulic engineering collapsed.

Para 8

Society was extremely hierarchical in India, China and Java, where the availability of land was critical. Kinship in India was (and is) vital, as not only is family important, with specific terms given to each relative, but the caste system determines one's status and rights in society entirely according to birth. The development of



was the main religion, though a proportion of the population followed Hinduism. (Clifford Geertz 'The Religion of Java'1960). Complementing the high level of population, the type of religion, and agricultural involution (also described by Geertz: op cit) is the world's largest Mahayanist Buddhist temple, Borobudur (or Barabudur). The 8-9th century temple, not far from the town of Muntilan in central Java, is listed as a World Heritage site and its three tiers are described thus by Unesco: '...a pyramidal base with five concentric square terraces, the trunk of a cone with three circular platforms and at the top a monumental stupa. The walls and balustrades are decorated with fine low reliefs, covering a total of 2,500 square metres. Around the circular platforms are seventy-two openwork stupas, each containing a statue of the Buddha...' An impressive example of what hierarchical societies can achieve.

Para 11

The form of Buddhism followed in Burma is called 'Theravada' meaning 'the Way of the Elders'. Theravada Buddhism adheres to the Buddha's original principles which stress an individual's responsibility for finding his own salvation. It is distinctly different from Mahayana Buddhism and its development as found in China, Java, Tibet, Korea and Japan (and its yet more hierarchical form found in India). Historically the Theravadans have been considered to be the more 'conservative' branch of Buddhism because they regard their way to be the authentic, original form of the Buddha's teachings, as 'contained in canon of scripture received by Sangha at 1st Buddhist Council at Rajagaha immediately after decease of Buddha' (Trevor Ling 1972:244). In this respect they may be thought to be the more fundamentalist of the two major branches of Buddhism'.

Para 12

The literature of Mahayana Buddhism began to develop some four hundred years after the death of the Buddha (Conze: 1957: 92). The Mahayanists considered the earlier teachings influenced largely by the disciple Sariputra to be a diluted form of Buddhism, an inferior kind of wisdom for the benefit of those who were of slow and dull intellect (op cit). The Mahayanists refer to the Theravadins, the Sarastavadins, and several other minor sects as Hinayanist ('yana' translates as 'the Way' and 'maha' as 'greater', while 'hina' means 'the small' or 'lesser'). Critical for Mahayanists is the concept of compassion, which is central to their view of Buddhism - a Bodhisattva (a person who is about to become a Buddha) postpones his Buddha-hood and consequent release from suffering because he feels compassion for mankind, and accepts remaining a Bodhisattva so as to help others. This simple idea of compassion immediately separates society and creates a hierarchy of the teacher and the taught. The emphasis on self-enlightenment in Theravada teaching is considered by the Mahayanists to be self-centred and individualistic. (Ling 1972:39).

Para 13

It is not possible to list here all the pertinent differences between Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism, nor am I qualified to do so, but certain important issues for my argument need to be considered in addition to the basic aspects touched upon. The importance given to compassion and to the concept of the Bodhisattva allows development in Mahayana of the Bodhisattva's active involvement with the human world, hence leads to the evolution of Bodhisattva cults. If the path to enlightenment is not principally through self-enlightenment, it is easily subject to the hierarchy of teacher and taught, and consequently to an increasing hierarchy of intermediaries, saints and associated icons.

Para 14

In addition to the people and the monarchy, the third pillar of Burmese society is the monastic order, the Sangha. This word derives from Sanskrit, but is used in many Indian languages, including Pali, meaning 'association', 'assembly', 'company' or 'community'. But its deeper roots come from the Sanskrit for pounding, 'Sangam', i.e. the pounding together of various elements, and was employed when referring to pre-Buddhist republican assemblies of the 6th century BC, based as they were on coming together of the people to 'pound' out their differences and thereby reach a consensus. (The Athenians later in the 5th century BC called the coming together of the people - demos - to resolve social and political issues 'democracy'). Hence Sanga effectively means an assembly based on democracy, although as in Athens it involved a distinct group rather than the whole population. The monastic

Buddhists took the established word 'Sanga/Sangha' from the political sphere and used it to describe assemblies in the religious sphere - i.e. the assembly of monks.

Para 15

Monasteries in Southeast Asia, established by the monarch or affluent patrons and often funded by extensive land holdings, taught children to read and write. The monasteries were organised collegially as an early form of Madrasa - a teaching and learning institution - as in 10th century Islamic Spain. ('Madrasa' is the Arabic word for any type of educational institution, secular or religious, for elementary instruction or higher learning, much like Cambridge and Oxford colleges in their early days). The attendance of almost all Burmese children at such 'phongyi Kyaungs' - literally 'monks' schools' - made pre-colonial Burma a highly literate society. Many of the young students were subsequently ordained as novice monks, and as today could be seen every morning in towns and villages following senior monks on their daily routine collecting the alms given by the laity as an act of piety. As today these young novices did not observe the full 10 precepts (and many sundry rules) which the senior monks observed. They also took holy orders for only a short period, unlike the adult monks most of whom dedicated their lives to the order, which must have contributed in some small way as now to keeping the population lower than it might otherwise have been.

Para 16

In vertical societies, those in which the dominant ideology is one of hierarchy, relationships tend to be unequal and generally fixed. The use of the term 'lateral' implies that laterality is the dominant ideology among the mass of the people, even where it may in fact be subordinate to a political hierarchy. We can say that in all societies there is always a struggle between the principle of hierarchy and the principle of equality, which are not fixed but dynamic, the factors of production favouring one or the other. Kingship in lateral societies is especially insecure where land is plentiful. The king as bringer of order among other things strives to push religion and society towards a Hindu form whenever greater social organisation is needed. Correspondingly the monuments they leave are more worked and elaborate as is the land, confirming not only Durkheim's thesis (1912) that the religious sphere is a mirror image of society, but that society is itself a mirror of the agricultural base or prevailing mode of production, which pervades all aspects of its culture. The two are in a way mirror images, as the elaborate Ananda temple in Bagan and Angkor Wat in Cambodia show. During the Ayutthaya period after the sacking of Angkor in 1431, the Thai brought many artisans and craftsmen to their capital, and also the Hindu ideology which considered the monarch to be a 'deva raja' (god-king). Many of its temples show a close affinity to the Hindu temples of India, especially Wat Chaiwattanaram built by King Prasat Thong (ruled 1629–1656) who was the first king of the dynasty named after him, and the fourth dynasty of the Siamese Ayutthaya kingdom.



Wat Chaiwattanaram

Para17

Though early Buddhism affirmed that the road to salvation is an individual path, reached by way of meditation, the Buddha was also concerned that his teachings should be passed on, as his discussions with his beloved disciple Ananda made clear. This was a paradox faced by most egalitarian ideologies. The early Buddhist message, which was essentially lateral with its egalitarian values and road to individual emancipation, can only be passed down the generations through an institution such as a church, which is essentially a vertical structure, requiring hierarchy and authority. (The early Christian church was confronted by a similar paradox.) We can see in Burma that though both agricultural conditions and religion inclined to individuality, elements of hierarchy were necessary.

In the religious sphere there was the well-developed

organisation of monks the 'Sangha' at least in urban areas, indicating the acceptance of a certain level of hierarchy, though there was also the tradition of the solitary forest-dwelling monk the *Yateh*. Given the preponderance of bilateral kinship in the whole of mainland Southeast Asia; the high status of women; the equality of inheritance and the reluctance to endow, alienate or transfer power to man or god, the region was pre-eminently suited to the Theravada form of Buddhism. But the price of the emphasis on laterality is most clearly seen at the political level, when order frequently gave way to chaos at the succession. There being no rule of primogeniture, death of the king often led to a power struggle among the princes and blood-baths within the royal family. A hierarchical form of political organisation such as monarchy is necessary after a certain point of social development, but as we have

seen in Southeast Asia it seeks legitimacy from a source outside its own culture, thus can be said to be an exogenous phenomenon maintained by alien rituals, an anomaly in Southeast Asia. George Coedes considers the institution to be 'migratory' ('Indianised States of Southeast Asia' 1968. See also Luce 1969 and S. Tambiah 1969: 59).

Para 18

Ashoka Maurya (268 to 232 BC) was the first Buddhist Emperor of what today is northern India and Pakistan, and he is held up by the Buddhists as the ideal for subsequent emperors to follow. After his conversion to Buddhism he promoted the concept of Dharma in the widest sense, acceptable both to Buddhists and Brahmins, as 'a general ethic and policy of his own creation.... not narrowly concerned with the propagation of Buddhist teachings' as Tambiah states. Ashoka considered religion to be the responsibility of the 'bhikkus' (monks) not of rulers, thereby ceding power to them. But having ceded power the state then needed to keep it in check, (cf. the first Council of Christianity convened by the Roman Emperor Constantine in AD 325 to affirm what was doctrine and what heresy).

Therefore, Ashoka promoted religious tolerance and the co-existence of sects (in Rock edicts VII and XII), but he also disapproved of divisions in the Buddhist Sangha and was willing to apply strong sanctions to keep the order united (Sanchi Pillar and Sarnath Pillar edicts. Tambiah 1969:64). The Sangha themselves, having renounced worldly affairs were not concerned with authority and did not of their own accord evolve hierarchy; the king appointed the abbots of most monasteries. Continuous schism was allowed for by the early bhikkus and to some extent institutionalised by them (See Ling 1976:160 on what is referred to as the 'law of schism'). It is generally the case that as states develop, if their ideology is underpinned by a particular religion, they cannot afford to be tolerant of schisms in that religion, lest schisms give rise to confusion about their own legitimacy and hence loss of confidence in the political structure. Thus the polity must endeavour to keep the religious order under some control to avoid division, disorder and confusion. Schisms in Theravada Buddhism have been about minor issues of dress or discipline rather than doctrine, unlike Mahayanan schisms which were inclined to be about doctrinal issues.

Para 19

We have seen that the forms of religion available in Southeast Asia ranged from the relatively unorganised and individualistic Theravada Buddhism, to a more organised and controlled Mahayana form with a teacher to help individuals find their salvation, and the even more intrusive Shiva-ite Hinduism. We have seen that the form adopted was always linked to the means of production i.e land, and when that availability became critical land was more intensively worked. Corresponding to involution on the land and in the belief system, is the involution of kinship, as inheritance becomes more critical. With the importance of inheritance comes greater control over women and their reproductive capability so as to avoid any challenge to legitimacy; and greater importance is attached to gates and doorways - what is internal and what external. We can also observe numerous other correspondences, most noticeable in architecture. A Hindu temple, or Chinese religious building cannot be said to be seeking simplicity, moreover a Hindu temple is not open to the 'polluting' outcaste class, whereas a Theravada Buddhist temple is generally a simple bell-shaped stupa without any specific monastic order attached to it, and is open to all. Separation and delineation is the way of hierarchy, however in much of Southeast Asia artefacts are known for their simplicity. Similarly, fundamentalist Protestant sects such as the Amish and Quakers (Shakers) made their own tools and used simple agricultural techniques, dressed plainly and made utilitarian furniture; which contrasts with the complex feudal system, hierarchical religion, centralised society and elaborate architecture and artifacts of other European societies. It should therefore be possible to form a general understanding of the nature of a particular society by examining any one index, as it can often reveal a pattern which is mirrored in other aspects of that culture. The brutalism of fascist architecture for example suggests much about fascist art, music, politics and ideology. Agricultural systems however are naturally the key index when agriculture is the dominant mode of production.

Para 20

This analysis is not dissimilar to the traditional Chinese concept of Yin and Yang, the unity of opposites, especially as the Yin-Yang concept shows clearly that part of the Yin is present in the Yang and vice versa. But it is not static as that unity has generally been understood. Instead this paper presents evidence of a dynamic (dialectical) unity, in which each component affects the other in a continually evolving relationship known as dialectical materialism. The unity of opposition can be correlated to Hegel's conception of dialectics, but his framework was idealistic, affirming as it did that man was alienated from God but through the progress of history would gradually as a species become his perfect image. Which brings to mind Corinthians 13.12. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face..."

Para 21

In every religion whether Christian, Buddhist or Islamic there exist two polar formats: one emphasises individuality and the individual's efforts to attain salvation, the other emphasises hierarchical systems which employ intermediaries to intercede for one's salvation. Examining the lateral pole in Christianity we find belief systems which are totally opposed both to icons and a priestly order. Among these Christian puritans religious buildings are not sanctified but are simply called Meeting or Friends' Houses, and employ no Priest, one speaks directly to the deity and all icons are frowned upon. The English puritans, led by Oliver Cromwell, were opposed to the power wealth and corruption of the Roman Church and destroyed icons such as stained glass windows, relics and statues, together with many religious buildings. With respect to population and social change studies in England McFarlane has shown (See Macfarlane A. 1978 & 1989) that the peasantry was in many respects liberated from their feudal lords after the population was dramatically reduced by the Black Death. It fundamentally changed the course of English history because labour became the critical factor of production. Similarly, in Islam there are two major poles, Sunni and Shia. The latter put emphasis on intermediaries for their spiritual emancipation and fulfilment and thus have many saints and Ayatollahs. Their split with the Sunni occurred because the Shia emphasise that leadership should be based on blood descent (inheritance) hence they stress the importance of Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, and Ali's two sons Hassan and Hussein, as his legitimate successors. The Sunni constitute the puritan pole in Islam, and their most extreme branch is known as the Salafi (Wahabi). They stress the importance of achievement, and are so opposed to iconography that they dismantled the Prophet's house because many followers believed that touching the bricks would bring them blessings, and that any object from the house would provide protection from evil and should be venerated. The word Salafi, like its Theravada Buddhist counterpart, literally means the Way of the Elders, the forefathers or predecessors. Its followers likewise do not believe that any priest can assist in one's emancipation, only the knowledge and practise of the Quran's teachings can do so. The Shakers and Quakers etc are their Christian counterparts and it is notable that all are iconoclastic, and in all the emphasis is on the individual and the simple "old" way. Though temples are not built in Europe there are other forms of construction such as cathedrals and meeting houses, and the connection between mode of production and ideology is similar. In the dialectics of hierarchy and laterality, the dialectics of order and chaos, of kinetic and potential energy, the achievements of order are spectacularly impressive, the greatest of which is civil society but it is always balanced by its creative pole the genii within chaos.

(Essay in Panorama and Pareidolia)

*".....not accumulation but change, the feedback proves, the feedback is the law
 Into the same river no man steps twice
 When fire dies air dies
 the message
is change, presents
 no more than itself
 And the too strong grasping of it,
 when it is pressed together and condensed,
 loses it.
 This very thing you are."*

Charles Olson 'Kingfishers' 1:4

Acknowledment

My thanks to Mary Madha for her input and grammatical corrections. Any faults remaining are my own: the persistence of chaos, despite all efforts to bring some order to it

Works Cited

- Aung Thwin M. 1985: PAPAN The origins of Modern Burma. U of Hawaii Press
- Aung Thwin M & Aung Thwin Maitri 2012: A History of MYANMAR since Ancient Times Bell and Bain. Glasgow.
- Baker, Chris; Phongpaichit, Pasuk (2017).A History of Ayutthaya: Siam in the Early Modern World (Kindle Edition). Cambridge University Press.
- Borubudur Temple Central Java: Unesco world Heritage Centre
- Coedes G. 1968 The Indianized States of Southeast Asia. (ed. W.F. Vella; trans. S.B. Cowing) East- West Centre Press Honolulu.
- Conze E. 1957 Bhuddism, Its Essence + Development.
- Bruno Cassirer, Oxford 1959 Buddhist Scriptures. (the references are from the Penguin edition.) Editor B. Radice. Harmondsworth England.
- Dumont L 1970 Homo Heirarchicus. The Caste System and its implications London. 1977 From Mandeville to Marx. The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology Uni of Chicago.
- Engels F 1925 (1883 manuscript) Dialectics of Nature. Marx–Engels–Lenin Institute. Moscow
- Engels and Marx. 1932 The German Ideology (manuscript 1846 ?) Marx-Engels- Lenin Institute Moscow
- Hirschman Charles 1994 Journal of Southeast Asian Studies Vol. 25: 2, pp. 381-416 CambridgeUniversity Press
- Feuerbach Ludwig 1841 The Essence of Christianity
- Hirschman Charles 1994 Journal of Southeast Asian Studies Vol. 25: 2, pp. 381-416 CambridgeUniversity Press
- Leach E.R. 1954 Political Systems of Highland Burma. London L.S.E.1961 Pul Eliya: a village in Ceylon C.U.P. 1972 Melchisedech and the Emperor: Icons of Subversion and Orthodoxy. R.A.I. Presidential Address 1972
- Ling T. 1972 A Dictionary of Buddhism. A guide to Thought& Tradition. Charles Scriber's Sons N.Y. 1976 The Buddha Pelican ed Harmondsworth England 1979 Buddhism Imperialism and War. Burma & Thailand in Modern History. George Allen and Unwin. London
- Luce G.H. 1969 Old Burma Early Pagan, Vol.1. Locust Valley N.Y.: J.J. Augustin
- Macfarlane A 1978 The Origins of English Individualism: The Family, Property and Social Transition. Blackwell, Oxford1986: Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction 1300-1840, Blackwell, Oxford, 1986,1989 The Culture of Capitalism. Wiley Blackwell
- Madha M. 1980: Economic Development & Social Change: The Structure of Two Sgaw Karen Communities (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis C.U. Library).
- Mao Tse Tung 1966: Four Essays on Philosophy. Peking
- M. Ismael K. Maung 1979 Southeast Asian Affairs pp. 95-102: ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute
- Murdock G.P. (ed) 1960 Social Structure in Southeast Asia. Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology 29. Chicago
- Tambiah S.J. 1976 World Conqueror and World Renouncer. A Study of Buddhism in Thailand against a Historical background C.U.P. Cambridge