"INDIANIZATION" FROM THE INDIAN POINT OF VIEW: TRADE AND CULTURAL CONTACTS WITH SOUTHEAST ASIA IN THE EARLY FIRST MILLENNIUM C.E.[1])

BY

MONICA L. SMITH
(University of Arizona)

Abstract

The idea that Indian "influence" was responsible for the socio-political development of early Southeast Asia is now largely discredited, but the question of the actual impact of early trade between India and Southeast Asia remains. Prior to the fourth century C.E., Indian trade activities with Southeast Asia appear to have been relatively infrequent, when assessed through the number of items of Indian origin recovered, and the incentives for such trade from the Indian point of view. After the fourth century, the adoption of subcontinental traditions—religious iconography, Sanskrit terminology, coinage, and terms identifying leaders—is seen throughout the area of Southeast Asia, from Bangladesh to Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand as well as the larger Indonesian islands. Subcontinental traditions became attractive at this time because of the advent of strong political entities in the Indian subcontinent, notably the Guptas, which produced coherent models of political, social and religious organization. Although such models were also available from neighboring China, apprehension about Chinese expansion led the rulers of emergent chiefdoms in Southeast Asia to prefer the adoption of Indian political and religious iconography.

Introduction

The interactions between the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia in the Early Historic period have in the past been interpreted as relationships of dominance or influence.[2]) More recently, archaeological evidence for the indigenous

1) This paper was originally presented in the working group "Understanding the Transition to History in Southeast Asia," organized for the Society for American Archaeology meetings held in Nashville in 1997. I would like to thank Miriam Stark for inviting me to participate in this session, and would also like to thank the session's other participants and observers for the productive comments raised during the course of the meetings. For their helpful and insightful comments on this paper, I would like to thank Francis Allard, Barbara Watson Andaya, Jean-François Salles, Henry Wright, Rita Wright, Norman Yoffee, and an anonymous reviewer.

2) For the purposes of the following discussion, the "Early Historic" period is defined for the subcontinent as the period from the third century B.C.E. to the fourth century C.E. This time period encompasses the beginning of the Mauryan dynasty with the first instances of

development of social complexity has prompted a reevaluation of these relationships, with the suggestion that local elites in Southeast Asia adopted "Indianized" customs as a means of increasing their political legitimacy.[3]) In this paper, it is suggested that prior to the fourth century C.E., contacts between regions of the eastern Indian Ocean were sporadic and limited to economic interactions, as evidenced by the recovery of a limited array of items having an Indian provenance. Only after the fourth century C.E., concurrent with a number of political and cultural changes in the subcontinent, did growing Southeast Asian political entities widely adopt a common script, iconography and set of political terms derived from Indian models.

One reason for the previously-held interpretations of Indian "influence" on the development of socio-political complexity in Southeast Asia lies in the historical trajectory of Western scholarship of the Indian Ocean. By 1900, the tradition of European scholarly inquiry in India was already more than a century old, whereas very little was known about the indigenous structure of early Southeast Asian societies.[4]) As archaeological investigations began in these areas, items of "Indian" affinity were easily recognized, and the presence of these items led to interpretations that credited the development of social complexity to the domination or influence of the subcontinent.[5]) As archaeological work has proceeded in Southeast Asia, it is increasingly apparent that these regions sustained a long period of indigenous development.[6]) Investigations in the past thirty years indicate that rather than a process of cultural colonization, "Indian influences were selectively assimilated into a pre-existing, well-developed cultural base."[7])

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writing in the Gangetic valley in the late third century B.C.E., through the inception of the Gupta polity in the northern subcontinent c. 320 C.E. The starting date for an equivalent "Early Historic" period is rather indefinite for regions of the eastern Indian Ocean littoral: as the transition to history encompasses the period from 300 B.C.E. to 500 C.E. (and later), there are clearly regional variants in the way in which different areas adopted or were affected by the transitions to a "historic" tradition. Thus, the term "Early Historic" in this paper will be reserved for the Indian subcontinent, while developments elsewhere will be identified by absolute dates.

3) For a useful summary of the early years of this debate, see Mabbett 1977a, 1977b.

4) See Coedès 1964. As John Miksic 1995 has observed in a recent article, the tendency to see Southeast Asian archaeology only within a greater Indian and Chinese context persisted at least until the 1970s.

5) See, for example, Coèdes 1968; Filliozat 1966; Mabbett 1977a, 1977b; Miksic 1995; Pollock 1996, pp. 232-33.

6) Summaries of archaeological fieldwork can be found in Bellwood 1997; Higham 1989; Stargardt 1990.

7) Stargardt 1990, p. 43. The transition from an Indian-dominated explanatory perspective to a more comprehensive view is seen in the work of individual scholars as well as in the discipline as a whole, as pointed out in a summary article by Solheim, Wheeler and

Contributing to the demise of the idea of monolithic Indian "influence" throughout this period is the realization that both the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia were comprised of a number of different groups at varying levels of political and territorial integration. Nor was there a single "Indian" culture prevalent in the subcontinent at this time: Vedic Hinduism was maintained along with the newer faiths of Buddhism and Jainism, each of which was undergoing significant schisms in the late first millennium B.C.E.[8]) In addition to these widespread religions, other forms of social groupings persisted from earlier periods, such as the megalithic communities of the southern subcontinent.[9]) As a result, attempts to pinpoint the exact sources of tradition are difficult to settle conclusively, and scholars of Southeast Asia have placed the origins of "Indian" culture in different parts of the subcontinent.[10])

I.W. Mabbett proposed that two stages of the "Indianizing" phenomenon could be observed in Southeast Asia: one in the early centuries C.E., and a later distinct stage resulting from "the growth of peasant societies supporting civil, priestly and military elites in the latter half, largely perhaps the last quarter, of the first millennium."[11]) His assumption was that the differences between the two stages stemmed from changes in local organizational capacity and social structure in Southeast Asia. But the idea of two stages of contact also makes sense when looking at the phenomenon of "Indianization" from the Indian point of view.

Early Contact and Trade

Initial expansion to the east by groups from India appears to have been limited by a lack of sustained large-scale political and economic organization in the subcontinent prior to the mid-first millennium C.E. In the third century B.C.E., the Mauryans formed what has often been characterized as a state-level

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Allen-Wheeler 1986. They observe that Harrison's interpretation of the "Tantric" shrine at Bongkisam (Borneo) in a 1967 article emphasizes the Indian influence on this monument, while in a later article (co-authored with O'Connor), the local religious background is discussed. They also observe a similar transformation in the works of Quaritch Wales.

8) See, for example, Gokhale 1983; Jain 1964; Reat 1994.

9) Ramachandran 1980.

10) George Coedès favored the south of India as the origin of Indian traditions exported to Southeast Asia, and this trajectory has been followed by others, including Stargardt 1990. A. Christie 1970, by contrast, favored the western portion of the subcontinent as the region from which traditions were borrowed, while the primacy of the subcontinent's eastern coast is proclaimed by H. Ray 1991b. Still others see continual shifts in the source of traditions: Bellwood 1997 proposes that the Indonesian trading states borrowed from South India in the fifth century, and from north India and Bengal in the seventh century.

11) Mabbett 1977a, p. 13.

polity or "empire" in the Ganges valley of northern India.[12]) This polity is principally known from the distribution of a series of stone inscriptions celebrating the conversion to Buddhism by the ruler Asoka (268-31 B.C.E.). The other main historical source for the Mauryans is the political treatise known as the *Arthashastra*, although the date of this text remains disputed, with estimates ranging from the fourth century B.C.E. to the third century C.E.[13]) Mauryan unity does not appear to have endured much beyond the single generation of rule by Asoka, and by 185 B.C.E. it had broken apart into a number of smaller entities.[14]) In the subsequent centuries, the political organization of the subcontinent consisted of a number of regional dynasties, each with shifting boundaries and relatively limited control over resources.[15])

Many of these dynasties are known only through coins or western Asian documents such as the first-century *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* which describes the presence in the Indian subcontinent of "a great many populous nations up to the Ganges".[16]) The more comprehensive historical records for groups such as the Satavahanas and Kushanas in the western subcontinent show that they were hampered in their control of territory by chronic warfare, frequent shifts of rulers from one capital to another, and conflicts within ruling families.[17]) Even in the heartland of the Mauryan polity, there was a succession of ruling dynasties, beginning with the Sungas and Kandvas, followed by the Nagas, Yaudheyas, Maghas and the rulers of Ahicchatra.[18]) And in the far southern subcontinent, the historically-known ruling groups of the Cholas, Cheras and Pandyas controlled relatively small territories, and were often split into competing lineages ruling from multiple capitals.[19]) For all of these groups in the Early Historic period, there was little surplus available for administration or economic investment by central agencies, and the management of territory consisted of a constant competition for local allies.[20]) Given the costs of admin-

12) See, for example, Thapar 1997; see also Allchin 1995; Chakrabarti 1992; Deloche 1992; Fussman 1987-88.

13) For a summary of the various points of view on the dating of this text, see Habib and Habib 1989-90; Thapar 1997, pp. 218-227 and pp. 292-296. In any case, it should be noted that the *Arthashastra* is a prescriptive text, rather than a descriptive one, and that the proclamations made by the author may not have actually been put into practice.

14) See, for example, Chakrabarti 1995.

15) Mirashi 1981.

16) Casson 1989, p. 83; for local coinage, see, for example, B. Lahiri 1991; Ray 1991a.

17) Mirashi 1981; Rao 1982; see also Morrison 1995 for her observation that "it seems more reasonable to consider not a unitary Satavahana polity but competing and cooperating groups of political elites" (p. 213).

18) Williams 1982; Sharma 1989; Allchin 1995.

19) Subramanian 1972; Rajan 1996.

20) Smith 1997a.

istering subject territories and the uncertainties of succession, few resources were available for long-distance contact or conquest.

The economy in this period also appears to have been only marginally controlled by political agents, with the majority of economic activities undertaken under the aegis of merchant groups or religious establishments.[21]) Although there was thriving local and regional exchange present in the subcontinent throughout the Early Historic period, the impact of long-distance exchange with the eastern Indian Ocean appears to have been slight. Archaeological excavations in the Indian subcontinent have been numerous and extensive, but to date no Southeast Asian or Chinese goods have been recovered in Early Historic levels.[22]) It is true that Southeast Asian goods might have consisted precisely of the kinds of materials least likely to be found in the archaeological record: perishables such as spices; rarities destined for very special consumption or Mediterranean transit-trade (such as the rubies and sapphires of the Myanmar region); or materials that were transformed as soon as they arrived in the subcontinent (such as tin). Nonetheless one would expect some durable goods such as pottery to have occasionally accompanied transoceanic voyages; for example, Indian coastal sites of the medieval Chola period yield large quantities of Chinese ceramics.[23])

From the perspective of the subcontinent, maritime trade with Southeast Asia would have duplicated other, already well-established trade networks. The goods that might have been obtained from Southeast Asia were available through other channels of exchange including the interior of the subcontinent and the westward Mediterranean-Arabian trade routes (see Appendix). Factors of available technology also appear to have limited Indian involvement in overseas exchange, as the level of open-water seafaring technology available in the subcontinent appears to have been rather limited. Although there are iconological representations of boats from the early centuries C.E. in India, these are principally depictions of river-boats rather than seagoing craft.[24]) In a recent summary of maritime archaeological finds from the eastern Indian Ocean, Manguin

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21) Ray 1986, 1994; Basa, Glover and Henderson 1991.

22) The only exception is the presence of several high-tin bronze fragments from sites in the subcontinent which Glover 1996b (p. 77) sees as "outside the normal range of Indian metallurgy" and thus likely to have come from Southeast Asia.

23) Recent survey and reconnaissance work in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu has revealed considerable quantities of Chinese pottery at sites such as Periyapattinam (with ceramics dating to the 14th century) and Kilakkarai (13th century and later); the Kerala coast has produced sites such as Pandalayini (13-14th centuries) and Tangasseri (13-14th centuries); see Subbarayalu 1996. The excavations at Arikamedu also revealed Chinese materials dated to the 11-12th centuries; see Wheeler 1946, pp. 91-95.

24) Deloche 1996. The adequacy of Indian navigation for long-distance voyages is the

noted that "no indigenous Asian ships . . . have been recovered from an archaeological context west of the Straits of Malacca."[25])

Literary evidence for early Indian seafaring is also sparse. The early historic Sangam literature of the southernmost Indian subcontinent indicates that merchants came sailing *to* the subcontinent for the purposes of trade, not the reverse.[26]) Another suggestion of a discontinuity between the well-traveled routes of the western Indian Ocean and regions to the east is shown in the *Periplus*. In this text, written by a Greek-speaking merchant, there is little detail east of the Ganges compared to a wealth of information about ports in Egypt, East Africa, and the western subcontinent.[27]) More importantly, it appears that this state of ignorance existed despite the author's (or his agents') travels in India, where it should have been possible to gather information if the Indians themselves sailed to Southeast Asia.

By contrast, evidence for early seafaring from Southeast Asia is strong. A knowledge of open-water sailing is demonstrated by the evidence of human activities in the islands of the Indo-Malaysian archipelago starting as early as the sixth millennium B.C.E.[28]) Plank-built craft are attested in the marine archaeological record of the Malay peninsula from the third-fifth century C.E.[29]) The thriving exchange in durable goods such as bronze seemed to have accompanied a trade in perishables including spices; cloves, for example, appear to have been traded within Southeast Asia long before contacts with either south or east Asia.[30]) The sustained contact between groups is confirmed by the presence of similar pottery complexes, such as the Sa-Huynh and Bau-Malay, in both mainland and island Southeast Asia by the end of the first millennium B.C.E.[31]) In sum, whatever contact was sustained in the early first millennium between

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subject of on-going ethnographic research to record the shipbuilding techniques in the subcontinent; see, for example, Kentley 1996; McGrail 1996.

25) Manguin 1996, p. 193.

26) See, for example, the verses translated in Chelliah 1985. The *Pattinapalai* speaks of the city limits, to which "are brought swift, prancing steeds by sea in ships" (lines 211-12); likewise the *Perumpanattrupadai* mentions "ships that from the west bring milk-white steeds with waving manes, and good things from the north" (lines 367-68). The *Maduraikanchi* talks of "sea captains that sail o'er the ocean high in showy ships that come from large and distant countries take away the salt that's formed in black and clayey pans, sweet tamarind and salted fish that look like sides of drums prepared by fishermen on widespread sands. They bring fine horses here and other precious things to barter them for jewels fine that are here made." (lines 331-39).

27) Casson 1989.

28) Bellwood 1997.

29) Manguin 1996, p. 185.

30) Miksic 1995, p. 53.

31) Solheim 1967 identifies the Sa-Huynh pottery complex as consisting of the Sa-Huynh

Southeast Asia and the subcontinent was likely to have been initiated by individuals sailing from Southeast Asia.

An evaluation of the items of exchange also calls into question the scale and impact of trade with the western Indian Ocean in the early first millennium. Recent excavations have provided more secure dating information than previously available, indicating that there are certainly some items found in Southeast Asia that were traded there in the early centuries C.E.[32]) These include celebrated artifacts such as the ivory comb from first-second century levels at Chansen in Thailand, as well as cotton thread from Ban Don Ta Phet also in Thailand.[33]) But many of the other items cited as proof of early trade with the West are unprovenienced finds, meaning that while the items themselves (Roman coins and bronze lamps, and intaglios) can be dated to the early centuries C.E., they may have been traded at a much later date.

Items cited as evidence of early trade with the subcontinent include the black-polish ceramic known as "Rouletted Ware," which has been found in abundance at sites of the Early Historic period along the eastern coast of India.[34]) This ware has been found in Southeast Asian sites as well, but always in relatively small quantities: three vessels from Java, 78 sherds from Sembiran in Bali, one sherd from Pacung, and one sherd from Tra Kieu in central Vietnam.[35]) The wide dating range assigned to Rouletted Ware, and the possibility of it being traded much later than the date of manufacture, again cautions against seeing these items as definitive proof of large-scale exchange in the early centuries C.E.

Items that can be directly dated are rare. There are no more than a handful of items bearing inscriptions (e.g. seal-impressions and stones) that can be dated to the early first millennium C.E. from controlled excavations in Southeast Asia.[36]) These items are usually dated paleographically, with the attendant risk that an archaizing later script is given an early date. One noted example is the Sanskrit inscription from Vo-Canh in Vietnam, which had been dated to the third century C.E. on paleographic grounds; new analysis of the text of the

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in Vietnam, the Kalanay in the central Philippines, the Gua Cha in northern Malaya, and the Niah in Sarawak; the Bau-Malay complex is seen in both mainland China and Taiwan. A comprehensive discussion of early expansion in the Indo-Malaysian archipelago can be found in Bellwood 1997.

32) This point is emphasized by Glover 1996b.

33) The comb is cited by Bronson 1979, p. 329; for Ban Don Ta Phet, see Glover 1996b, p. 79.

34) For a summary and distribution map, see Begley 1991, p. 177.

35) For Java, see Walker and Santoso 1977; for Sembiran and Pacung, see Ardika et al., 1993; for Tra Kieu, see Glover 1996b.

36) An updated catalog of such items is found in Glover 1996a.

inscription indicates that it dates to the fifth century or later.[37]) Again, most of the inscribed items for which an early date is claimed are surface finds or from unknown stratigraphic contexts, and may have been deposited in Southeast Asia much later than their date of manufacture.

There are two other categories of items that are usually cited as indicating a high volume of trade between the subcontinent and Southeast Asia: iron and beads. Closer scrutiny of these items of "Indian" origin in Southeast Asia prior to the fourth century C.E. reveals that a large proportion could actually be the result of local Southeast Asian manufacture. The idea that iron and iron-working technology were brought from India has been asserted with confidence by archaeologists working in Southeast Asia.[38]) However, there is little concrete evidence of such a transfer, and there are other more plausible scenarios for the beginnings of iron use in mainland Southeast Asia, including the local development of iron technology or the transfer of goods and knowledge from China, where iron-age developments appear to have preceded those in mainland Southeast Asia.[39]) The simultaneous "discovery" of iron technology in various parts of Asia may also be attributable to the fact that metallic iron can sometimes be produced by accident in the process of copper-smelting.[40]) Once identified, the process of manufacturing iron could be controlled and duplicated by metallurgists skilled in high-temperature transformations.

Beads made of glass, agate and carnelian are usually described uncritically as being of Indian origin when they are encountered in Southeast Asian sites.[41]) However, there is no reason why these beads must be interpreted as coming from India, since all of the elements were in place for an indigenous development of bead-making in glass and stone. Stone beads appear very early in burials of mainland Southeast Asia, prior to the generally-acknowledged dates for the first Indian contact: for example, stone beads are reported from Khok Phlap, a site in the Chao Phraya region of Thailand dated to Higham's General

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37) See de Casparis 1979 for the date assigned through paleography, and Pollock 1996 for textual analysis.

38) See, for example, Glover 1996a, p. 132.

39) Piggott 1996; Higham 1996.

40) Piggott 1996. For a description of early sites with iron from the late first millennium B.C.E. in Southeast Asia, see Higham 1989.

41) See, for example, Glover 1991, pp. 349-351, where he refers to the items associated with neolithic communities of west-central Thailand c. 500 B.C.E.; and Higham 1989, p. 190, on the items known from the first few centuries B.C.E. in mainland Southeast Asia. A similar observation was made by Bellwood in 1985 about the beads found in the context of the Sa-Huynh culture in southern Vietnam; in the 1997 revised edition of his book, he now comments that early dates for stone beads in central Thailand "make a more local origin for these an attractive alternative." (p. 275).

Period B (2000-1500 B.C.E. until 500-300 B.C.E.,[42]) and at Khok Charoen (dated by thermoluminescence to the 12th-11th century B.C.E.), also in the Chao Phraya delta.[43]) The site of Phung Nguyen in the Bac Bo region of Vietnam appears to have an even earlier assemblage; it is associated with General Period A (3600-3000 to 2000-1500 B.C.E.) and has a wide variety of polished-stone objects including adzes, chisels and grinding stones, as well as stone rings and stone beads.[44])

The presence of polished-stone items at these Southeast Asian sites indicates that expertise in stone-working would have enabled the local production of beads. The raw materials needed for stone bead manufacture, including agates and cherts, are widely distributed in the local limestone geology of Southeast Asia.[45]) The presence of chert nodules and layers is noted, for example, among the limestone formations of eastern peninsular Thailand.[46]) This region is near the well-known site of Khlong Thom, where it is reported that "carnelian" beads in various stages of manufacture were recovered.[47]) Cherts and chalcedonies naturally occur in a variety of colors, and those containing iron oxide can be additionally reddened through heating. It thus seems highly likely that stone bead manufacturing activities at sites like Khlong Thom were conducted using locally-available materials.[48])

Regarding glass-working, sites in mainland Southeast Asia contain evidence for the indigenous mastery of other high-temperature manufacturing techniques such as those employed in bronze-casting. The materials for the manufacture of glass are also readily and widely available (sand, soda and lime). Beads were a valued item, as evidenced by the large number of beads found in burials of the second and first millennium B.C.E. in mainland Southeast

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42) Higham 1989, p. 165.
43) Higham 1989, p. 161.
44) Higham 1989, p. 177.
45) Brown et al., 1951.
46) Ampornmaha 1995.
47) Higham 1989, p. 270, citing M. Veeraprasert, "Khlong Thom: An Ancient Bead-Manufacturing Location and an Ancient Entrepôt." *Research Conference on Early Southeast Asia*, Bangkok, Silpakorn University, 1985.
48) One particular category of stone beads found in Southeast Asia still requires explanation. These are the "etched" beads, which feature white geometric tracings on stone beads of varying shapes. These beads have a very wide distribution throughout the Indian Ocean, with single exemplars being found as far west as southern Iran (Whitcomb 1985, fig. 69). While the majority of scholars continue to see these as Indian imports, Glover 1996b (p. 83) has recently suggested that there may be an as-yet undiscovered eastern manufacturing center. One complicating factor in the analysis of these items is that these beads were also duplicated in glass, as shown by a photograph of beads with identical markings in an article by Peter Francis 1996, p. 143.

Asia. The local manufacture of glass beads, utilizing relatively straightforward technology as a replacement for the labor-intensive manufacture of stone and shell beads, would have been especially attractive. Evidence for glass-working appears at Oc Eo in the first few centuries C.E., where it is described that the manufacture of glass beads "employed clay crucibles with a long local ancestry."[49]) Glass-bead manufacture is apparently also attested at the site of Khlong Thom, dating from the 4th century C.E.[50]) The presence of the resources and technology for both stone and glass bead manufacturing in Southeast Asia illustrates that there are no compelling reasons to propose that beads came from the subcontinent.[51])

Finally, it is interesting to consider an item of trade that one might expect to see more often in early Southeast Asian contexts: coinage. Coinage was adopted by the fifth century B.C.E. in the Indian subcontinent, with the earliest specimens consisting of flanges or strips onto which geometric and other symbols were cold-hammered.[52]) These "punch-marked" coins circulated widely in the subcontinent, and were later supplemented by copper cast coins. However, as Mitchiner observes, no Indian coins of these types have been found in Southeast Asia.[53]) While trade activities certainly do not require the use of coinage, the presence of a monetized economy in the subcontinent leads to the expectation that some coins should have circulated to the east in exchange for desired goods.

In sum, the evidence for economic, political and cultural contact between the subcontinent and Southeast Asia in the Early Historic period is limited to a small quantity of objects. From the Indian point of view, the desired items of long-distance trade could be obtained through the routes mutually established through the western Indian Ocean by the Roman state, the merchants of Arabian and East African ports, and the traders of the western subcontinent. From the Southeast Asian point of view, items such as iron and beads could be manufactured locally.

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49) Higham 1989, p. 52.

50) Basa, Glover and Henderson 1991.

51) Basa, Glover and Henderson 1991 offer one potential reason for continued importation: ". . . it seems unlikely that the locally-made glass could have satisfied the demand throughout the whole of Southeast Asia during the period between 400 B.C. and A.D. 500. Few manufacturing centres are known and very large numbers of glass beads have been found in most parts of Southeast Asia" (p. 373). However, this argument is somewhat unwieldy, since it is based on the presumption that the importation of beads over 1800 kilometers of open water was more efficient than local manufacture.

52) Allchin 1995, p. 218; A. Lahiri 1991.

53) Mitchiner 1991. Glover 1996b, p. 65 shows a photograph of a cast Indian coin with a standing-bull motif from Khuan Luk Pat in southern Thailand, but no date or provenience

Some scholars have argued for the presence of significant cultural interaction in the Early Historic period, despite the meager archaeological record of such contacts. Ian Glover, in a recent article, has given his strongest statement to date on the link between Indian goods and Indian ideals. He sees the recovery of items bearing stylistic similarity to subcontinental models in the fourth century B.C.E. levels at Ban Don Ta Phet in Thailand as reinforcing its position as "the earliest Indianizing site so far recognized in Thailand."[54]) The thresholds of evidence which are adequate for the interpretation of objects such as those found at Ban Don Ta Phet are difficult for archaeologists to agree upon: How much physical evidence is required to document direct contact? And how much more is required to suggest the presence of significant and purposeful influence? As will be shown below, the demonstrable adoption of subcontinental traditions in Southeast Asia occurred only after the emergence of strong political groups in India.

The Adoption of Indian Traditions after the Fourth Century C.E.

Beginning in the fourth century C.E., there are indications of a widespread adoption in Southeast Asia of religious and political traditions whose original home lay in the Indian subcontinent: architecture suited to Buddhist and Hindu religious beliefs, the adoption of Sanskrit terms for some levels of political office, the use of coinage, and the use of scripts (often mixed with local languages) to record administrative events on both copper-plate grants and stone inscriptions.

This adoption of "Indian" traditions was undertaken by dynastic leaders who were increasing their dominance over local groups as well as improving their contacts with other cultures.[55]) Anthropological studies have illustrated that the voluntary adoption of "foreign" iconography from well-established neighbors is a means by which local leaders may claim special knowledge and thereby reaffirm their claims for authority.[56]) Similar processes of iconographic adoption can be observed in other historical and archaeological contexts where the

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is offered for the piece. Srisuchat 1996, p. 221 presents a photograph of what appears to be the same coin, with a ship on the reverse.

54) Glover 1996b, p. 79.

55) See, for example, Wolters 1982; Mabbett 1977a, 1977b. Although a critique of this concept has recently been offered by Pollock 1996, most scholars maintain that local Southeast Asian groups were attempting to legitimize their political control through the adoption of Indian customs.

56) For a discussion of the process and effects of emulation used to achieve local status, see Wright 1984.

new iconography served principally for the consolidation of local authority.[57])

Why did the iconography of the Indian subcontinent, located at a distance across the Bay of Bengal, become attractive to Southeast Asian rulers at this time? One important factor was the development of a coherent model of political, social and religious integration resulting from political consolidations in the subcontinent. These political consolidations are most prominently associated with the Gupta dynasty, which established what can be characterized as the first long-lived political organization in the Indian subcontinent. George Coedès was the first to observe that the earliest impact of an Indian political group upon Southeast Asia came with the growth of the Gupta polity in the fourth century C.E.[58]) An examination of the growth and development of the Guptas illustrates why this group became a prominent political and social model for Southeast Asia.

Inscriptions place the starting-date for Gupta rule in 320 C.E. from a base in the central Gangetic valley; shortly afterwards, Gupta leaders began to exercise control over the Deccan (central-western) region of India.[59]) Around 350 C.E., the ruler Samudragupta brought into the Gupta domain a number of other rulers in the eastern subcontinent, in the areas of Chota Nagpur, Bundelkhand, Baghelkhand, Chhattisgarh, and the Andhra country in the southeast.[60]) At the end of the fourth century, the Guptas extended their domain towards western India (the areas of Gujarat, Malwa and Kathiawar).[61]) In many of these cases, Gupta conquest involved the cooption of local leaders, who adopted aspects of Gupta bureaucratic structure (e.g. the use of Sanskrit) and participated in trade which is documented archaeologically through the widespread distribution of Gupta coins.

The Guptas exercised control throughout a large portion of the northern subcontinent and managed to retain that control through succeeding generations. The accompanying continuity in administration permitted the steady accumulation of surplus at the central level that could be utilized to support religious entities and provide trade infrastructure. Several significant administrative

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57) See, for example, Dietler 1989, who discusses the ways in which local chieftains in France obtained and displayed Roman goods such as wine. Helms 1979 observes the effects of local and long-distance knowledge upon the indigenous development of chiefly authority in pre-columbian Panama; Mathien 1986 and Nelson 1986 consider the appearance of Mesoamerican goods and architectural forms in the prehistoric American Southwest, where such goods are interpreted as embellishments to a locally-developed structure of authority, and not an imposition or conquest by peoples from central Mexico.

58) Coedès 1964.

59) Altekar 1982; Jain 1964.

60) Altekar 1982.

61) Sharma 1989, p. 152; see also Mirashi 1981.

changes were put into effect under the Guptas: the adoption of copper-plate grants for recording land records and temple-donations, the shift away from Buddhism in a return to a pre-Buddhist Vedic tradition, and the revival of Sanskrit as the principal language for monumental inscriptions, land-grants, seals and coins.[62])

Gupta rulers and their courtiers and feudatories served as patrons of art, contributing to the construction of a number of temples (principally of Shiva and Vishnu) throughout northern India.[63]) The revival of the Vedic Hindu tradition under Gupta patronage did not eliminate the practice of Buddhism, and a number of important Buddhist shrines were the recipient of Gupta donations.[64]) However, the comparatively greater emphasis on Hindu traditions may have prompted some practitioners of Buddhism to move elsewhere, including to Southeast Asia. In addition to the Guptas, other polities in the subcontinent which favored the Vedic tradition were also asserting their territorial authority, including the Vakatakas to the south.[65]) But the Guptas took primacy in leading these developments, and one significant illustration of the Guptas' impact on surrounding regions was the widespread adoption of the "Gupta era" for marking time throughout the northern subcontinent.[66])

Contemporaneous social change in the southernmost subcontinent is more difficult to evaluate. In a recent volume, Champakalakshmi comments that in this region the period between the third and sixth centuries C.E. contains less documentary evidence than the preceding period; at the same time, she notes that this era was one of agrarian expansion and the adoption of the brahmanical religious tradition.[67]) By the fifth century C.E., many groups in the south, such as the Pallavas, Ikshvakus, and Kadambas, imitated their northern neighbors and adopted Sanskrit for official inscriptions.[68]) The Pallavas were the most prominent of these groups, although their army was decentralized and they did not control a large cohesive territory.[69]) During the time of Gupta expansion, the influence of the Pallavas remained modest, although their participation in

62) Miller and Eaton 1992.

63) Miller and Eaton 1992; Williams 1982. Williams makes the additional observation that the greater contacts allowed by the "pax Guptica" were responsible for the increasing similarity of sculptural style in many parts of the Ganges valley (p. 60).

64) Gokhale 1983; Williams 1982.

65) Misra 1992; Ramesh 1992.

66) Williams 1982, chapter 4, discusses the continued use of the Gupta era by regional dynasties after the sixth century.

67) Champakalakshmi 1996.

68) Pollock 1996.

69) Dirks 1976.

Indian Ocean trade is evident in the adoption of Pallava-style writing and architectural designs in some parts of Southeast Asia.[70])

Emergent political entities such as the Guptas and the Vakatakas, with their well-implemented administrative and political structures, promoted within the subcontinent a greater visibility of religious motifs and political ideologies. Although the Guptas had a level of sustained political and bureaucratic organization greater than previous subcontinental groups, there were still limitations on the amount of force that could be used against distant neighbors. The Guptas maintained their territory through a sophisticated network of alliances and feudatories.[71]) Warfare in the subcontinent was localized, and the Guptas had mixed success in defending themselves against outside aggressors such as the Hunas.[72]) It is highly unlikely that the Guptas could have mustered sufficient resources to invade Southeast Asia, much less maintain a political presence of sufficient size and duration to impose their political and cultural will upon these distant regions. As in the preceding period, therefore, merchants and religious people were the active agents in transporting Indian constructs including iconography, Sanskrit language and religious practice.

The adoption of these constructs can be seen throughout the region of greater Southeast Asia, from Bangladesh to Vietnam and Indonesia.[73]) Across the Jamuna river of Bangladesh (which seems to mark the easternmost extent of direct Gupta control) the earliest known inscription is dated to 508 C.E. and records the donation of property to a Buddhist institution in the Lalmai hills area (near present-day Comilla).[74]) To the north, the earliest inscription in the Assam region dates around the fifth century C.E.[75]) No other inscriptions are known until the mid-sixth century C.E., in the form of the Badaganga rock-inscription of Bhutivarman.[76]) The principal religious and architectural focus of this period is based in a regional interpretation of Hinduism: there are a number of Shiva temples in Assam dating from the fifth century C.E., although Vaisnavism was also popular.[77])

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70) Christie 1970; Thapar 1990, p. 180.

71) Sharma 1989, especially chapter 8; this view is also expressed by H. Raychaudhuri 1996. In the commentary to Raychaudhuri's volume, B.N. Mukherjee agrees with the importance of the alliance-building process in the formation of the Gupta polity.

72) Raychaudhuri 1996; Williams 1982.

73) See, for example, Bellwood 1997; Chutiwongs 1996; Coedès 1968; Mabbett 1977a, 1977b; Glover 1996a; Higham 1989; Pollock 1996.

74) For a comprehensive account of an archaeological survey of the Mainamati area with an analysis of artifacts, see Morrison 1974.

75) This is the Kamakhya rock-inscription of Surendravarman; see Chaudhury 1964.

76) Choudhury 1985.

77) Choudhury 1985, p. 119.

In the Mun valley (Khorat Plateau) region of Thailand, there are inscriptions starting from the mid-sixth century C.E. A seventh-century inscription from Muang Sima records in Sanskrit and Khmer "the donation of buffalo, cattle and slaves of both sexes to a Buddhist community by the overlord of Sri Canasa."[78]) From Cambodia, the earliest inscriptions also combine Sanskrit with archaic Khmer, and date to the sixth century on the basis of paleography.[79]) Along the central coast of Vietnam, Sanskrit inscriptions are found in the Truong San range, also dating to the early sixth century C.E.[80]) Religious architecture likewise begins in the same period, and the earliest image-shrines in Southeast Asia with structural affinities to the Indian Gupta style date to the sixth and seventh centuries.[81])

The earliest inscriptions from Myanmar include a stone slab with early Pyu language in Brahmi (an Indian script) from Hmaingmaw, datable to the late fourth or early fifth century C.E.[82]) Contemporary activities include the issue of local coinage, based on Indian iconography and weight standards, by the kings of Arakan on the west coast of Myanmar.[83]) The adoption of Buddhist architectural styles from southeast India also begin around the sixth century in this region.[84]) In island Southeast Asia, the adoption of Indian written and religious conventions occur at about the same time as on the mainland. The oldest Sanskrit inscription from Java, recovered in the western part of the island, is estimated to date from the fifth century.[85]) In Borneo, there are inscriptions dated to c. 400 C.E. describing a ruler who offers cows to Brahmans and indicates Shiva-worship; in western Borneo there are eight Sanskrit inscriptions from the sixth century that show Buddhist influence.[86])

The successful political growth of the Guptas provided a powerful, coherent and attractive ensemble of religious motifs and bureaucratic mechanisms. Beginning in the mid-first millennium, the elements of this ensemble were combined with local Southeast Asian traditions, resulting in synchretisms that varied in their content from place to place. But the adoption of Indian models by ambitious political leaders was conditioned by factors other than the availability of powerful groups to emulate. In mainland Southeast Asia, two

78) Higham 1989, p. 280.
79) Higham 1989, p. 249.
80) Higham 1989, p. 298.
81) Chutiwongs 1996; see also Christie 1970.
82) Stargardt 1990, p. 124.
83) Mitchiner 1991.
84) Chutiwongs 1996, p. 13.
85) Bellwood 1997, p. 293.
86) Mabbett 1977b.

adjacent regions provided potential models of socio-political complexity: India and China. As seen above, contacts with the subcontinent prior to the fourth century C.E. appear to have been limited to sporadic economic interactions. The logistics of contact were affected by the difficulties of long-distance sailing across the Bay of Bengal, but the principal restraint on contacts was the lack of incentive in both areas. The subcontinent presented neither compelling economic products nor any well-organized political ideology, while the small social groups of Southeast Asia had few requirements that could not be met by local manufacture.

Interactions with China appear to have been considerably different, with incentives for contact that can be identified in both regions. Early Chinese sources indicate familiarity with the products of mainland Southeast Asia, and as early as the Ch'in period (c. 221 B.C.E.), the Chinese emperor's military campaigns in the southern region were motivated by "the expected gains from the lands of the Yüeh with their rhinoceros horns, ivory, kingfisher feathers, and pearls."[87]) By the beginning of the first century C.E. there is archaeological evidence for the use of Han plows and Han-style burials in the regions of the Red River valley in present-day northern Vietnam.[88]) Recent work has also recovered Han-style artifacts further south, in Thailand, Sumatra and Java.[89]) Contacts throughout the region increased in the early first millennium C.E. By the fifth century, "extensive areas of the western Indo-Malaysian Archipelago were becoming increasingly important links in the trade routes, and Austronesian-speaking crews may have been in control of much of the shipping."[90]) The fifth century was also a period during which Chinese travellers, in their pilgrimages to Buddhist sites, reported on the towns and regions which they visited.

When the impetus to greater socio-political complexity developed in Southeast Asia, China was also a potential source of ideology and administrative models. Chinese society was hierarchical, as was Hindu society.[91]) As in the subcontinent, there was a high degree of integration between political leaders

87) Yü 1967, p. 182. Yü's commentary on the growth of the Han state is principally devoted to the lands of the west in which trade preceded and accompanied military intervention. For more specific and detailed observations of the impact of Han expansion in southeastern China, see Taylor 1983; O'Harrow 1982.

88) Higham 1989, pp. 195-200 and pp. 287-292.

89) Glover 1996b, p. 81, mentions the presence of Han-style items in Thailand and Java in a footnote without elaboration. Bellwood 1997 adds that there is some Han pottery from southern Sumatra, now housed in the National Museum in Jakarta.

90) Bellwood 1985, p. 279; Bellwood 1997, p. 276.

91) Mair 1994.

and religious leaders, with a institutional support for Confucian ideals at all levels.[92]) These beliefs were incorporated into a standard iconography and religious architecture. The Chinese dynasties of the mid-first millennium followed the conventions established by the Han dynasty, which had developed a system of local and provincial administration as well as maintaining a monetary system with regular coinage.[93]) The documented presence of early trade between China and Southeast Asia shows that contacts were maintained between the two regions, through which elites in Southeast Asia would have become familiar with Chinese bureaucratic and political models.

Many of these early trade contacts were however accompanied by the use of force and numerous attempts to capture and administer territory. Chinese military intervention in the area of northernmost Southeast Asia began in 111 B.C.E., when a Han expedition which forced the surrender of P'an-yü (Canton) also established nine commanderies to administer the southern territories of Kwangtung, Kwangsi and northern Vietnam.[94]) These military interventions and administrative changes included the imposition of new social standards, such as requiring the local inhabitants to adopt Chinese modes of dress and formal Chinese marriage rites; the latter enabled the Han prefects to regulate local inheritance and land-ownership patterns in accordance with Chinese custom.[95])

These forced changes were met with resistance by local leaders. The Chinese chronicler Hsüeh Tsung (sic) observed that the Han had to abandon Hainan Island "after an uprising provoked by greedy officials who forcibly cut off the people's hair to sell for wigs."[96]) A significant revolt in the region of northern Vietnam broke out in 40 C.E., for which the Chinese general Ma Yüan was dispatched with a force of 20,000 troops. Additional outbreaks of violence occurred frequently in the following years, "often calling for strong defensive action by the Chinese" (conflicts broke out again in the years C.E. 100, 116, 137, 144, 157, 178, and 184).[97]) Even after the demise of the Han dynasty in the early third century C.E., subsequent Chinese dynasties including the Eastern Chin continued to retain bureaucratic structures and conduct punitive raids in the region of northern Vietnam.[98]) It would have taken little time for news of Chinese military activities and bureaucratic abuses to reach throughout Southeast Asia along the trade routes connected to this coastal region.

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92) Yü 1967; Mair 1994.
93) See, for example, Ebrey 1996.
94) Yü 1986.
95) O'Harrow 1982; Taylor 1983.
96) Taylor 1983, p. 78. The author probably refers to Hsüan-tsang (602-64).
97) Yü 1986, p. 454.
98) Taylor 1983; Ebrey 1996.

A good example of the way in which Southeast Asian groups were exposed to both Indian and Chinese goods and ideologies is provided by the Lin-i dynasty of northern coastal Vietnam. Founded in the late second century C.E., the Lin-i controlled a territory that straddled a trade route running from southern China to the Mekong delta, where Indian and Chinese merchants and religious figures passed.[99]) By the late third century, the Lin-i ruler was in league with the ruler of Funan and the two entities conducted raids across the ill-defined border to the neighboring Chinese territory.[100]) As the Lin-i dynasty grew in strength, that strength was marked by the use of Indian iconography and traditions. By the early fifth century, they had adopted the Sanskrit language, and dedicated temples to the Indian deity Shiva; some of their rulers took Indianized names such as Gangaraja and Bhadravarman.[101])

The example of the Lin-i illustrates that while Chinese models of social, political and religious organization were available to local leaders, their adoption would have been tempered by the apprehension that such adoption implied, or invited, Chinese control. By contrast, Indian political entities were too weak for physical expansion, and in being distant provided attractive, neutral and easily-manipulable symbols for local authorities. Presented with two models of state-operation, the Chinese and the "Indian," indigenous leaders in Southeast Asia chose to incorporate a model of bureaucratic organization that encompassed little threat of political intervention.[102])

Conclusions

The use of the term "Indianization" to describe the contacts between the subcontinent and Southeast Asia conceals the complexities of socio-political organization in the early first millennium C.E., when the Indian subcontinent consisted of a mosaic of cultural and political entities. Although the Mauryan polity may have had some consolidating effect for a brief period, the following centuries saw the presence of a number of polities with limited control over

99) Higham 1989, p. 300.
100) Taylor 1983, p. 96.
101) Higham 1989, pp. 300-301; Christie 1970.
102) An interesting comparative case is the reaction by the indigenous communities of the Korean peninsula to the Han expansion in that region. Pai 1992 (p. 311) observes that the indigenous society in Korea had an egalitarian social structure, consisting of "small villages of sedentary rice agriculturalists" without any evidence for social stratification in burials or architecture. In contrast to the Vietnamese case, then, the local society appears to have developed in tandem with the Han presence and its adoption of Han Chinese motifs did not conflict with any previously-developed patterns of hierarchy and social organization.

territory and resources. Starting in the fourth century C.E., the Guptas began their expansion from the center of India's Gangetic valley, incorporating allies into a large, consolidated territory. This expansion was characterized by the retention of surplus at the center and a successful transfer of power between ruling generations, and was marked by the development of new types of administrative documents such as copper-plate grants to record land transactions, the use of Sanskrit as a bureaucratic *lingua franca*, and a renewed attention to the iconography of the Vedic tradition.

Archaeological evidence supports the interpretation that Southeast Asia sustained indigenous traditions of manufacturing and political developments until the fourth century C.E.; the recovery of Indian items of this early period in Southeast Asian contexts should be regarded as evidence of contact but not "trade" or cultural expansion in any meaningful sense. After the fourth century C.E., many of the areas along the eastern Indian Ocean sustained the development of complex political entities that adopted Indian political terms and religious motifs. These Indian traditions were attractive because they had been fashioned into a coherent sociopolitical model by groups in the subcontinent. The greater invigoration of the Gupta polity resulted in the consolidation of a larger political territory, promoted trade more aggressively, and may have driven out Buddhist practices from some parts of the subcontinent to new areas around the eastern Indian Ocean littoral. Thus, within the phenomenon of "Indianization" there were developments not only on the part of the recipients, but on the part of the "senders" as well.

The simultaneous adoption of traditions from the subcontinent throughout Southeast Asia varied in response to local needs and circumstances. In regions close to the Gupta realm, such as the areas of modern Bangladesh, the adoption of subcontinental religious icons and languages may have been a demonstration of local leaders' acceptance of their role as a frontier zone or ally of the expanding Gupta polity. In the intervening regions of Myanmar and northeastern India, as well as in island Southeast Asia, the adoption of subcontinental traditions may have been undertaken by local leaders desiring to impress and govern their populations by reference to powerful but distant outside authorities. And in many parts of mainland Southeast Asia, the adoption of such traditions may have included the additional motivation to maintain cultural autonomy as a reaction to the spectre of Chinese expansion.

APPENDIX

Potential Items of Export from Southeast Asia to the Indian Subcontinent in the Early Historic Period

* *silk and silk yarn*: This is proposed as one of the desired items from Southeast Asia by Indian traders according to Basa, Glover and Henderson (1991). However, a commercially-viable silkworm species (*Antheraea mylitta*) is present all along the western coastal mountain range of the peninsular Indian subcontinent (Good 1995). Randhawa (1980) comments that the Indian silk moth (*Bombyx huttoni*) of the north-western Himalayas is ancestral to the five silk-producing species of moth in India. Thus, it appears likely that the development of silk production occurred in India by the early centuries C.E. The earliest silk in an archaeological context comes from Nevasa (located on the western side of the subcontinent), dated as early as the 10-15th centuries B.C.E. (Gulati 1961). Early written materials also discuss silk use (such as the inscription recording the donation of a temple by a group of silk-weavers in Mandasor in 437-38 C.E.; Randhawa 1980).

* *tin*: Tin deposits are plentiful in mainland Southeast Asia, and were exploited as early as c. 2000-1000 B.C.E., when there is evidence for bronze-working at the site of Non Nok Tha in central Thailand (Higham 1989). Tin was also to be found in the subcontinent, specifically in the Chhotanagpur plateau of the east-central subcontinent, where there were reported occurrences of cassiterite; there is also a source of tin located close to Giridih in south Bihar (Sengupta 1996). To the west of the peninsular subcontinent, tin could also be obtained in Afghanistan (Ray 1994).

* *copper*: Copper deposits, also plentiful in mainland Southeast Asia, were likewise utilized at an early date. At the site of Phu Lon in the Phetchabun mountains located near the Mekong river, Pigott has reported a date of c. 1600 B.C.E. for copper exploitation (reported in Higham 1989, p. 123). However, copper could also be located closer to the areas of India which may have required it. For the area of West Bengal, Sengupta observes that copper "must have come from the northern part of Medinipur, Bankura and Purulia districts of West Bengal, and in the neighbouring Singhbhum plateau of Bihar. Ancient copper mines are known at Tamkum in Bankura district and Chhedapathar in Midnapur district . . ." (Sengupta 1996, p. 123).

* *tortoise shell*: This is proposed as one of the items from Southeast Asia desired by Indian traders, according to Basa, Glover and Henderson (1991). Alternative sources for this material in the western Indian Ocean are listed in the *Periplus*: the areas of the Ethiopian shore and northern Somalia, as well as the eastern coast of Africa (Casson 1989, p. 16). However, I have not been able to find any references to archaeologically-recovered tortoise shell in any Indian sites.

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