

BOOK I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

I. THE LAND

INDO-CHINA is the name given to the large Peninsula which stretches out from the south-east of Asia far into the Indian Ocean. It lies to the south of China and south-east of India, and between the Bay of Bengal and the China Sea. It includes Burma, Siam (Thailand), Malay Peninsula, Laos, Cambodia, Cochin-China, Annam and Tonkin.

Burma comprises nearly the whole of the western part of the Peninsula. High mountains starting from Central Asian plateau separate it from India and China, and cover the northern part of the country. These throw out parallel ranges of hills, called Yomas, that extend to the extreme south. The valleys enclosed by them are watered by three great rivers, *viz.* the Irawadi, with its tributary, the Chindwin, the Sittang and the Salween. The wide delta of the Irawadi forms a large coastal plain of rich alluvial soil. Two other long narrow coastal plains constitute the provinces of Arakan and Tenneserim, two Yomas, named after them, separating the former from the Irawadi valley, and the latter from Siam.

The present independent kingdom of Siam, which includes the northern part of Malay Peninsula, is bounded on the north by Burma and Laos, on the west by Burma and about 350 miles of coast on the Bay of Bengal, on the south by the Malay Peninsula and nearly 1,000 miles of coast round the Gulf of Siam, and on the east by Laos and Cambodia.

Northern Siam, lying between the Salween and the Upper

HINDU COLONIES IN THE FAR EAST

Mekong is a land of narrow valleys separated by steep longitudinal spurs rising occasionally to a height of more than 8,000 ft. Central Siam is mostly an alluvial plain intersected by many rivers, the largest of which is the Menam which passes by the capital city Bangkok and falls into the Gulf of Siam. Southern Siam embraces the northern part of the Malay Peninsula up to the Isthmus of Kra.

The Malay Peninsula or the Peninsula of Malacca is a long narrow strip of territory which forms the most southerly extremity of the mainland of Asia. Politically, it begins at the Isthmus of Kra, but geographically it extends from the parallel of the head of the Gulf of Siam, in Lat. $13^{\circ}30'$, to cape Rumenia, a distance of more than 900 miles. The peninsula is bounded on the north by Siam, and is surrounded by the sea in all other directions; by the China Sea and the Gulf of Siam on the east, by the Strait of Singapore on the south, and by the Straits of Malacca and the Bay of Bengal on the west. There are many islands along the shores of the peninsula, the most notable being Langkawi and Penang on the west, and Singapore, Batan and Bintang on the south.

The most characteristic physical feature of the peninsula is the long range of granite mountains which runs along its whole length, descending somewhat abruptly into a wider plain on the east, and more gently into a narrower plain on the west. Almost the whole of the peninsula—both alluvial plains and mountain ranges—is covered by evergreen forests, mostly dense jungles, the major part of which is yet untrodden by human foot. The rivers are numerous, but small, and in most cases navigable for large boats only up to a short distance from the mouth.

Annam occupies the eastern part of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula. It is bounded on the north and the south respectively by Tonkin and Cochin China. The China Sea forms its eastern boundary, while on the west a chain of hills shuts it off from Lower Laos and Cambodia. This chain of hills, covered with rich forests, runs along the whole length of the country, gradually descending from north to south and ranging in height from 8,000 to 6,000 ft. The long narrow strip of country between the mountains and the sea, which forms the habitable zone of the country, is intersected by innumerable spurs of hills

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

running in various directions. Sometimes the spurs of hills extend as far as the sea-coast, and nowhere does the habitable zone exceed a breadth of seventy miles. A large number of rivers issuing from the mountains falls to the sea. The whole country thus comprises a series of separate river-valleys with few routes of communication by land, favouring the growth of a number of isolated independent settlements rather than one united State.

Tonkin (also spelt as Tongking and Tonquin), which lies to the north of Annam, forms almost a natural part of this country. The Red River flows across the whole of Tonkin from north-west to south-east, and forms a huge delta on the Gulf of Tonkin which forms its eastern boundary. The northern part of Tonkin consists of a series of hills and plateaus reaching up to the borders of China, while dense forests and hills separate it from Laos on the west.

The region between Burma and Siam on the one hand and Tonkin and Annam on the other is occupied in a line from north to south by the three countries, Laos, Cambodia and Cochin-China, which may be said to constitute geographically, and in ancient times also politically, a single unit, though with diversified physical features. Through this entire region flows the mighty river Mekong, which issuing from the hills runs along the eastern borders of Burma and Siam, and then cuts its way through Luang Prabang range into the table-land of Laos proper. Running along the western border of Laos, and separating it from Siam, the majestic river passes over the Dangrek range and enters Cambodia proper near Khong.

From this point the bed of the Mekong is enlarged to nearly double its breadth and covers almost the whole of Cambodia by its ramifications. Near the modern capital city of Pnom-Penh it is joined to the vast lake of Tonle Sap, about 60 miles to the north-west, by a wide sheet of water, full of islands. From this point of junction the river branches off into two wide streams, connected by numerous cross canals, till they both fall into the China Sea forming the rich delta of Cochin-China.

The characteristic physical features of the Great Indo-Chinese Peninsula may be summed up as follows:—

Shut off by high mountains from India and China it is traversed by long ranges of hills and mighty rivers, both run-

HINDU COLONIES IN THE FAR EAST

ning north to south. The hill ranges divide the entire country into four distinct regions, *viz.* (1) Burma and (2) Siam and Malay Peninsula in the west; (3) Annam and Tonkin in the east; and (4) Laos, Cambodia and Cochin-China in the middle. The mighty rivers which fertilise the lands are the Irawadi and the Salween in Burma, the Menam in Siam, the Mekong in the central region, and the Red River in Tonkin.

The East Indies, called by various names such as Indian Archipelago, Malay Archipelago, Asiatic Archipelago, Indonesia and Insulinde, comprises a large group of islands of varying size, more than six thousand in number. It begins with the large island of Sumatra which lies to the west of the Malay Peninsula and is separated from it by the Straits of Malacca. The narrow Sunda Strait parts Sumatra from the neighbouring island of Java to its south-east. Java is the beginning of a series of islands lying in a long chain in the direction from west to east. These are Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa, Flores and a number of small islands which almost stretch up to New-Guinea. A little to the south of this line are the two important islands, Sumba and Timor.

A similar chain of islands lies to the north, along a line drawn through the centre of Sumatra towards the east. It begins with Borneo, the largest island in the archipelago. Next comes Celebes and then the large group of islands known as the Moluccas or Spice islands.

Beyond all these islands, numbering more than six thousand, lie the large island of New-Guinea to the east and the group of islands known as the Philippines to the north.

The Archipelago is separated from Indo-China in the north by the South China Sea and from Australia in the south by the Timor Sea. To the west there is no large country till we reach the shores of India and Africa, the intervening sea being dotted with hundreds of islands. The most important of these, beginning from the east are Andaman, Nicobar, Ceylon, Maldives, Laccadives and Madagascar.

The ancient Hindus designated the country described above, *viz.* Indo-China and Malay Archipelago, by the general name *Suvarṇabhūmi* or Land of Gold. They, however, also used the name *Suvarṇadvīpa* or Island of Gold to denote particularly the islands, including Malay Peninsula. Particular regions in

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

Indo-China (such as Burma and Siam) and Malay Archipelago were also called respectively *Suvarṇabhūmi* and *Suvarṇadvīpa*. The names indicate that the Hindus, like the Arabs, believed that this region produced gold in large quantities, or was rich in precious commodities. In any case they regarded the lands as veritable mines of gold, literally or figuratively.

II. THE PEOPLE

The most primitive people in Indo-China probably belonged to the Melanesian group inhabiting Australia and New-Guinea, but they have hardly left any trace behind. To these succeeded an Indonesian group which is now represented by the Chams, the remnant of a powerful nation which came under the influence of the Indian colonists and founded the kingdom of Champā in the southern part of what is now called Annam.

Next came the most important group, called Mon-Khmer from the names of its two leading representatives. The Khmers settled in Cambodia, Cochin-China and a part of what is now called Laos to the north of them, though it is very likely that they were preceded by savage mountain tribes whom they conquered and forced to take shelter in hills and forests.

The Mons inhabited the lower valleys of the Irawadi and the Salween in Burma. The rest of this province was occupied by various Mongoloid tribes belonging to the Tibeto-Burman group. The Mons, however, extended further south and, along with the Khmers, settled among and dominated over the Lawas, the primitive population of Siam and Laos. Throughout the course of history a distinction is noticeable between the heterogeneous Mon-Khmer people of Siam and the pure Khmers of Cambodia.

The Thais inhabited the province of Yunnan and the region immediately to its south, full of hills, dales and forests, and watered by the upper courses of the Mekong and the Menam. The Annamites who have now given their names to the whole country on the eastern coast of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, are probably a branch of the great Thai people and occupied at first only Tonkin and the northern part of present Annam up to the Hoan Sonh mountains. To their south lived the Chams. The primitive savage tribes who formed the origi-

HINDU COLONIES IN THE FAR EAST

nal inhabitants of Annam and Tonkin were driven by the Chams and the Annamites to the hills and jungles.

From the point of view of history and ethnography the Malay Peninsula belongs to the East Indies, and the two together are known as Malayasia. The people of this region are usually divided into three strata:—

(1) The primitive races, such as the Semang and Sakai of the Malay Peninsula, who are wild savage tribes living in hills.

(2) The Proto-Malays found all over Malayasia, whose languages are distinctly Malay. The Batak, Achinese, Gayo and Lampongs of Sumatra, the Dayaks of Borneo, and the aborigines of Celebes, Ternate and Tidor islands all belong to this type. Some of them are cruel and ferocious. The Bataks, for example, are cannibals who eat prisoners and aged relatives. Others are more civilised. The Dayaks of Borneo, although head-hunters for ritualistic purposes, are mild in character, and honest, simple, hospitable and truthful.

(3) The Malays, who now form the predominant element in the population of Malayasia are usually divided under four great heads:—(1) The Malays proper who inhabit the Malay Peninsula and the coastal regions of Sumatra and Borneo; (2) the Javanese of Java, Madura, Bali and parts of Lombok and Sumatra; (3) the Bugis of Celebes; and (4) the Tagalas of the Philippines.

The peoples of Indo-China and East Indies described above belonged to various stages of culture and civilisation, from wild savage tribes, who went naked, to fairly civilised races, who not only possessed rudimentary elements of civilisation, but also some knowledge of primitive arts and sciences. They formed the main elements of population in the Indo-Chinese Peninsula and the East Indies when the Indians first colonised these regions shortly after or before the beginning of the Christian Era. There are, however, reasons to believe that most of these peoples themselves had originally come from India and thus represent an earlier wave of Indian colonisation in the Far East in pre-historic times. This view is based on a study of their languages. It is now generally recognised that the languages of the Malays and the people of the numerous islands in the Pacific ocean belong to the same family, to which the name Austronesian has been applied. Recent linguistic

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

researches have established definite connection between the languages of some primitive tribes of India such as the Munda and Khasi with Mon-Khmer and allied languages of Indo-China including those of Semang and Sakai, and the linguistic family to which they all belong is called Austro-Asiatic. The German scholar Schmidt connects the Austro-Asiatic family with the Austronesian, thereby establishing a larger linguistic family called Austric, and also indicates the possibility of an ethnic unity among them. Schmidt thus regards the peoples of Indo-China and East Indies as belonging to the same stock as the Munda and allied tribes of Central India and the Khasis of North-eastern India. He regards India as the original home of all these peoples from which they gradually spread to the east and south-east. This view must, however, be regarded as only a probable one, as it lacks positive and satisfactory evidence.

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNINGS OF INDIAN COLONISATION

As in all ages and countries, the prospect of acquiring wealth first tempted the Indian traders and merchants to explore unknown territories beyond their own frontiers. The lands and islands beyond the sea and the hills on the east were reputed to possess fabulous quantities of gold and precious minerals and were called by them *Suvarṇabhūmi* or *Suvarṇadvīpa*, 'the land of gold'. The spices of the east were also as great an attraction as they proved to be fifteen centuries later. In short, the Indians were attracted to the east by the same allurements which proved so irresistible to the Arabs in the ninth and tenth and to the Europeans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries A.D.

No doubt other forces were at work to speed up the pace of emigration. The missionary zeal of the Brahmins and Buddhists, pressure caused by increasing population and invasion of foreign hordes, and the spirit of adventure of the Kshatriya princes and nobles were added to the commercial enterprise of the merchants, and caused a steady flow of Indian emigrants to various parts of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula and the East Indies. Many of these emigrants permanently settled in these foreign lands. They married women of the localities and the influence of their superior culture gradually Hinduised the society. This imperceptible but gradual penetration, often aided by active missionary propaganda, gradually spread Hindu religion, art, literature and social ideas in all directions. Sometimes a military adventurer seized the political power and established a Hindu kingdom. The fusion between the Indian settlers and the Hinduised local people was so complete that it is not always possible to distinguish between the two. The latter assumed Hindu names and adopted Sanskrit or Pali language and Hindu religion, manners and customs, while the Indians imbibed local habits and social usages and merged

THE BEGINNINGS OF INDIAN COLONISATION

themselves into the local communities. Thus grew up the Indian colonial kingdoms which were constantly strengthened by fresh streams of immigration from the motherland.

A contemporary account of a small State in Malay Peninsula by an eye-witness shows such a colony in the making and throws interesting light upon the whole process. It is named Tuen-suin by the Chinese. "Its market was a meeting ground between the east and west, frequented every day by more than ten thousand men, including merchants from India, Parthia and more distant kingdoms who come in large numbers to carry on trade and commerce in rare objects and precious merchandises. It contains five hundred merchant families, two hundred Buddhists and more than thousand Brahmans of India. The people of Tuen-suin follow their religion and give them their daughters in marriage, as most of these Brahmans settle in the country and do not go away. Day and night they read sacred scriptures and make offerings of white vases, perfumes and flowers to the gods."

The migration of the Indians on a large scale to the Far East and their colonisation in this region are echoed in many stories and legends, current in India as well as in the colonies. Although these legends cannot be regarded as history, they preserve the memory of events long forgotten and the cumulative effect of evidence of this kind cannot be altogether ignored. In particular they throw interesting light on the objects and motives of the early colonists, the routes followed by the Indians in their journey to the Far East, and the perils and hardships encountered by them both in land and sea.

Several Buddhist Jātaka stories which were probably current long before the Christian era refer to voyages between India and Suvarṇabhūmi, the general name for the lands and islands in the Far East. We may mention a few of them:—

(1) A king of Videha being defeated and killed in battle, the widowed queen fled in disguise to Champā (Bhagalpur) with her treasures. When her son had grown up he told his mother: "Give half your treasures to me and I will go to Suvarṇabhūmi and get great riches there and will then seize my paternal kingdom." Having thus got together his stock-in-trade he put it on board a ship with some merchants bound for Suvarṇabhūmi. "My son", said the mother, "the sea has

HINDU COLONIES IN THE FAR EAST

few chances of success and many dangers, do not go." But he bade her adieu and embarked on board. The rest of the story describes how, although he was shipwrecked, he at last regained the kingdom of Mithilā.

(2) Near the city of Benares was a great town of carpenters, containing a thousand families who decided to go to a foreign land. The carpenters cut down trees from forest, built a mighty ship and launched her in the river. Having put their families on board the ship, they proceeded in due course to the ocean. There they set sail and reached an island that lay in the midst of the sea. In that island grew wild all manner of plants and fruit trees, rice, sugar-cane, banana, mango, rose-apple, jack, cocoanut and other fruits. So they took up their abode in that place.

(3) There was a sea-port town named Bharukachchha (Broach in Gujarat). The son of the master-mariner in that city gained at an early age a complete mastery over the art of seamanship. Afterwards when his father died he became the head of the mariners and plied the mariner's calling. He was wise, and with him on board, no ship ever came to harm. Unfortunately it so happened that injured by the salt water both his eyes lost their sight. But still when some merchants had got ready a ship and were looking out for a skipper they selected the blind mariner. Passing through many seas and braving many perils the merchants were brought back with a rich cargo of diamonds, gold, silver, emeralds and coral.

Similar stories of mercantile voyages to Suvarṇadvīpa are told in the *Bṛihat-kathā*, another treasure-house of old Indian stories, dating from a period before the Christian era. The most interesting of all is, however, the adventurous story of Sānudāsa of which a summary is given below.

Sānudāsa joins the gang of the adventurer Āchera, who is preparing an expedition to the land of Gold (Suvarṇabhūmi). They cross the sea and land at the foot of a mountain. They climb up to the top by catching hold of creepers (*Vetra*). This is the "creepers' path" (*Vetrapatha*). On the plateau there is a river which changes into stone everything that falls into it. They cross it by holding on to the bamboos which overhang the banks. This is "the bamboo's path" (*Vamśapatha*). Fur-

THE BEGINNINGS OF INDIAN COLONISATION

ther on, they meet a narrow path between two precipices. They light a fire with wet branches; the smoke attracts some Kirātas who come and propose to sell them some goats; the adventurers get on those goats, the only animals sure-footed enough to be able to follow the narrow edge without feeling giddy. This is the "goats' path" (*Ajapatha*). The adventurers do not come to the end of it without some difficulty, as another gang is approaching from the opposite direction. A struggle ensues, but Āchera's troops are able to pass through after having thrown their enemies into the ravines. Sānudāsa begins to feel indignant at the fierceness of the gold-seekers. Āchera orders his followers to slay the goats and to put on their skins with the inside out. Huge birds will mistake those men for a heap of raw meat, come and carry them away to their aerie. It is there the gold is! Sānudāsa attempts to save the goat he was riding, but his companions are pitiless. Everything takes place as Āchera foretold, but the bird which carries off Sānudāsa is attacked by another bird which attempts to steal his prey. The goat's skin bursts open and Sānudāsa falls in a tank which is in the heart of a luxuriant forest. The next day he comes to a river the banks of which are of golden sand; near by, there is a hermitage from which a hermit comes out.

The above story refers to several 'paths' or ingenious means of passing through difficult territory. A few more of these paths are referred to in various early books. There is *Jannupatha* where one has to crawl on knees. *Sānkupatha* was a difficult and laborious procedure for ascending a mountain. An iron hook, attached to a rope of skin, is thrown up till the hook is fixed up in the mountain. Having climbed up the rope, the man makes a hole on the hillside with a diamond-tipped iron instrument, and fixes a spear. Having caught hold of this, he detaches the hook, and throws it aloft again, till it is again fixed up in the mountain. Then he ties the rope to the spear, and having caught hold of the rope with one hand, strikes it by a hammer with the other till the spear is detached. Then he climbs up again, again fixes the spear, and repeats the process till he ascends the top of the hill. Last comes *Chhatrapatha*, the means of coming down from a steep height. One has to jump down from a precipice with an open parasol made of skin, and descends slowly to the ground, on account of the

HINDU COLONIES IN THE FAR EAST

resistance of the air. In other words, it involved the principle of parachute.

These various kinds of 'paths' give us some idea of the difficulties which Indians had to surmount while travelling in unknown foreign lands to which they were attracted by lure of wealth. An idea of the dangers attending a sea-voyage in small wooden boats is given in the following vivid description recorded by the Chinese traveller Fa-hien who went by way of sea from India to China early in the fifth century A.D.

"Fa Hien took passage in a large merchantman, on board of which there were more than 200 men and to which was attached by a rope a smaller vessel, as a provision against damage or injury to the large one from the perils of the navigation. With a favourable wind, they proceeded eastward for three days, and then they encountered a great wind. The vessel sprang a leak and the water came in. The merchants wished to go to the smaller vessel; but the men on board it, fearing that too many would come, cut the connecting rope. The merchants were greatly alarmed, feeling their risk of instant death. Afraid that the vessel would fill, they took their bulky goods and threw them into the water.

"In this way the tempest continued day and night, till on the thirteenth day the ship was carried to the side of an island, where on the ebbing of the tide, the place of the leak was discovered, and it was stopped, on which the voyage was resumed. On the sea (hereabouts) there are many pirates, to meet with whom is speedy death. The great ocean spreads out, a boundless expanse. There is no knowing east or west; only by observing the sun, moon, and stars was it possible to go forward. If the weather were dark and rainy, (the ship) went as she was carried by the wind, without any definite course. In the darkness of the night, only the great waves were to be seen, breaking on one another, and emitting a brightness like that of fire, with huge turtles and other monsters of the deep (all about). The merchants were full of terror, not knowing where they were going. The sea was deep and bottomless, and there was no place where they could drop anchor and stop. But when the sky became clear, they could tell east and west, and (the ship) again went forward in the right direction. If she had come on any hidden rock, there would have been no way of escape.

THE BEGINNINGS OF INDIAN COLONISATION

After proceeding in this way for rather more than ninety days they arrived at a country called Java-dvīpa (Java)."

Literature is justly regarded as the echo of national life. The stories quoted above, and numerous other Indian folk-tales about merchants going beyond the sea indicate that the spirit of exploration and adventure was a characteristic feature of ancient Indian life.

We possess reliable evidence regarding the sea-routes followed by the Indians. Beginning from the north there was first the famous port of Tāmralipti, which is now represented by Tamruk in Midnapur district, Bengal. From this port there was a regular sailing of vessels which either proceeded along the coasts of Bengal and Burma, or crossed the Bay of Bengal and made a direct voyage to Malay Peninsula and to the East Indies and Indo-China beyond it. There were other similar ports of embarkation, one at Palura near Gopalpur (Ganjam) in Orissa, and three near Masulipatam (Madras), from which ships sailed across Bay of Bengal to the Far East. There was a regular coasting voyage from the mouth of the Ganges along the eastern coast of India to Ceylon, and thence along the western coast up to Broach at the mouth of the Narmada river and perhaps even beyond it. People from all parts of India came by land or river route to the nearest sea-port, and then made a coastal voyage to Tāmralipti, Palura, or one of the harbours near Masulipatam whence ships made a direct voyage to the Far East across the Bay of Bengal.

The existence of these ancient trade-routes between the eastern islands and the coasts of Bengal, Orissa, Madras and Gujarat, is thus established on good authority. It is interesting to find that it is precisely in these directions that the ancient traditions of Indian colonists in the Far East and South-East lead us to look for their original homes. To mention briefly only a few of the many traditions, there is first the story of a Bengali Prince Vijaya, colonising the island of Ceylon. Secondly, the foundation of Ligor is ascribed by tradition to a descendant of Asoka who fled from Magadha, embarked a vessel at Dantapura and was wrecked on the coast of the Malay Peninsula. There is also the story preserved in the chronicles of Java, that the Hindus from Kalinga coast colonised the island. Similar traditions of colonists from Kling or Kalinga country are pre-

HINDU COLONIES IN THE FAR EAST

served in many other islands. Fourthly, according to traditions current among the people of Pegu, Indian colonists from the country of the lower courses of the rivers Krishna and Godavari had at a remote time crossed the sea, and formed settlements in the delta of the Irawadi and on the adjoining coast. Lastly, there is the story preserved in the chronicles of Java that the island was first colonised by a Gujrati prince who landed there in 75 A.D.

The exact correspondence of colonial traditions with the evidence derived from Indian source leads to the hypothesis that generally the Indian colonists proceeding by sea to the east and south, started from the four centres mentioned above, *viz.* Tāmralipti in the coast of Bengal, Gopālpur in ancient Kalinga, the three unidentified harbours near Masulipatam, and Broach.

In addition to the sea-route described above the Indian colonists also proceeded to the east and south-east by land-route through Eastern Bengal, Manipur and Assam. We learn from the Chinese texts that at least as early as the second century B.C. there was a regular trade-route by land between Bengal and China through Upper Burma and Yunnan. Through this route the Indians came and established their colonies not only in Burma, but also in the mountainous regions of the upper valleys of the Chindwin, the Irawadi, the Salween, the Mekong and the Red River as far as Yunnan, which was known by its Indian name Gandhāra even as late as the 13th century A.D. We know the Chinese names of several of these kingdoms. To the east of the hill ranges bordering Manipur and Assam there was the Hindu kingdom of Ta-tsin. About 150 miles further east, beyond the Chindwin river, was another Hindu kingdom just to the north of the town of Ngan-si. In Yunnan itself was the kingdom of Nan-chao or Tali and a local tradition regarded a son of the great Indian Emperor Asoka as having founded the colony. The whole of Upper Burma was colonised by the Indians who established kingdoms at Prome, Pagan, Tagaung and various other places, many of which still retain their old Indian names with slight alterations. There is evidence that similar Hindu kingdoms existed in Laos, in Central Indo-China. The colonists who proceeded by sea established many kingdoms in Arakan, Lower Burma, Malay Peninsula, Siam,

THE BEGINNINGS OF INDIAN COLONISATION

Cambodia, Cochin-China and Annam on the mainland, and in the islands of Sumatra, Java, Borneo and Bali in the East Indies.

It is interesting to observe that local traditions in many of these places preserve even today the memory of the founder of the colonial kingdoms there as having originally come from India.

According to Burmese tradition, a Śākya chief of Kapilavastu came with an army to the country of the middle Irawadi, long before Buddha was born. The dynasty he founded ruled for 31 generations in Burma when it was overthrown by an invasion of an eastern tribe coming apparently from China. About this time there came a second band of immigrant Kshatriyas from Gangetic India. Their chief married the widowed queen of the last king of the previous dynasty and established a new kingdom. This was the origin of the ruling dynasty of Upper Burma.

According to the traditions of Arakan the first king of the province was the son of a king of Benares who settled at Rāmāvatī, a name which still exists in the corrupted form Rambyi or Rāmi. The Cambodian annals explain the origin of the kingdom of Cambodia in the following way:—

“Ādityavaṁśa, king of Indraprastha, was displeased with one of his sons and banished him from the State. He came to the country of Kok Thlok and made himself master of it by defeating the native king. One evening he was walking on a sand bank when suddenly the tide arose and obliged him to pass the night there. A Nāgī of marvellous beauty came to play on the sand, and the king, overpowered by her charm, agreed to marry her. Then the Nāgarāja, the father of the betrothed girl, extended the dominions of his would-be son-in-law by drinking the water which covered the country, built a capital for him, and changed the name of the kingdom into that of Kāmboja.”

While the facts and legends mentioned above testify to the existence of colonies in these territories, they do not enable us to fix even an approximate date for their foundation. We may, however, reasonably infer from the statements of the Greek and Chinese writers and the Indian inscriptions found in many localities, that some of the colonial kingdoms, even in the easternmost parts, must have been founded not later than the

HINDU COLONIES IN THE FAR EAST

second century A.D. and a few of them, at any rate, prior to this date. Colonisation, as distinguished from the establishment of political authority, evidently took place much earlier, and the beginnings of trade intercourse, which must have preceded colonisation, may thus be placed centuries before the Christian Era.