

# **Bibliography on Sailing to Suvarnabhumi**

## **Introduction**

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## Introduction

The Project titled ‘Sailing to Suvarṇabhūmi: Cultural Routes and Maritime Landscapes’ was proposed by the ASEAN – India Centre (AIC) at RIS and was sanctioned by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) for two years on 30 December 2016. The Project was implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2017 and the first year until April 2018 was utilized for preparation of detailed lists of readings on the various themes under the Project. The Bibliographies of the ASEAN countries prepared to date have been uploaded on the AIC- RIS website at <http://aic.ris.org.in/culture-and-civilization>.

This introduction on the Project addresses the following issues with a view of providing a context to the Project and the Bibliographies:

1. Discussion of the term ‘Suvarṇabhūmi’;
2. The raison d’être of the themes chosen for the bibliography and their relevance; and
3. To what extent does the Project chart a different course vis-à-vis existing secondary writings on the theme of India and Southeast Asia interactions?

### **1. Defining Suvarṇabhūmi: Discussion of the term ‘Suvarṇabhūmi’**

References to Suvarṇabhūmi are found not only in Indian literary sources such as the *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE to 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE)<sup>1</sup> and the Buddhist Jātakas, some of which date to 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE,<sup>2</sup> but in Greek accounts as well. Chapter II of the *Arthaśāstra* contains detailed descriptions of several commodities such as precious stones, perfumeries and cloth. It lists many varieties of aromatics and includes Kaleyaka or a kind of incense that came from Suvarṇabhūmi.<sup>3</sup> References in Buddhist literature, especially in narratives associated with the past lives of the Buddha indicate the use of the term as a destination reached after sailing across dangerous seas.<sup>4</sup> There are references to voyages undertaken by merchants to Suvarṇabhūmi in numerous Jātakas. The Mahājanaka Jātaka mentions adventures of a prince named Mahājanaka who sailed with some merchants in a ship for Suvarṇabhūmi for trade and wealth.<sup>5</sup> Evidence of another sea voyage from Bharukaccha (modern Broach in Gujarat) to Suvarṇabhūmi is discussed in Suppāraka-Jātaka.<sup>6</sup> The Sussondi Jātaka refers to the journey of the minstrel Sussondi from

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick, Olivelle, *King, Governance and Law in Ancient India: Kautilya’s Arthaśāstra*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Maurice Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, Vol.II, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993(reprint), p.116

<sup>3</sup> Himanshu Prabha Ray, *The Winds of Change: Buddhism and the Maritime Link s of Early South Asia*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 87

<sup>4</sup> R.C. Majumdar, *Suvarṇadvīpa, Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East*, Vol.II, Dacca: Asoke Humar Majumdar Ramna,1937, pp. 56-57.

<sup>5</sup> E. B. Cowell and W. H. D. Rouse (tr), *The Jataka*, Vol. VI, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press ,1907, No. 539.

<sup>6</sup> Majumdar, *Suvarṇadvīpa*, p. 37.

Benares to Bharukaccha, from where some merchants sailed to Suvarṇabhūmi.<sup>7</sup> In the Sankha Jātaka the Bodhisattva was once born in Molinī nagara (Benares) as a very rich brahmana, named Sankha. He spent six thousand daily on alms-giving. One day he thought to himself, "My store of wealth once gone, I shall have nothing to give. Whilst it is still unexhausted I will take ship, and sail for the Gold Country, whence I will bring back wealth." So he caused a ship to be built; filled it with merchandise; and bade farewell to wife and child.<sup>8</sup> Stories of voyages of adventurous merchants to Suvarṇabhūmi also occur in Sanskrit narrative literature, for example the *Bṛhatkathāmañjari* (400 CE), *Bṛhatkathā śloka samgraha* (1037 CE)<sup>9</sup> and the *Kathāsaritsāgara* (1063-1081 CE).<sup>10</sup> The *Kathāsaritsāgara* (stories that could have originated well before the seventh century), centres on the voyages of the brahmana Candrasvamin who went in search of his lost son and of the princess Gunavati, and whose ship was wrecked on the coast of Suvarṇadvīpa while on its way from Kataha to India.<sup>11</sup>

The *Milindapañha*, dated to first and second century CE, also mentions various places of overseas trade and seaport towns like Suvaṇṇabhūmi, Takkola and Cīna.<sup>12</sup> The *Samaraiccakaha* dating to the eighth century CE describes a sea voyage to *Suvarṇadvīpa* and the making of bricks from the gold rich sands which were inscribed with the name *dharana* and then baked<sup>13</sup> An 11<sup>th</sup> century Indian text refers to the gold coming from *Survarṇadvīpa* as being of different types: of yellow gold colour and white shell colour, which is presumed to refer to the amounts of silver or copper contained in the alloy.<sup>14</sup>

*The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, a Greek text by an anonymous sailor of the first century CE refers to the Land of Gold, Chryse, and describes it as "an island in the ocean, the furthest extremity towards the east of the inhabited world, lying under the rising sun itself, called Chryse... Beyond this country... there lies a very great inland city called Thina".<sup>15</sup> Claudius Ptolemy's *Geography*, dated to second century CE contains the best-known and perhaps the earliest reference to the Golden Chersonese. According to Ptolemy's account, ships sailed from a

<sup>7</sup> H.T. Francis and R.A. Neil. (tr). *The Jataka*, Vol. III, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897, No. 360.

<sup>8</sup> E. B. Cowell and W.H.D. Rouse (tr), *The Jataka*, Vol. IV, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1901, No. 442.

<sup>9</sup> A.A. Macdonell, *India's Past: A Survey of her Literatures, Religions, Languages and Antiquities*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927, p.126.

<sup>10</sup> Raj Kumar (ed), *Essays on Indian Economy*, New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House., 2003, p.16.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese- Studies in the Historical Geography of the Malay Peninsula before AD 1500*, Kuala Lumpur : Univ. of Malaya Press, 1966, pp.80,82

<sup>12</sup> R.K. Dube, 'Southeast Asia as the Indian El-Dorado', in D. P. Chattopadhyaya, and Project of History of Indian Science, Philosophy, and Culture (eds.), *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, Vol.1, Pt.3

<sup>13</sup> Anna T. N. Bennett, 'Gold in early Southeast Asia', *Archaeo Sciences, revue d'archéométrie*, 2009, 33: 101.

<sup>14</sup> Bennett, 'Gold in early Southeast Asia,' :101.

<sup>15</sup> Lionel Casson (ed.), *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, p.91.

point of departure near modern Chicacole and striking right across the sea called at Sada and Tamale in the Silver country on the way to Chryse Chersonese.<sup>16</sup>

With regard to names given to sailing destinations in ancient literature, it is suggested that “Information about these places was not obtained from the lone voyage of a vessel that managed to return home after being swept by a storm to an unknown coast, whose sailors told fabulous stories that in no way could be checked. There is an increasing conviction that this information was the result of both indirect and direct trade contact which began long before the Christian era and became, at least from the beginning of that era, a regular occurrence along well-known trade routes.”<sup>17</sup>

The term Suvarṇabhūmi, however, has been the focus of attention and much debate. The French art historian Nicolas Revire cautions in his article *Facts and Fiction: The Myth of Suvannabhumi through the Thai and Burmese Looking Glass*<sup>18</sup> that both Burma and Thailand claimed to be the ‘Buddhist Golden Land’. “As expected, this myth has largely shaped the vision and the historical interpretation of generations of archaeologists, historians and art historians, especially in these two Buddhist countries. With such nationalist agendas, it is hardly surprising that the scholarly quest to identify [Suvarṇabhūmi] has been both controversial and muddled.”<sup>19</sup>

The search for Suvarṇabhūmi became the focus of intellectual history in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe and Southeast Asia.<sup>20</sup> Revire points out that, “in the eyes of the Buddhist devotee throughout the Theravada world Suvarṇabhūmi is more than just a name. Much of the scholarship has been preoccupied with attempting to identify the precise location of Suvarṇabhūmi, motivated in part by “the national pride of claiming to be the first Buddhist state of Southeast Asia.”<sup>21</sup> Pali sources specifically link the name with a pivotal story that narrates the spread of Buddhism into various ‘countries’ or polities, one of which was called Suvarṇabhūmi. The most important sources are the Sinhalese Chronicles such as the *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa*.<sup>22</sup> From the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards Lower Burma and Northern Thailand adapted parts of the myth contained in the Sinhalese Chronicles.<sup>23</sup>

Revire claims that, “Based on this meagre historical and scanty archaeological evidence it would seem to suggest that Buddhist practices were gradually introduced in various regions of

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<sup>16</sup> G.E. Gerini, *Researches on Ptolemy's Geography of Eastern Asia*, London: Royal Asiatic Society and Royal Geographical Society, 1909, p.78

<sup>17</sup> W. J. van der Meulen, ‘Suvarṇadvīpa and the Chryse Chersonesos’, *Indonesia*, 1974, 18: 2.

<sup>18</sup> Nicolas Revire, ‘Facts and Fiction: The Myth of Suvannabhūmi through the Thai and Burmese Looking Glass,’ *Mahachulalongkorn Journal of Buddhist Studies*, 2011, 4 : 79–80.

<sup>19</sup> Rinith Tiang, ‘Was Cambodia Home to Asia's Land of Gold?’, *Phnom Penh Post*, 5 January 2018, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Revire, ‘Facts and Fiction’: 80.

<sup>21</sup> Prapod Assavavirulhakaar, *The Ascendency of Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2010, p. 55.

<sup>22</sup> Revire, ‘Facts and Fiction’: 80.

<sup>23</sup> Revire, ‘Facts and Fiction’: 81.

Southeast Asia from at least, to be safe, the fifth century CE onwards.”<sup>24</sup> In Revire’s words “But what hard archaeological evidence is there to substantiate these views and what do we really know about the early advent of Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia?”<sup>25</sup> I strongly object to the statement that all this early material found or excavated in Thailand as sign of the arrival of Buddhism in Suvarṇabhūmi 2000 years ago.”<sup>26</sup>

Added to Burmese and Thai claims to Suvarṇabhūmi, being located within their national boundaries, is the Cambodian recent assertion to its land being Suvarṇabhūmi. This is based on the tablets excavated in Kampong Speu, which are now kept on the grounds of the Kiri Sdachkong pagoda and read “The great King Isanavarman is full of glory and bravery. He is the King of Kings, who rules over Suvarṇabhūmi until the sea, which is the border.”<sup>27</sup> Dr. Vong Sotheara, Professor of Cambodian and Southeast Asian history at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, is of the view that “the existing facts and findings, combined with the inscription in Kampong Speu, prove that Suvarṇabhūmi was the Khmer Empire”.<sup>28</sup>

The above discussion and debates around Suvarṇabhūmi make it apparent that a term that originated in narratives from the ancient sailing world was taken up by Buddhist literature and is now being analyzed within nationalistic frameworks. The term was coined and used in an age when there were no clear nation states with set political boundaries and seemed to denote a geographical zone rich in gold. As has been rightly pointed out by Tranet, the literature points to Suvarṇabhūmi being larger than just the Khmer Empire and appears to have comprised Myanmar, the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia.<sup>29</sup>

The issues discussed above may be summarized as follows:

- a. Was the name Suvarṇabhūmi just a myth or is there archaeological proof regarding the presence of gold mining and gold artefacts across Southeast Asia? Were these sources of gold tapped in the ancient period?
- b. Does archaeology provide evidence for early contacts between India and Southeast Asia/Suvarṇabhūmi, and the possibility of Buddhist monks and missionaries taking recourse to already established maritime networks and vocabulary in describing the area of Southeast Asia?

#### 1. a) *Archaeological Proof Regarding the Presence of Gold*

Archaeological excavations and research work seems to justify the term Land of Gold for most of the Southeast Asian region has gold deposits which were used by its inhabitants from an early period. “Gold is fairly widely, though irregularly, distributed throughout Southeast Asia in

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<sup>24</sup> Revire, ‘Facts and Fiction’ : 91.

<sup>25</sup> Revire, ‘Facts and Fiction’ : 81.

<sup>26</sup> Revire, ‘Facts and Fiction’ :88.

<sup>27</sup> Rinith Tiang, ‘Was Cambodia Home to Asia’s Land of Gold?’, *Phnom Penh Post*, 5 January 2018, p.2.

<sup>28</sup> Rinith Tiang, ‘Was Cambodia Home to Asia’s Land of Gold?’, p.3.

<sup>29</sup> Rinith Tiang, ‘Was Cambodia Home to Asia’s Land of Gold?’, p.5.

igneous and metamorphic hard rock deposits and in sedimentary placer deposits. Luzon and Mindanao in the Philippines, the Barisan mountain range in west Sumatra, western Borneo, Timor, parts of the Malaysian and Thai Peninsula, northern Burma, north and central Vietnam, Laos, northwest Cambodia in the Oddar Meanchey province, near Banteay Chhmar, its north-central area, in the Preah Vihear province in Rovieng district, and in the northeast in Rattanakiri province have all acquired a reputation as gold producers at one time or another.”<sup>30</sup> Anna T Bennett’s communication with villagers revealed evidence of ancient gold mining shafts in Central Vietnam at Kham Duc.<sup>31</sup> Ancient gold mines and 79 gold coins were discovered from Bengkulu in southwest Sumatra, and three gold coins were found in the deposit of Candi Gumpung located in Muara Jambi.<sup>32</sup> Touchstones, found at Kota Cina in northeast Sumatra, and at Khuan Lukpat, Krabbi Province, in Peninsular Thailand, which is dated to the third century CE and contains a Tamil inscription, *Perumpadan Kal*, or ‘the property of Perumpadan’<sup>33</sup> are definite proof for the existence of gold working and goldsmiths in Southeast Asia, some of them using Tamil language.

“The large coastal and riverine settlements around Oc Eo in the Mekong Delta, Giong Ca Vo in Southern Vietnam, the early river port of Khao Sam Kaeo in eastern peninsular Thailand, together with the Tabon caves in the Palawan Islands of the Philippines represent the earliest sites yielding gold finds in maritime Southeast Asia.”<sup>34</sup>

A notable amount of early gold material were brought to light during excavations of 52 burials at the protohistoric cemetery of Prohear, about 65 km east of Phnom Penh, Cambodia and these date to a period between the second century BCE and the first century CE.<sup>35</sup> In Vietnam, the site of Oc Eo had significant amounts of gold jewellery, including rings, some surmounted by images of Nandi, the sacred bull, linked chains, inscribed gold sheets, gold plaques decorated with repoussé images of Hindu deities, and over nine hundred gold beads with various shapes.<sup>36</sup> A large number of gold plaques depicting Hindu deities have been recovered from excavations at various sites in southern Vietnam: the site of Go Thap has 321 gold plaques with dates ranging from the late centuries BCE to fifth century CE; at the site of Da Noi approximately 300 gold plaques and one gold linga and yoni were unearthed; and 21 gold plaques are from the site Nen Chua and 166 gold plaques from Cat Tien.<sup>37</sup> “Although the gold finds from these sites have not

<sup>30</sup> Bennett, ‘Gold in early Southeast Asia’ : 99-100.

<sup>31</sup> Bennett, ‘Gold in early Southeast Asia’ : 100.

<sup>32</sup> John N Miksic and Geok Yian Goh, *Ancient Southeast Asia*, London- New York: Routledge, 2017, p. 358.

<sup>33</sup> A. Srisuchat, (ed.), *Ancient Trades and Cultural Contacts in Southeast Asia*, Bangkok: The Office of the National Culture Commission, 1996.

<sup>34</sup> Bennett, ‘Gold in early Southeast Asia’:104

<sup>35</sup> A Reinecke, Vin Laychour, Seng and Sonetra, *The first Golden Age of Cambodia: Excavation at Prohear*, Bonn: Die Deutsche National Bibliothek, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Bennett, ‘Gold in early Southeast Asia’: 103.

<sup>37</sup> Le Thi Lien, ‘Hindu Pantheon as Observed on the Gold Plaques found from Southern Vietnam’, <http://www.indian-ocean.in/Ms.%20Le%20LienThi%20-Bhubaneswar-IORC-March2015.pdf> (accessed on 12 February 2018)

all been excavated and are often chance finds, recorded in local villagers' collections, they share many highly characteristic features which provide sufficient evidence to indicate that a trade network linking the areas of the Southeast Asian mainland, the outer islands, the Philippines and India was already in place by the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the first millennium BCE.”<sup>38</sup>

### 1. b) *Evidence for Early Contacts between India and Southeast Asia/Suvarṇabhūmi*

In regard to the second point made by Revire that there is no evidence to prove earlier existence of Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia before fifth century CE, the archaeological data is analysed here. This evidence may have skipped Revire's attention as they do not constitute monumental remains or sculptures of great aesthetic significance, but are subtle and small artefacts excavated from archaeological sites, mainly coastal sites. Buddhism is not merely a philosophy with a defined doctrine and a sect of rituals but involves a whole range of human activity which includes literature and art.<sup>39</sup> “Buddhism in Southeast Asia came peacefully often as a guileless missionary or converted sailor and traders aboard ships.”<sup>40</sup>

Lion carnelian pendants have been recovered from the sites of Ban Don Tha Phet, Khuan Lukpad and Than Chana in peninsular Thailand, Chansen in central Thailand and in central coastal Vietnam at Lai Nghi near Hoi An (dated to second – first century CE), and have been reported from Halin, Ywa Htin and Hnaw Kan in Burma.<sup>41</sup> The discovery of carnelian lion pendants at Ban Don Ta Phet is the representation of Buddha as *Sakyasimha* (lion of the Sakya clan).<sup>42</sup> Boonyarit Chaisuwan notes that, crouching lion pendant was found at Phu Khao Thong Ban don Ta Phet and Tha Chana, and these types of stone lions were found in the north western centre of Buddhism, namely Taxila in first to eighth centuries CE and in the Satvahana period they are noticed in western Indian towns of Sanbhar and Nasik.<sup>43</sup> “The lion pendant was a symbol of power and grandeur. During the Kushana dynasty (first-third century CE) it was the symbol of Buddha as sakya singha. Other auspicious symbols were conch shells, srivatsa and svastikas....

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<sup>38</sup> Bennett, ‘Gold in early Southeast Asia’:104.

<sup>39</sup> Aurora Roseas Lin, ‘Buddhism in Early Southeast Asia: A Contribution to Study of Cultural Change’: 75 <http://www.asj.upd.edu.ph/mediabox/archive/ASJ-11-01-1973/roxas-limbuddhism%20early%20southeast%20asia.pdf> (accessed on 6 February 2018)

<sup>40</sup> Lin, ‘Buddhism in Early Southeast Asia’: 77. <http://www.asj.upd.edu.ph/mediabox/archive/ASJ-11-01-1973/roxas-limbuddhism%20early%20southeast%20asia.pdf> (accessed on 6 February 2018)

<sup>41</sup> Bérénice Bellina and Praon Silapanth, ‘Khao Sam Kaeo and the Upper Thai Peninsula: Understanding the Mechanisms of early Trans Asaiatic Trade and Cultural Exchanges’, in Elisabeth A Bacus, Ian C Glover and Vincent C Pigott (eds) *Uncovering Southeast Asia's Past*, Singapore: NUS Press, 2006, p. 386.

<sup>42</sup> Ian C Glover and Bérénice Bellina, ‘Ban Don Ta Phet and Khao Sam Kaeo: The Earliest Indian Contacts Re-assessed’, in P Y Manguin, A Mani and G Wade, (eds.) *Early Interactions between South and Southeast Asia: Reflections on Cross-Cultural Exchange*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2011, pp. 17–46.

<sup>43</sup> Boonyarit Chaisuwan, ‘Early Contacts between India and the Andaman Coast in Thailand from the Second Century BCE to Eleventh Century CE’, in P.Y.Manguin, A Mani and Geoff Wade (eds.), *Early Interactions between South and Southeast Asia: Reflections on Cross Cultural Exchange*, Singapore: ISEAS, 2011, pp.87-88.

Those religious symbols were the sign of the arrival of Buddhism in Suvarnabhumi 2000 years ago.”<sup>44</sup>

The Vo Canh Stele from central Vietnam is the earliest evidence for Buddhism in Southeast Asia, which describes a donation of property by the King Sri Mara to his relatives. The inscription has been dated to around the fourth century CE.<sup>45</sup> Inscriptions with the Buddhist creed have been recovered from sites in Malay peninsula dating to the fourth and fifth century CE, such as Kampung Sungai Mas, Seberang Perai, Bukit Meriam and the Buddhagupta Tablet from Kedah.<sup>46</sup> Buddhist association with the maritime community is evident from the Buddhagupta inscription (fifth century CE),<sup>47</sup> recording a dedication by a sea captain (*mahānāvika*) from Raktamrttika, probably in Bengal.<sup>48</sup> In the case of Vietnam Buddhism was introduced in the beginning of Common Era,<sup>49</sup> by both sea and land routes and by Indian or Central Asia priests. Buddhism in Vietnam directly originated from India.<sup>50</sup> “The Indian merchants and Buddhist priests temporarily stayed at Luy Lau, Giao Chau in the first centuries C.E., they were not missionaries. They just followed their Buddhist beliefs. They took the Three Refuges, believed in the Three Jewels, and took the Five Precepts. They donated foods, clothes, shelters to priests as the “best land for merit seeds. The Buddhist texts they prayed could be some sutras about that law along with the narration of Buddha’s previous lives.”<sup>51</sup>

A proliferation of Buddhist inscriptions in Southeast Asia is discernable from fifth - sixth century CE onwards and these include inscriptions and structural remains. Buddhist presence in Java is revealed by excavations of a large brick stupa at Candi Blandongan which likely dates to the sixth century CE, though “the structure is part of a complex that is expected to reveal earlier phases of construction.”<sup>52</sup> Pali inscription on the carnelian seal of the sixth century CE discovered in Kuala Selinsing, Perak, Malaysia; Buddhist scriptures inscribed on the gold plates of the fifth or the sixth century CE, discovered at Maunggun village near Hmawaza in the district of Prome in Burma; the inscription of the fifth or sixth century found in Si Thep; the inscriptions of the same period found in Wat Mahadbatu in Nakhorn Si Thammarat (Ligor); the four Mon inscriptions, engraved on an octagonal stone pillar, of the sixth or seventh century

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<sup>44</sup> Boonyarit Chaisuwan, ‘Early Contacts between India and the Andaman Coast’, pp. 88-89

<sup>45</sup> Anton O Zakharov, ‘A Note on the Date of the Vo-canah Stele’, *The South East Asian Review*, 2010, 35(1–2): 18.

<sup>46</sup> Jane Allen, ‘An Inscribed Tablet from Kedah, Malaysia: Comparism with Earlier Finds’, *Asian Perspectives*, 1986-87, 27(1):35-57.

<sup>47</sup> B.Ch.Chhabra, *Expansion of the Indo Aryan Culture during the Pallava Rule,(as evidence by inscriptions)*, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1965, pp.23-24.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy: A Guide to Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit and the other Indo Aryan Languages*, New York- Oxford: OUP, 1998, p.158.

<sup>49</sup> Duong Van Con, ‘Buddhism from India to Vietnam: A Study of Early Introduction’, *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research (IJIR)*, 2016, 2(9): 1171.

<sup>50</sup> Con, ‘Buddhism from India to Vietnam’: 1174.

<sup>51</sup> Nguyen Lang, *Viet Nam Phat Giao Su Luan (Essays on Vietnamese Buddhist History)*, vol. I, Hanoi: Van Hoc Publishing House, 1994, pp.49-50.

<sup>52</sup> John Guy, *Lost Kingdoms: Hindu Buddhist Sculptures of Early Southeast Asia*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014, p.10.



found in Lopburi in Thailand; the inscriptions of Purnavarman (the king of Taruma in West Java) of about 450 CE); the inscription of Rambipodji near Locmadjang-Djember in East Java belonging to the fifth century CE; the inscriptions of Mahendravarman of Cambodia, dated early seventh century CE<sup>53</sup>, sandstone stele of the Buddha with Ye Dhamma inscribed in Sanskrit dating to sixth century CE, Muang si Mahosot (central Thailand) inscription of sixth century CE.<sup>54</sup> John Guy notes that “Buddhism was firmly established in Pyu territories of Myanmar in the fifth century CE”,<sup>55</sup> evident from the find of one of the earliest Pali texts in Sriksetra (Myanmar). The text is inscribed on gold leaves and contains eight excerpts of Buddhist canonical texts and has been dated to the mid to late fifth century CE.<sup>56</sup> As for Kedah, John Guy is of the opinion that, “The Indian presence, predominantly Buddhist, seems established by the sixth century, if not earlier.”<sup>57</sup> Dating to the eighth century CE are Buddhist mouldings and metal foils inscribed with the Ye Dharma verse.<sup>58</sup>

Early evidence of maritime transactions between India and Southeast Asia is provided not by monumental remains or sculptures, but rather more basic commodities, namely food grains, pottery and beads. Arduous effort by archaeologists made over the last four decades has revealed a rich collection of artefacts, each pregnant with startling revelations of South and Southeast Asia’s past. Archaeological artefacts in the form of pottery and beads found in coastal sites of Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia clearly indicate that maritime trade between these regions and South Asia was established by the third century BCE.<sup>59</sup> The presence of merchants is evident from seals found at U Thong and Chansen categorized as merchant seals. The small stone seals from Palembang are inscribed in Sanskrit with the verse, “This successful journey is for the welfare and happiness for all human beings.”<sup>60</sup>

Archaeobotanical Studies: Scientific analysis of crop remains date the interactions between India and Southeast Asia to the prehistoric period. In Peninsular Thailand, the Indian community brought a suite of pulses that were formerly unknown in the area, or at least, if present in the wild, undomesticated, such as the mung bean. Mung bean (*Vigna radiata*), horsegram (*Macrotyloma uniflorum*) and pigeon pea (*Cajanus cajan*) were found in both Khao Sam Kaeo and Phu Khao Thong; but Phu Khao Thong, located on the India-facing coast, had a larger suite of pulses of Indian origin. This included black gram (*Vigna mungo*) and grass pea (*Lathyrus*

<sup>53</sup> S. Singaravelu, ‘Note on the Possible Relationship of King Rama Khamhaeng’s Sukhodaya Script of Thailand to the Grantha Script of South India’, *Journal of the Siam Society*, 1969, 57(1):7.

<sup>54</sup> Guy, *Lost Kingdoms: Hindu Buddhist Sculptures of Early Southeast Asia*, p.18.

<sup>55</sup> Guy, *Lost Kingdoms*, p. 10.

<sup>56</sup> Thein Lwin, Win Kyaing, and Janice Stargardt, ‘The Pyu Civilization of Myanmar and the City of Śrī Ks·etra’ in John Guy (ed), *Lost Kingdoms: Hindu Buddhist Sculptures of Early Southeast Asia*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014, p.65.

<sup>57</sup> Guy, *Lost Kingdoms*, p. 21.

<sup>58</sup> Guy, *Lost Kingdoms*, p. 9.

<sup>59</sup> Shahnaz Husne Jahan, ‘Rouletted Ware Links South and Southeast Asia through Maritime Trade’, *SPAFA Journal*, 2010, 20(3):5.

<sup>60</sup> Guy, *Lost Kingdoms*, p. 8.

*sativus*), which were not found at Khao Sam Kaeo. Grass pea is originally from either the Near East or the Balkans, and came to India before 2000 BCE. The grass pea, together with other finds in the Thai-Malay Peninsula such as hyacinth bean (cf. *Lablab purpureus*) and finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*), provides evidence of early translocations from as far afield as East Africa and, in the case of the latter two, via India by at least 1600 BCE and 1000 BCE respectively.<sup>61</sup>

“A number of important cultivars in south India, especially amongst trees, have their likely wild origins in Southeast Asia. These include the Areca-nut palm, the nuts of which are chewed as a stimulant together with slaked lime and the leaves of the vine Piper betel. Both are probably from Island Southeast Asia<sup>62</sup> Another interesting tree that appears to have come to south India from the east at this time is the true sandalwood (*Santalum album*). Sandalwood is probably originally wild in the driest parts of Indonesia, such as eastern Java and the Lesser Sundas, where its distribution appears natural.<sup>63</sup> Wood charcoal from the latest Neolithic levels of Sanganakallu (Sannarachamma) in south India, identified as *Santalum*, however, places it in the southern Deccan by c. 1300 BCE”.<sup>64</sup>

The Rouletted Ware: This wheel-made pottery constitutes a very significant item in the evidence for exchange between South and Southeast Asia and is dated from 500 BCE to 300CE.<sup>65</sup> “It has been well known in India since the excavations of Wheeler at Arikamedu in the 1940s. The most common form is a flat-based shallow dish, about 6 centimetres deep and up to 32 centimetres in diameter. The bevelled rim curves slightly inwards. The surface is highly polished, brown to red-grey in colour, and the interior body mainly grey. Decoration comprises one to three interior bands of impressed rouletted designs.”<sup>66</sup> The subsequent explorations and excavations have yielded Rouletted Ware from 124 sites in India. Rouletted Ware is concentrated more in peninsular India, particularly along the coasts of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal and on the banks of the Rivers Godavari, Kaveri and Krishna and recent excavations at Pattanam along the coast of Kerala have also yielded Rouletted Ware. Rouletted Ware is also reported at Beikthano in Myanmar; Kobak Kendal (Buni Complex) and Cibutak in

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<sup>61</sup> Dorian Q. Fuller and N. Boivin, ‘Crops, Cattle and Commensals across the Indian Ocean: Current and Potential Archaeobiological Evidence’, in G. Lefevre (ed.) *Plantes et sociétés (Études Ocean Indien 42–43)*: Paris: Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, 2009, pp.13–46.

<sup>62</sup> Dorian Q Fuller, Nicole Boivin, Tom Hoogervorst and Robin Allaby, ‘Across the Indian Ocean: The Prehistoric Movement of Plants and Animals’, *Antiquity*, 2011, 8: 549.

<sup>63</sup> Dorian Q Fuller, Nicole Boivin, Tom Hoogervorst and Robin Allaby, ‘Across the Indian Ocean’: 549.

<sup>64</sup> E. Asouti and Dorian Q.Fuller, *Trees and Woodlands of South India: Archaeological Perspectives*, Walnut Creek (CA): Left Coast Press, 2007, p.135.

<sup>65</sup> Peter Magee, ‘Revisiting Indian Rouletted Ware and the Impact of Indian Ocean Trade in Early Historic South Asia’, *Antiquity*, 2010, 84:1049.

<sup>66</sup> Bérénice Bellina, and Ian C. Glover, ‘The archaeology of early contacts with India and the Mediterranean World from the fourth century BC to the fourth century AD’, in Ian C Glover and P. Bellwood (eds), *Southeast Asia, from the Prehistory to History*, London: Routledge/Curzon Press, 2004, p.78.

Java; Sembiran and Pacung in Bali; Tra Kieu, Go Cam in Vietnam; Palembang in Sumatra; Bukit Tengku Lembu in Malaysia.<sup>67</sup>

The sites across India include- in West Bengal at Chandraketugarh, Deulpota, Atghara, Harinarayanpur and Hadipur (24-Parganas district), Tamluk, Tilda, Bahiri, Boral and Natshal (Medinipur district), Mangalkot (Bardhaman district), Saptagrama (Hugli district); in Orissa at Sisupalgarh (Khurdha district), Manikpatna (Puri district) and Radhanagar (Jajpur district); in Maharashtra at Junnar (Pune district), Paithan (Aurangabad district), Nashik (Nashik district), Nevasa (Ahmednagar district), Ter (Osmanabad district); in Andhra Pradesh at Kondapur (Medak district), Salihundam (Srikakulam district), Vamulapadu and Satanikota (Kurnool district); in Karnataka at Maski (Raichur district), Brahmagiri and Chandravalli (Chitradurga district); in Tamil Nadu at Kanchipuram (Kanchipuram district), Karaikadu (Cuddalore district), Arikamedu (Pondicherry), Kaveripattinam (Krishnagiri district), Karur (Karur district), Manigramam (Nagapattinam district), Uraiyr (Tiruchchirappalli), Alagankulam Ramanathapuram district) and Sengamedu (Perambalur district); in Uttar Pradesh at Ayodhya (Faizabad district) and in Bihar at Rajghat.<sup>68</sup>

Archaeological sites which yielded Rouletted Ware along the Andaman Coast are at Pak Chan in Kra Buri district, Kapoe in Kapoe district and Phu Khao Thong in Suk Samran district in Ranong province and on the east coast of the Kra Isthmus at Khao Sam Kaeo archaeological site in Muang district and Tham Thuay.<sup>69</sup> Rouletted Ware sherds from Khao Sam Kaeo archaeological site in Chumphon province have been analysed technologically by P. Bouvet and are dated between fourth and second century BCE.<sup>70</sup>

Rouletted Ware has also been reported from Chansen in Central Thailand . Other archaeological sites of Southeast Asia that yielded Rouletted Ware sherds are at Beikthano on the Irrawaddy River in Central Myanmar; Bukit Tengku Lembu in Perlis on the western coast of Malaysia; Kobak Kendal and Cibutak in North West Java, Indonesia; Sembiran, a coastal site on the north coast of Bali, Indonesia; and Tra Kieu, the ancient Cham capital of Simhapura in Central Vietnam). Among these, Rouletted Ware of Sembiran has been dated from the last centuries BCE to the early centuries of the Christian Era<sup>71</sup> and Rouletted Ware of Tra Kieu has been dated to the first century BCE and the first half of the first century CE.<sup>72</sup> Mineralogical analysis

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<sup>67</sup> Sila Tripathi, 'Seafaring Archaeology of the East Coast of India and Southeast Asia During the Early Historical Period', *Ancient Asia*, 2017, 8: 7.

<sup>68</sup> Shahnaz Husne Jahan, 'Rouletted Ware Links South and Southeast Asia through Maritime Trade', *SPAFA Journal*, 2010, 20(3):6-7 .

<sup>69</sup> Jahan, 'Rouletted Ware Links South and Southeast Asia through Maritime Trade': 8.

<sup>70</sup> Jahan, 'Rouletted Ware Links South and Southeast Asia through Maritime Trade': 9.

<sup>71</sup> I W Ardika and P.S. Bellwood, 'Sembiran: The Beginning of Indian Contact with Bali', *Antiquity*, 1991, 65: 224.

<sup>72</sup> Ian C Glover and M.Yamagata, 'The Origins of Cham Civilization: Indigineous,Chinese and Indian Influences in Central Vietnam as Revealed by Excavations at TraKieu, Vietnam 1990 and 1993', in C.Yeung, and Wai-Ling, B. Li (eds.), *Conference Papers on Archaeology in Southeast Asia*, Hongkong, 1995, p. 166.

confirmed that the fabric of the pottery from this site was similar to that of sherds from Wheeler's excavations at Arikamedu.<sup>73</sup>

The excavations at Sembiran and Pacung on the north-eastern coast of Bali have yielded a number of Rouletted Ware sherds, a sherd with graffito and semiprecious stone beads which resemble the findings of Arikamedu. Prof. B. N. Mukherjee has deciphered the graffito as Kharoshti script and read as 'te sra vi' where as Dr. I. Mahadevan has suggested that the script is Brahmi in Prakrit language and read as 'm(a) la sa'.<sup>74</sup> In recent years, the problem has been illuminated through chemical examination of the pottery fabric. Reporting the discovery of Rouletted ware and Arikamedu Type 10 sherds from Bali and Indonesia, for which Ardika & Bellwood<sup>75</sup> proposed a geological source in India. "Subsequently, Ardika and others indicated a 'trading/warehousing' activity area at Sembiran and also the identification of a number of sherds of assumed South Asian origin, including Arikamedu Type 10 and Arikamedu Type 18."<sup>76</sup> "Thus, the presence of Indian-made Rouletted Ware in Southeast Asia puts the matter of contact between these regions beyond question."<sup>77</sup>

Beads : Bérénice Bellina's comprehensive and meticulous study of beads leads her to conclude that "The distribution of beads shows that cultural exchange was already underway in the protohistorical period, and while the transfer was not all one way: South-east Asia specified the form of the symbolic objects and India was itself affected by the exchanges."<sup>78</sup> The most ancient beads from South-east Asia, dating from the last centuries BCE, are technically identical and of similar size, or smaller, to those from India. However they are of a very high quality which is not so frequent in India and often have more complex morphologies, such as icosahedral and bipyramidal shaped beads. These high quality beads have been found in Central Thailand sites such as Ban Don Tha Phet, a Peninsular Thailand site, Khao Sam Kaeo, Coastal Vietnamese sites of the Sa Huynh culture (Sa Huynh, Giong Ca Vo, Phu Hoa) and, in the Philippines, the Tabon caves in the Palawan island. Local South-east Asian manufacturing centres have not yet been located, and the beads are assumed to be Indian productions.<sup>79</sup> "In the earlier period (Period 1) corresponding to the last centuries BCE, the high proportion of ornaments found in South-east Asia were made with the most skilled Indian technologies but in a local style, suggest (following ethno-historical analogies), Indian productions made to order. This must be the result of well-

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<sup>73</sup> R.Prior, 'The Ceramics from Early Historic Sites in Vietnam', in P.Y. Manguin (ed.) *Southeast Asian Archaeology 1994*, Hull: Centre for South-East Asian Studies, 1998, p. 106.

<sup>74</sup> Tripathi, 'Seafaring Archaeology of the East Coast of India and Southeast Asia': 7.

<sup>75</sup> I.W.Ardika, and P.S.Bellwood, 'Sembiran': 224.

<sup>76</sup> L.A. Ford, A.M. Pollard, R.A.E. Coningham and B.Stern, 'A Geochemical Investigation of the Origin of Rouletted and Other Related South Asian Fine Wares', *Antiquity*, 2005, 79 (306):909.

<sup>77</sup> Bérénice Bellina, and I.C. Glover, 'The Archaeology of Early Contacts with India and the Mediterranean World from the Fourth Century BC to the Fourth Century AD', in Ian.C Glover and P. Bellwood (eds.), *Southeast Asia, from the Prehistory to History*, London: Routledge/Curzon Press, 2004, p.77.

<sup>78</sup> Bérénice Bellina, 'Beads, Social Change and Interaction between India and South-East Asia.' *Antiquity*, 2003, 77: 286-287.

<sup>79</sup> Bellina, 'Beads, Social Change and Interaction between India and South-East Asia': 289.

established exchange relationships, probably dating back to the first half of the first millennium BCE<sup>80</sup>. During the following period (Period 2) corresponding to the first millennium CE, manufacturing centres began to develop in South-east Asia, producing beads of medium or mediocre quality *en masse*. At the same time, beads of Indian manufacture continued to reach certain destinations.”<sup>81</sup>

“The method by which Indo-Pacific beads are made is complex. It requires specialized knowledge, a unique furnace and tools, and a dozen trained workers.”<sup>82</sup> They are Indian at heart, as the industry began in India and has its last remnant there, but their story is much broader than that, being largely played out in Southeast Asia.”<sup>83</sup> The Indian settlements of Khambhat and Arikamedu are considered as two of the largest centres of production of Indo-Pacific glass beads (including collared beads and etched beads) from the second half of the first century BCE to the first or second century CE. However, recent investigations have produced small pieces of broken glass tube wasters (broken during drawing), black slag and tubular pre forms of uncut glass beads at Giong Ca Vo (and Khao Sam Kheo, Thailand) that indicate that at least some of the glass beads were produced locally<sup>84</sup> or elsewhere in Southeast Asia using imported Indian technology<sup>85</sup>.

The geographic distribution of Indo-Pacific trade beads indicates that complex trading routes had already developed widely from Southeast Asia to the Indian sub-continent, and possibly as far as the Mediterranean by the early to mid-first millennium BCE (*ca.* 2350 BP). Not only were finished ornaments and raw materials traded but evidence from Thailand and Vietnam demonstrates that technological innovation and manufacturing skill were also exchanged between different cultures<sup>86</sup>

Stamped Ware: Conversely there is the presence of Southeast Asian wares at Indian coastal sites Such as Kottapattanam, Arikamedu<sup>87</sup>, Alagan Kulam<sup>88</sup> and Jaugada<sup>89</sup>. 337 sherds of stamped or

<sup>80</sup> Bellina, ‘Beads, Social Change and Interaction between India and South-East Asia’: 291.

<sup>81</sup> Bellina, ‘Beads, Social Change and Interaction between India and South-East Asia’: 293.

<sup>82</sup> Peter Francis Jr, ‘Glass Beads in Asia, Part Two: Indo Pacific Beads’, *Asian Perspectives*, 1990, 29(1): 16.

<sup>83</sup> Francis Jr, ‘Glass Beads in Asia’: 20.

<sup>84</sup> Nguyen K.D. , ‘Jewellery in jar burial sites from Can Gio District, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. *Khao Co Hoc* 1995,2: 27–46 ; Hirano, Y. 2008. Trading and its Development in Iron Age of Vietnam: A Study on Glass Ornament’, *Khao Co Hoc*, 2008, 4: 39–44 (in Vietnamese)

<sup>85</sup> Bérénice Bellina,. ‘Maritime Silk Roads’ Ornament Industries: Socio–Political Practices and Cultural Transfers in the South China Sea’, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 2014, 24: 345–377.

<sup>86</sup> Ian.C Glover, ‘Ban Don Ta Phet: The 1984–5 Excavation’, in Ian C. Glover and E. Glover (eds), *Southeast Asian Archaeology 1986, Proceedings of the First Conference of the Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists in Western Europe*, Oxford: BAR International Series 561,1990, pp. 139–183.; K.D Nguyen, ‘Jewellery in Jar burial sites from Can Gio District, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam’, *Khao Co Hoc* 1995,(2):27–46 (in Vietnamese).; Bellina, Bérénice and Ian C. Glover, ‘The Archaeology of Early Contact with India and the Mediterranean world from the fourth century BC to the fourth century AD’, in Ian C. Glover and P. Bellwood (eds), *Southeast Asia: From Prehistory to History*, London: Routledge Curzon, 2004, p.70

<sup>87</sup> R E M Wheeler, ‘Arikamedu: An Indo Roman Trading Station on the East Coast of India’, *Ancient India*, 1946, 2, : 49-51.

impressed ware have been found at Kottapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, <sup>90</sup> and according to Rao, this is a southeast Asian ware which is datable to as early as 700 BCE in north Vietnam. The ware found at Kottapatnam closely resembles the southeast Asian ware<sup>91</sup> most of the decorative motifs have almost exact parallels in southeast Asia sites like Johor, Tanjong Kubor, Kota Tinggi, Santabong .<sup>92</sup> Rao estimates that the presence of this pottery at Indian sites can be dated to third century BCE,<sup>93</sup> and states that “The occurrence of this ware only in the coastal sites, especially those with evidence of maritime activity, is a clear indication that this ware reached the Indian shores via maritime contracts.”<sup>94</sup>

Roman Coins as Jewellery: The custom of wearing Roman coins or their imitations as pendants is documented by numerous finds from southern India. The equivalent phenomenon in Southeast Asia is to be seen in the context of the network of maritime routes.<sup>95</sup> A disc of gold from Oc Eo, 19 mm in diameter corresponds to that of a Roman *aureus*, and its design being a copy of Antoninus Pius (r. 138–161 C. E.) coin, <sup>96</sup> and another gold disc from Óc Eo seems to derive from a gold coin of Commodus (r. 180–192 C. E.).<sup>97</sup> Pendants imitating Roman coins have also been found at Khlong Thom in southern Thailand.<sup>98</sup> “The pendant from Khlong Thom is certainly to be seen in the context of the popularity of the Indian pendants imitating this particular coin of Tiberius.”<sup>99</sup> The practice of wearing such pendants may have been ‘imported’ from southern India, either encountered there by Southeast Asians in the course of trade activities, or brought eastwards by South Indians”<sup>100</sup> According to Borell, the Roman coins would have served as prototypes in manufacturing the moulds, for the imitations might have been imported via India in the scope of more regional networks across the eastern Indian Ocean.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> V. Begley, ‘The Ancient Port of Arikamedu’, *Journal of Pondicherry Institute for Linguistics and Culture*, 1994 : 203.

<sup>89</sup> *Indian Archaeology Review*, 1956-57: 30-31.

<sup>90</sup> K.P.Rao, ‘Early Trade and Contacts between South India and Southeast Asia, (300 B.C.-A.D. 200)’, *East and West*, December 2001, 51, (3/4):385.

<sup>91</sup> Rao, ‘Early Trade and Contacts between South India and Southeast Asia’: 388.

<sup>92</sup> Rao, ‘Early Trade and Contacts between South India and Southeast Asia’: 389.

<sup>93</sup> Rao, ‘Early Trade and Contacts between South India and Southeast Asia’: 392.

<sup>94</sup> Rao, ‘Early Trade and Contacts between South India and Southeast Asia’: 391.

<sup>95</sup> Brigitte Borell, ‘The Power of Images – Coin Portraits of Roman Emperors on Jewellery Pendants in Early Southeast Asia’, *Zietchrift fur Arcaheologie Aussereuropaischer Kultures*, 2014, 6: 7.

<sup>96</sup> Borell, ‘The Power of Images’: 10.

<sup>97</sup> Borell, ‘The Power of Images’: 13.

<sup>98</sup> Borell, ‘The Power of Images’: 15.

<sup>99</sup> Borell, ‘The Power of Images’: 23.

<sup>100</sup> Borell, ‘The Power of Images’: 29-30.

<sup>101</sup> Borell, ‘The Power of Images’: 31.

## **2. The Raison d'être of the Themes Chosen for the Bibliography and their Relevance**

### **Objectives of the Project:**

The project does not locate the term *Suvarṇabhūmi* within the narrow confines of Buddhist or Nationalist framework but signifies a geographical location in the maritime world. The primary concern of the project is elucidating the multifaceted and multidimensional interactions across the Bay of Bengal based on a multidisciplinary approach incorporating archaeological, literary, ethnographical and archival sources. The project's objective is to better understand the various dimensions and facets of interactions and interplay across the Bay of Bengal with a focus on Maritime Archaeology. The project approaches the study of maritime interactions between India and Southeast Asia at multiple levels, encompassing a database comprising of archaeology, ethnography, maritime archaeology, archival and art historical studies. The themes of the Project are as follows:

**2.a) Boat Building Traditions**– This theme aims at bringing out the diverse boat building traditions, shipbuilding technology, evolution of various sailing crafts and interpreting various boat finds across the eastern shores of India as well as various sites across coastal Southeast Asia. Besides ethnographic data the resource base constitutes various shipwrecks and boat remains, depiction of boats found at sites such as Ajanta caves, the Jagganatha temple or at Niah caves and also information regarding traditional navigation and sailing such as the Manual of the Bugis, or the Indian text *Yuktikalpataru*, which highlight the rich sailing and boat building tradition.

**2.b) Narratives of Tran locality** : Humans are the key agents in the creation, maintenance, continuity and change in maritime networks. Important connections in economic, military organization, religious ideology were forged across the Indian Ocean and the participants in this inter regional network included sailors, mariners, traders, pilgrims, financiers, intellectuals, soldiers and administrators. A record of their journey and reconstruction of their narratives is possible through the study of textual data, inscriptions, artefacts, monuments and oral traditions. The presence of these communities and their narratives of trans-locality are established with the aid of archaeological and monumental remains, literary references and inscriptions.

**2.c) Colonial Intervention**: This theme has its focus on the various archaeological and ethnographical studies that were carried out and monumental and architectural remains that were recorded by European colonizers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century across India and Southeast Asia. With the coming of colonial rule in India and Southeast Asia, new disciplines of study such as Buddhist studies, archaeology etc. found a foothold, and shaped initial views of interactions between India and Southeast Asia within the colonial framework and objectives.

**2.d) Indian Leaders Travelling to Southeast Asia and vice versa**- The colonial era also witnessed mutual interest of Indian and Southeast Asian leaders in each other's country and culture. While Rabindranath Tagore visited various places in Southeast Asia, King Chulalongkorn travelled through India in 1872 and the Indian National Army of Subhas Chandra

Bose had its headquarters in Singapore. This theme is thus chosen so as to highlight forging of socio, cultural and political ties between Indian and Southeast Asian regions prior to Independence.

**2.e) Coastal Shrines and Religious Identity-** As communities moved away from their shores and settled in new areas they constructed religious structure to maintain their identity. Cultural symbols and religious identities circulated along with people. The monuments and buildings dotting the littoral of eastern coast of India and Southeast Asian shores were not merely structures. They dotted the coastline and served as markers for sailors and mariners and were significant installations that physically circumscribed the seafaring world.

**2.f) Indian Textiles in Southeast Asia :** Indian textiles were an important trade commodity in southeast Asia and this theme not only traces the existence of commercial trade in Indian textiles but rather highlights the socio religious significance of Indian textiles and designs in southeast Asian societies. It also indicates an equally important involvement of southeast Asian communities in trade in textiles, which included a wide range of textiles that came primarily from production centers on the Coromandel coast and Gujarat.

### **3. To What Extent does the Project chart a Different course vis-à-vis Existing Secondary Writings on the Theme of India and Southeast Asia Interactions?**

As has been rightly pointed out, “Histories written over the last five decades in different countries of Asia have primarily dealt with the ancient period of the present nation states and the discussion has largely centered on present national boundaries and local identities *versus* external influences. Perhaps it is time to move beyond the paradigm of the nation state in researching the history of Asia as these frontiers had little meaning in the earlier period.”<sup>102</sup> The sea/ ocean world serves as a channel between peoples and lands scattered across the seas. The project aims to study movement and interactions across modern jurisdictional boundaries for a deeper understanding of the salient interactions at multiple levels. While most studies and research have focused primarily on one country or the other, this project aims on integrating information from all ASEAN countries to better comprehend developments and interactions amongst the littoral societies in India and Southeast Asia. The focus is to bring forth the multifaceted relations forged mutually across the seas, and the reciprocal and complimentary historical cultural interactions that have existed between India and ASEAN over two millennia, exemplified by a study of the bibliography provided for the themes selected for the project.

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<sup>102</sup> H. P. Ray, ‘Beyond National Boundaries’, in Satish Chandra and H.P. Ray (eds), *The Sea, Identity and History: From the Bay of Bengal to the South China Sea*, Singapore/New Delhi: ISEAS/ Manohar Publishing, 2013, p.35



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**WORKING PAPER: I**

# **ON THE SAILING SHIP: ACROSS THE BAY OF BENGAL**

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# On the Sailing Ship: Across the Bay of Bengal

Himanshu Prabha Ray and Susan Mishra

## 1. Introduction

The seas across the India – ASEAN region presented a unique environment to the sailor in antiquity. The monsoon winds not only determined the basic rhythm for seafaring activity in much of tropical and equatorial Asia, but also influenced agricultural activity in the region. This paper suggests that one way of understanding this complex web of interactions of the past is through a deeper engagement with the markers of maritime regions and the communities that inhabited these spaces. One of the markers being discussed in this paper relates to depiction of boats and ships on religious architecture in the region. While these representations may not be realistic, they raise the issue of context. Why were boats and ships sculpted on Buddhist monastic sites and Hindu temples? How are these representations to be understood? It is being suggested here that these depictions are indicative of the diverse engagement with the sea in the region.

The paper is divided into several sections starting with the location of narratives of ship-wreck at three important sites in India, viz. Mathura, situated about 150 kilometres south of Delhi; Kanheri, a group of rock-cut caves located on the western outskirts of Mumbai on the west coast; and Ratnagiri in the Brahmani and Birupa river valleys in Jajpur district on the Orissa Coast in the east. Chronologically, while the first two are near contemporaries, the last of

the three monastic sites dates from fifth to thirteenth century CE, i.e. the second phase of sculpting at Kanheri. The three sites are also diverse in their location: thus, while Kanheri and Ratnagiri are in coastal regions, Mathura is located in the northern heartland of the subcontinent away from the sea. What links up the three sites are representations of the saviour from ship-wreck and other dangers encountered at sea at each of them. Thus, one objective of the paper is to highlight the uniqueness of Buddhism, which adopted an approach unlike its contemporary religions in evolving the notion of a saviour from worldly disasters, including threats and risks involved in seafaring.

A more important agenda is to underscore commonalities between the national monuments and World Heritage sites of the ASEAN – India region and the engagement with the sea that these represent. How are representations on religious architecture to be understood? Scholars have often identified the sculptural depictions through the textual traditions, but often there is little consonance between the visual and the written. A well-known art historian has suggested that the large number of Avalokitesvara representations showing the Bodhisattva saving his devotees from trouble as shown in the paintings from Ajanta indicate physical dangers rather than spiritual salvation. Dieter Schlingloff argues against this position and states that “Buddhist artworks financed by laymen and executed by lay artists were primarily

intended to help and guide the monks in their path to salvation.” We also need to factor into this debate not only the vision of the community who conceptualized and built religious structures, but also those who maintained and nurtured it over the centuries.

Most religious architecture survived through history because it continued to be relevant and meaningful to communities living nearby. In the second section, I move to another Buddhist site, which is also a World Heritage site, viz. Ajanta rock-cut caves in Maharashtra, which are exquisitely painted and sculpted. It is indeed significant that many of the paintings drawn from the Jatakas or stories of the earlier lives of the Buddha show the Buddha as a seafaring merchant. This is followed by a section focussed on ASEAN countries, especially Thailand, Cambodia and Indonesia and their interconnectedness to sites in India as evident from religious travel and visits by Chinese pilgrims to India along the sea route, which show a somewhat different engagement with the waters. The final section deals with ship-wreck sites in South Asia to highlight the need to develop underwater archaeology for a deeper understanding of the water craft used to cross the seas. I start with one of the earliest Buddhist monuments in the country, viz the site of Bharhut in central India.

## 2. Early Buddhist Sites in Central India

Perhaps the earliest representation of a seafarer in distress is to be seen on a medallion on a railing bar from the Buddhist site of Bharhut, located in the Satna district of Madhya Pradesh. Foucher identified the story as described in the *Mahāvastu* and the *Divyāvadāna* while Chavannes showed that it also occurred in a Chinese version. In the Chinese and *Divyāvadāna* version the merchants shout ‘*namo buddhāya*’ or ‘*namo buddhasya*’ in the *Mahāvastu* version. In the medallion, the ship is depicted twice: once, being swallowed by a giant fish and the second time safely sailing away from the monster. Thus in its representation, the narrative adheres to the fifth century texts quoted above, but the inscription deviates from the texts by referring to the saviour as Mahādeva, a name unknown for the Buddha in textual sources.

This raises the issue of examining the sculptural representation of the narrative along with the inscription, which as in the case here, presents a somewhat different insight into the depiction. It also interrogates the extent to which sculptural representations followed textual accounts. The paper then proposes that the evidence from art and architecture be viewed as a parallel tradition, rather than one supplementing the narratives as prescribed in the written form.

More recently, an archaeological survey has revealed that a small monastic site may have existed as early as the end of third century BCE. During the later centuries BCE, the monastic community at Bharhut appears to have consolidated and expanded, as is evident from the construction of the stone railing and the network of four smaller sites that emerged around Bharhut. Before I discuss the three sites of Mathura, Kanheri and Ratnagiri, two points need to be stressed: one, the coastal location of a large number of Buddhist monastic sites; and secondly, the conceptualization of maritime space, as evident from inscriptions at early Buddhist sites.

The peninsular part of Gujarat is referred to as Saurashtra and forms a rocky tableland with an altitude of 300 to 600 meters, fringed by coastal plains. It is known for its black cotton soil making it a fertile tract for agriculture. Gujarat has a total coastline of 1600 kilometres with the Gulf of Kutch and the Gulf of Cambay providing major inlets. The Saurashtra coast is marked by sandy beaches, which extend from Dwarka to Diu and the distinction between the coast and the interior is not as marked as elsewhere in peninsular India. The Girnar hills, which contain the site of Junagadh are important for pilgrimage to the Buddhists, Hindus and the Jains.

In the coastal regions of Gujarat, Buddhist caves were excavated from second century BCE to the sixth century CE. Rock-cut caves are known from Kateshwar and five from Siyot in Lakhpat taluka in the extreme north-west of Kutch, as also bronze images of the Buddha have been found datable from fourth to seventh century CE. Other coastal sites in south Gujarat include Talaja in Bhavnagar district with thirty rock-cut caves and Kadia Dungar near



Bharuch. Thus, the maritime orientation of a large number of Buddhist sites is striking and this leads to the second issue of travel across the seas.

### 3. Saviour of Mariners and Travellers in Distress

The emergence of the cult of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara as a saviour of mariners and travellers in distress is generally associated with the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* (chapter 24), though an enumeration of dangers of travel is to be found in earlier texts as well such as the *Anguttara Nikāya* (Kessivagga 119-20; vol. II: 121) and the *Divyāvadāna* (p.92: 25-8).

How does one explain the clustering of representations of Avalokitesvara in the western Deccan caves? The icon of Avalokitesvara as protector of the faithful is a type that occurs widely in the caves of western India. Several renditions were made in the western Deccan and over twelve painted and/ or sculpted versions are known from Ajanta (caves 2, 4, 6, 10A, 11, 17, 20, 26), three from Kanheri (caves 2, 41 and 90), one from Aurangabad (cave 7) and two from Ellora, though nowhere is the composition so elaborate and the treatment so elegant as in cave 90 at Kanheri. The image in cave 90 is unique in that it depicts Avalokitesvara as protector against ten perils (rather than the usual eight) and includes numerous subsidiary figures. In this litany, Avalokitesvara offers the devotee promise of salvation from the various perils depicted at the sides of the composition including attack by elephants, lions, robbers and similar disasters.

Around the same time, in the rock cut sanctuaries at Ellora, the function of the Avalokitesvara as the saviour from the eight perils is delegated to Tara. This theme occurs prominently in the monastic establishment at Ratnagiri in Orissa. It was in Orissa that the major expansion of Buddhism took place in the fifth to thirteenth century period and stupendous monastic complexes were constructed in the three hill ranges of Jajpur district, the Alti or Nalti, Assia and Mahavinayaka. Local tradition refers to the region being close to the sea in the past.

Ratnagiri is a 25 metre high isolated hill of khondalite formation of the Assia range bounded on three sides by the rivers Brahmani, the Kimiria and the Birupa. In the vicinity of Ratnagiri, the extensive Buddhist site of Udayagiri is located in the easternmost part of the Assia hills in a horse-shoe formation, while Naltigiri or Lalitagiri is not very far on the south bank of the Birupa. The three monastic complexes form a triangle, with the distance between Ratnagiri and Udayagiri is 5.5 kilometres as the crow flies and 3.5 kilometres between Udayagiri and Lalitagiri. The latter two hills are much broader and higher than Ratnagiri.

As late as the 1950s, Ratnagiri was marked by two compact mounds: one circular and conical, which yielded the stupa; and the other quadrangular, with several Buddhist sculptures scattered on the surface of the mounds. The site was located in close proximity to the major centre of Jajpur and was surrounded by navigable rivers, productive plains and khondalite bearing hills. The excavations yielded a large impressive stupa surrounded by a number of smaller stupas and two quadrangular monasteries. Several slabs found during excavations were inscribed with texts such as the *Pratītyasamutpāda sūtra* or the *dhāraṇīs*.

Of all the three major sites in Assia hills, the stupa at Ratnagiri is indeed striking (Fig. 6). The precincts of Stupa I were crowded with smaller stupas of varying dimensions and forms and comprised of both structural stupas of brick and stone, as well as portable stone stupas. It is interesting that there were several levels of stupas and sometimes stupas were built on top of earlier ones, the largest number of dedications being built between the ninth and thirteenth centuries CE. Many of the stone portable stupas had niches for enshrining deities such as Buddha, Tara, Lokeshvara, Manjusri and sometimes deities from the Vajrayana pantheon. Some of the smaller stupas yielded *śārīrika* relics in the form of charred bones, though hardly any attention was paid to reliquaries, which were generally plain earthen vases or stone blocks with sockets.

Two standing images of *aṣṭamahābhaya* Tara were found from the surface at Ratnagiri. In

1927-8, R. P. Chanda, an official of the Indian Museum, Calcutta visited Ratnagiri and other sites in Orissa to collect Buddhist sculptures for the Museum. He found a number of sculptures near the Mahakala temple on the hill at Ratnagiri, including *aṣṭamahābhaya* Tara image, which is now in the Patna Museum. The standing image is dated to the 11<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of a fragmentary inscription and graphically portrays the *jalārṇava-bhaya* or fear of drowning in a sinking boat. A second image now in the site museum at Ratnagiri, dated to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE, shows Tara flanked by scenes of the eight perils depicted in two vertical rows of four panels each.

A striking feature of Buddhism in Orissa is the lack of narrative sculptures, one of the few exceptions being the *aṣṭamahāprātihārya* sculpture, now in the Raghunatha temple at Solampur. Tara was a popular deity in Orissa, especially at Ratnagiri, where she is found sculpted on 99 niches of monolithic stupas. She is represented both in her seated *lalitāsana* form as also in various other types described in the *Sādhana-mālā*. The eleventh century manuscript of *Astasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* in the Cambridge University Library (MSS no. Add 1643) illustrates Buddhist images and shrines from different parts of India and four of the illustrations relate to Orissa. It is not surprising that three of these refer to images of Tara, perhaps from Banpur, while the fourth refers to the monastic complex at Kuruma, near Konarak in Puri district. From seventh to twelfth centuries she is shown as the saviour from a variety of dangers including ship-wreck in sculpture as also in epigraphs. She is invoked in several inscriptions, such as the Nalanda record of Vipula Srimitra dated to the first half of the twelfth century, as also the Kalasan inscription from Java. It would then seem that though there were several similarities between contemporary sites, yet every site placed emphasis on certain images suggesting local preferences for cults and specific texts. It is this local and regional context of the practice of Buddhism that imparts the archaeology of monastic complexes a crucial place in the study of Buddhist narratives. In the next section we discuss the site of Mathura, which depicts another aspect of the Saviour of merchants at sea.

#### 4. Mathura: Valahassa Jataka

Mathura is located on the river Yamuna, about 55 kilometres north-west of the city of Agra. Preliminary explorations at Mathura began as early as 1830s with the discovery of a Bacchanalian group of stone sculpture by Col. Stacy. This was followed by a survey by Alexander Cunningham from 1853 to 1883 based on the account of the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang. His primary objective was to collect sculptures from the several mounds around the present city of Mathura, especially from Katra, Jail, Kankali Tila and Chaubara mounds. In 1872, during his explorations, Cunningham found a pillar in a small dharamsala near the Balabhadra tank close to Bhuteshwar mound. The second-third century railing pillar shows a standing female figure on the back of a dwarf and on the backside is sculpted the Valahassa jataka in three compartments. The first panel shows the chief merchant perched on a tree addressing others imprisoned in a circular tower. The central panel depicts merchants escaping by clinging to a flying horse, while the demons are portrayed gorging on their hapless victims in the lower panel. Thus, the context of the Mathura panel is no longer available. Five other railing pillars are known from Bhuteswar mound, though at present a Siva temple built in the late eighteenth century is an important marker at the site. Two inscriptions are known from Bhuteswar: one inscribed on a Naga image; and the other on a railing pillar, though the reading is doubtful.

The Pali version of the Valahassa Jataka relates an episode from a previous incarnation when the Bodhisattva was born as a white horse. He rescued five hundred merchants who had been cast ashore after they were ship-wrecked on the island of Ceylon where there was a town peopled by she-demons who seduced unwary travellers wrecked on the coast as far as the river Kalyani on one side and Nagadipa on the other. The head-merchant became aware of the flesh-eating demons, who charmed them by appearing as beautiful women and cautioned the others. Two hundred and fifty of them agreed and were saved by the Bodhisattva who flew in the form of a white horse from the Himalayas. This Jataka found wide popularity in the Buddhist world and it

was painted in the caves in Kizil, as also on scrolls in Japan. Representations also occur in the Anand temple at Pagan and in Tibet. The discussion so far has largely revolved around the Bodhisattva as a saviour of travellers and sailors in trouble. Did the kings and ruling groups in early India claim control of the seas? This is an issue that we take up in the next section.

## 5. Conceptualization of Maritime Space

Two names are used for the Indian subcontinent in early sources: the fourth century BCE Minor Rock Edict I of Aśoka at Brahmagiri and elsewhere refer to Jambudvīpa or ‘island of the rose-apple tree’ and the same term occurs in the *Mahābhārata*; and *Bhāratam varṣam* or *Bhāradhavaśa*, which occurs in the Hathigumpha inscription. The minor rock edicts of Aśoka describe the king’s noble deeds through which the people of Jambudvīpa were united with the world of the *devatās* or gods. The conceptualisation of the Indian subcontinent as an island continues to occur in later centuries. A first century CE inscription on a limestone slab found in a vihara at the Buddhist site of Phanigiri in Nalgonda district reads ‘*Jambudvīpa mile vagu*’.

By the second-first century BCE, royal inscriptions initiate the practice of defining territory under control of the king and the Buddhist caves in the hills at Nasik, on the river Godavari, are especially significant in this regard. The caves are locally known as Pandulena and are situated 8 kilometres west of Nasik town about 60 to 70 metres up the hill on a rock scarp. The monastic establishment had one *cetiyaḥara* (cave 18), eighteen *lenas*, including three unfinished ones, one *matapa* and three cisterns, though more water cisterns are also known from the vicinity of the hill. The twenty-six inscriptions from the caves are significant not only for an understanding of the chronology of the Satavahana and Kshatrapa rulers of the region, but for the relationship between royalty and Buddhist monastic centres. The earliest record of the ruler Kanha of the Satavahana-*kula* is inscribed on the upper part of the right window of vihara 19 at Nasik. The vihara appears to be the

earliest excavation at the site that came into existence because of the generosity of the king.

Thus, the inscription is valuable as the earliest evidence for royal control of the oceans, but what is intriguing is its location in a Buddhist *vihāra* and the inclusion of Epic heroes as role models for the king. No doubt cave 3 was an unusual setting for the Queen’s inscription. It consists of a large hall with eighteen cells around it, five to the left, six at the back and seven to the right. There are two additional cells in the veranda in front. A beautiful relief of a stupa was cut in the back wall of the hall between doorways to the third and fourth cell. There are three additional royal inscriptions engraved in the veranda and these require brief discussion.

The earliest record in cave 3 is on the left wall of the veranda and dates to the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Satavahana ruler Gotamīputa Siri Sātakani. Thus, the caves at Nasik indicate complex relationship between royalty, the inhabitants of monastic sites, such as Nasik and the administration of monastic property, in this case by the Bhadāyanīyas, probably located in Andhra. This wealth of inscriptional data undoubtedly accords a special place to the Buddhist monastic centre at Nasik and to the claim for control of the three oceans. Another site that needs to be brought into discussion at this stage is that of the rock-cut caves at Ajanta.

## 6. The Paintings at Ajanta and Insights into Control over the Seas

Walter Spink has suggested that the bulk of the work at Ajanta dates from 462 to 480, though there was an early phase, as evident from caves 9, 10, 12, which were excavated in the first phase dated from first century BCE to the first-second centuries CE. Work at cave 2 at Ajanta was started in the mid- 460s, though the elaborate work was done on it after 475. Cave 4 the largest vihara at the site was started in the early 460; cave 11 is another inaugural Vakataka vihara; and in cave 26, work continued until 478. How is this royal power of control over the oceans represented? We discussed the inscriptional data from Nasik in the previous section, but no sculptural depictions are to be found at Nasik, instead the

Simhala vijaya narrative and its somewhat later fifth century representation at Ajanta cave 17, a cave “fit for the king” elaborate this concept.

In one of his previous births, Sakyamuni Gautama was born as Simhala, a merchant who led fine hundred others on a seagoing venture to Tamradvīpa or Sri Lanka. They were ship-wrecked, but eventually saved from the man-eating ogresses by the horse Balaha, who rose majestically into the sky with Simhala on his back. The ogresses, however, followed him back to his kingdom. Simhala once again rose to the occasion and saved the kingdom from being devoured by them. Simhala was crowned king and Tamradvipa was renamed Simhaladvipa.

The story of Simhala can be read at different levels: at one level, it is about the defeat of evil worldly forces by dharma and “articulates the Mahayana notion that in order to reach the further shore of nirvana, one must rely upon the *sambhogakāya* power of a saving bodhisattva”, while at another it refers to physical dangers such as those encountered by the fifth century Chinese pilgrim Faxian off the coast of Sri Lanka, who saved himself by calling upon Avalokiteśvara. Holt continues the argument further and states that from the eighth to tenth centuries Avalokiteśvara was not only venerated by the coastal communities of Sri Lanka, but also in some of the monasteries of Anuradhapura.

The impressive litany of Avalokitesvara in cave 4 was, according to Spink, carved early in 479 CE and the scene of the Bodhisattva as Saviour continued to be popular at Ajanta. This popularity is indeed striking, as the other iconic images are either of the Buddha or the stupa. Based on his study of pictorial representations of the litany of Avalokitesvara at Ajanta, Schlingloff does not prioritise any particular text that was followed by the artists. “On the contrary, they developed their own relatively flexible iconographic tradition in which neither the number nor the subject of the perils, to say nothing of a prescribed sequence, were generally considered compulsory.” In contrast, Schopen attempts to identify Mahayana Sutras that may have formed the basis for the painting tradition at Ajanta and suggests

after examination of a painting of the Avalokitesvara in cave 10 that as the *Gandavyuha sutra* contains a similar enumeration of perils, it would have been taken recourse to at Ajanta. On an esoteric level, the dangers may be interpreted as obstacles to salvation.

In addition scenes of sea travel and ship-wreck are depicted, such as the voyage of prince Kalyanakarin in cave 1; the painting of the Purnavadana in cave 2; and Simhala legend showing ships carrying an army of elephants and cavalry to Sri Lanka in cave 17. Clearly sea-travel is prominently depicted and the popularity of the Avalokitesvara as saviour from ship-wreck at sites such as Ajanta indicates a far more complex picture than that suggested by the inscriptions at Nasik. How does this compare with representations at sites across the seas? Three of the sites that are significant include Nakhon Pathom in Thailand; Borobudur in Indonesia; and Neak Pean in Cambodia.

## 7. Chedi Chulapathon in Central Thailand

In this section, I shift the focus to the development of archaeology in Thailand over the last six decades and the shifting priorities in the research agendas. Dvaravati appears in the official name of both Ayutthaya (founded in 1350) and Bangkok (founded in 1782) and it would seem that the memory of the polity maintained itself from the tenth until the fourteenth century. Jean Boisselier has argued that the Ayutthaya royalty looked to Dvaravati culture as important to their rule, rebuilding Dvaravati period monuments abandoned at U Thong and bringing Dvaravati sculpture from Nakhon Pathom to Ayutthaya. No doubt the revival of interest in historical Buddhism had far-reaching implications for the study of the past – a case in point being the restoration of Phrapathom Chedi.

As a monk, king Mongkut (1804-1868) visited the Phrapathom Chedi that was in a state of disrepair in the jungle, though it was still considered a centre of pilgrimage by the local communities. On his accession to the throne, the monarch not only restored the Chedi, but also developed the surrounding areas. Two new canals were dug – the



Mahasawas and Chedibooja (1853-1862) and these provided a link between Nakhon Pathom and the waterways of Bangkok.

The following two stucco reliefs from Chulapathon chedi need to be brought into the discussion here. These reliefs were brought to light during excavations by the Fine Arts Department in 1968. As the present chedi had covered the earlier one, Pierre Dupont's 1939-40 excavations had failed to unearth them. It would seem that the chedi was renovated and expanded three times in the past. How are these depictions to be explained in the context of the monument at Nakhon Pathom, especially as there is no evidence for them from other stupa sites? Are these representations linked to the association of the site with the landing of Buddhist monks sent by Ashoka and the setting up of the earliest stupa in Thailand?

The panel shows the Buddha as a giant tortoise in a previous birth saving ship-wrecked merchants by carrying them ashore and then by sacrificing himself to keep them from starvation. This story also occurs in the first gallery at Borobudur in central Java.

The representation shown above draws from Suparaga Jataka, which narrates the adventures of merchants who travel to Suvarṇadvīpa under the able guidance of Supparaga, the *niryāmaka* or steersman who was none other than the Buddha in a previous birth. As compared to Nakhon Pathom, the eighth century monument at Borobudur displays an exuberance of sculpture devoted to sea travel and pilgrimage.

## 8. Chinese Pilgrims on the Sea Route

Another network that needs to be taken into account is that with China. As recorded in the written history of the Han (*Qian Hanshu*) under the reign of Emperor Wudi (140-87 BCE), the emperor sent a mission to the kingdom of Huangzhi, which contemporary writers generally agree was located on the shores of the Indian Ocean very likely in India. More often quoted are records left by Chinese pilgrims who travelled to India and visited Buddhist sites. The pilgrim Faxian arrived overland in India in 399 CE

and returned by sea to China in 413-414 CE from Sri Lanka heading towards the northwest tip of Sumatra. The ship was wrecked on the way and perhaps landed in the Andamans. The next phase took Faxian to the northwest of Borneo where he arrived in 414 after 90 days at sea. The pilgrim remained in Borneo for five months and then left for China in mid-414 heading towards Canton.

The most interesting information about circum-peninsular navigation of the Malay Peninsula is contained in Yijing's accounts of the voyage of the Chinese pilgrims who travelled to India and returned during the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. Yijing provides an account of his journey from Canton in October-November with the northeast monsoon and his arrival in Palembang on Sumatra a month later. He stayed there for six months, and then went to Jambi near Palembang sometime around May. He stayed there for another two months and then re-embarked in order to profit from the winds of the southwest monsoon to reach Kedah (Jiecha) on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula. He did not leave this region for India until the beginning of the following year when the north-east monsoon was well established. He reached the Nicobar islands in ten days and fifteen days later arrived at Tamralipti in Bengal. This was clearly the most direct route to the holy places of historic Buddhism.

Twelve years later, Yijing returned by the same route travelling on the winds of the north-east monsoon to reach Kedah, but this trip required two months, when the outward journey had taken only twenty-five days. Sailing against the winds was a well-tried technique but it took much longer than sailing with the winds. One of the voyages recounted by Yijing lasted only the time of one monsoon – the pilgrim Wujing left China “in the period of the east winds,” i.e. in October-November and arrived in Srivijaya at the end of a month. After stopping at Jambi he took another month reaching Jiecha and from there he left for Negapatam on the Tamil coast with the same winds before they began to wane towards the end of March. Clearly then the notion of the Saviour and its depiction on monastic structures reflected an active engagement of the patrons and

sponsors of Buddhist monastic architecture with the sea. This is further corroborated by ship-wreck sites found in the region, though their numbers are still small.

## 9. Ship-wreck Sites

The oldest ship-wreck in South Asia dates to first century BCE – first century CE and lies off the fishing village of Godavaya on the south coast of Sri Lanka. The ship was transporting a cargo of raw materials, including what appear to be ingots of iron and others of glass, as well as finished stone querns (hand-operated mills) and ceramic bowls, when it sank some time before the first century CE. Further across the Indian Ocean a somewhat later ninth century ship-wreck of a vessel of possible Indian or Arab origin was found in Indonesian waters in 1998. The wreck was located just north of the main town and port of Belitung Island, Tanjung Pandan. A large number of seventh century Chinese coins and ceramics were recovered from the site indicating that the ship was travelling on the route from the Persian Gulf to China. The wood for the ship originated in India, though the ship itself may have been constructed in the Arab region based on an analysis of bitumen pieces found near the ship-wreck.

In this paper the focus has been on representations of the several conceptions of the saviour of seafarers as represented on Buddhist monuments across South and Southeast Asia. This is an issue that needs further discussion and research as it is linked to larger issues of maritime connections, cultural plurality and memory of the community. Monuments enshrine many kinds of memories: memory of the vision of the builder; memory acquired over time; and finally, the created memory through transformation of the monument, either through its destruction or by altering its context or form. Monuments also become sites for enactment of rituals such as pilgrimage for the replenishment of memory and knowledge of the past. Social carriers of memory are agents for the reproduction and circulation of historical memory and traditionally these have included story-tellers, singers or actors who narrate mythical and past events to a local audience. As this overview of narratives

of sea-stories shows, the sculptural depictions has multiple meanings and were significant markers of the diverse ways in which the communities of the ASEAN – India region travelled across the seas and related to each other.

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**WORKING PAPER: II**

# **TRADE NETWORKS AND COMMODITIES**

**Himanshu Prabha Ray**

**Susan Mishra**



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# Trade Networks and Commodities

Himanshu Prabha Ray and Susan Mishra

## 1. Introduction

In the Working Paper I, the role of small-scale maritime communities involved in utilizing the resources of the sea since at least the prehistoric period had been discussed, with a view to shifting the emphasis from Empires and luxury trade to sailing networks and people to people contact. Maritime trade has conventionally been viewed as trade in luxury items and controlled by the state or Empire, but as shown in this paper, it is time to frame intercultural interactions across the seas with reference to maritime communities. This stress on fishing and sailing groups is further corroborated by finds of boats and boat burials in archaeological contexts in Vietnam. For example, boat burials associated with Dong Son bronze drums and dated from 500 BCE to 200 CE have been found not only along the coast of Vietnam, but also in the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago and have been linked with seafaring communities. These maritime activities resulted in vibrant interchanges in the first millennium BCE between South and Southeast Asia, as evident from material remains of Indian origin found at archaeological sites, such as that of Oc-Eo in the Mekong delta. In addition to material artefacts such as beads of carnelian and glass and other items, the archaeological record also shows the spread of writing in the Brahmi script and religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism across Southeast Asia. The evidence for the spread

of Buddhism and Hinduism will be discussed in the next Working Paper. Here I would like to highlight the cultural and religious underpinnings of much of trading activity in the historical period, which facilitated cross-cultural interactions across the seas.

“We can mention a great number of carnelian and agate beads of Indian origin, which were found in the Iron Age sites in Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam: in particular, specific etched beads and beads with animal shape..... The pottery imported from South India appeared very early in Central Vietnam. It was evidenced in the early Cham sites such as Tra Kieu and Go Cam in Quang Nam province....The superimposition of Indian culture never derived from a policy of political subjugation nor to economic exploitation; rather the very process signified a peaceful outlook and a cooperative approach.”

It is vital to incorporate this archaeological data in an understanding of cross-cultural interactions across the Bay of Bengal, which enables current research to move away from nineteenth century paradigms and models, such as the often-touted term - Maritime Silk Road. The term ‘Maritime Silk Road’ or ‘die Seidenstrasse’ is of recent origin and was first proposed by the German Geographer Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen (1833–1905) in the nineteenth century. He suggested that the road focused on trade in silk connecting Han China and Imperial Rome in the early centuries of the Common

Era, but lost its relevance with the collapse of the two Empires. While the use of the term did not result in academic research on the concept, it did inspire Sven Hedin (1865 – 1952) to lead four expeditions from 1893 to 1927 to central Asia. An unintended outcome of the expeditions by Hedin and others was the discovery of hitherto unknown oases cities, Buddhist caves, etc. in central Asia and China and looting of paintings, sculptures and manuscripts from these sites so evocatively portrayed by Peter Hopkirk in his book. In recent years China has revived the terminology in an attempt at ‘mythologising’ the past in order to serve a current foreign policy interest, as discussed by Kwa Chong Guan of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore.

At this stage attention should also be drawn to the fact that traditionally it was Indian cotton textiles that were traded across the Indian Ocean and it is with an overview of the archaeological record of cotton fabrics that I start this paper. The beginnings of the maritime system in the subcontinent may be traced to the exploitation of marine resources in the Mesolithic period around 10,000 BCE when fishing and sailing communities settled in coastal areas. By the third millennium BCE, there is evidence for trade networks between the Makran and Gujarat coasts of the subcontinent and the Persian Gulf. This is an issue that has been dealt with elsewhere and will not be repeated here. In this paper, the focus is on the historical period starting with centuries around the beginning of the Common Era. This first section is followed by an overview of trade and exchange as discussed in Sanskrit and Buddhist texts and a discussion of movements of crops and plants, as evident from the archaeological record that has been studied and analyzed in recent decades. The final section presents an analysis of the organization of maritime trade in South and Southeast Asia in the early historic and early medieval periods.

## 2. Cotton Textiles and Indian Ocean Networks

India has historically been one of the major producers of cotton fabrics in the Indian Ocean region and these have been the staple of trade networks across

the region. Though a local weaving tradition has existed for nearly 4,000 years in the Indonesian archipelago, Indian textiles were nonetheless considered special and continued to be imported. These imports included the double-ikat silk *patola* and the block-printed cotton textiles, which were traded to the region because of their status and ritual significance. This ritual significance of textiles is evident in 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century inscriptions from Java, which record the ceremony and feast associated with donation of land and establishment of a *sima*, i.e. an area with changed revenue status. Together with gold and silver, pieces of cloth - *wdihan* for the men and *kain* for the women - were important gift items at this ceremony. It is important to underscore the fact that though several varieties of cotton cloth were produced in the subcontinent, it is only some of these that travelled across the seas. Secondly clothing was an important marker of social and cultural identity and a vital function of textiles was in ritual, as shown above.

Indigo is perhaps the oldest organic dye used and Greek sources refer to its origin in India. The first century CE text in koine Greek, the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* catalogues it as an item of export from Barbarikon at the mouth of the Indus river (section 39) and the west coast of India. The *Periplus* contains a useful list of commodities traded across the Indian Ocean and refers to the west coast of India as providing spices, medicinal and aromatic plants, gems, textiles, both cotton and silk, dyes, such as indigo, grain, rice, sesame oil, ghee or clarified butter, ivory, pearls and tortoise shell.

Cotton was the most common fibre used in the subcontinent at least from the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE onward. At the site of Mehrgarh in Baluchistan seeds of the cotton plant (*Gossypium* sp.) were found in 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE context. The evolution of a cultivated version of cotton (both *Gossypium arboreum* or tree cotton and *G. herbaceum* or short staple cotton) in South Asia is dated to around the same period. Terracotta spindle whorls found at archaeological sites in the Indus valley in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE attest to the spinning of yarn in the region. There are indications for the use of indigo

dyed cloth, while at Mohenjo-daro, Marshall found two silver vases wrapped in red-dyed cotton cloth in the lower town. The archaeo-botanist Dorian Fuller has reviewed the evidence for the presence of cotton and flax at Harappan sites, as also in other parts of the Indian subcontinent. He suggests an increase in spinning activity in peninsular India from the second half of the second millennium BCE as a result of increasing social complexity.

Silk is another important fibre and is known to have been in use in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE at Harappan period sites. Current evidence suggests that the fibres belong to the wild silk moth (*Antheraea* sp). References to silk and silk working in Sanskrit texts indicate that silk technology and production was well established in the subcontinent in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. The South Asian silk industry is also known to have evolved independently from the silk traditions of China. The *Arthaśāstra* lists valuable goods considered important to be included in the king's treasury and this includes a range of textiles such as silk, where a distinction is made between *patrorna*, *kaūṣeya* and *cina-patta* (II.11.107-114). *Patrorna* has been identified as uncultivated silk collected from various trees and together with *kaūṣeya*, which Xuanzang differentiates from Chinese silk and refers to as gathered from wild silk worms, it forms the Indian varieties of silk. *Kaūṣeya* is already mentioned in 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE grammar of Panini (IV.3.42) and occurs in the Epics, as well.

A piece of silk was found in a Buddhist relic casket dated to the early centuries CE at Devnimori in Gujarat. The site of Devnimori is situated on the eastern side of the river Meshvo, overlooking the gorge and the valley and excavations have dated the Buddhist monastic complex from 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. One of the two caskets found inside the stupa contained silk bags, gold bottle and some organic material inside a cylindrical copper box. Clearly silk-weaving was an established tradition in early India as further supported by inscriptional evidence. A 5<sup>th</sup> century Sanskrit inscription of the chief of a guild of silk weavers from a now lost temple at Mandasor in central India describes designs woven by them on silks as *varnantara-vibhaga-cittena*, translated as 'with varied stripes of different colours'.

Excavations at the burial site of Ban Don Ta Phet in central Thailand have yielded cotton fragments and thread. The analysis of cotton shows that it was made of *cannabis sativa* fibre which might have originated from cotton plants found in South Asia. Similarly, remains of textiles have been found at Ban Chiang in Thailand. Moreover, at Tha Kae, central Thailand 'door-knob' spindle whorls, of which ninety fragments were found in 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE to 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, context, some with traces of iron remaining inside the central perforations are similar to those found at Kodumanal, Tamil Nadu. Archaeological excavations at Kodumanal will be discussed in a later section here. Unlike Kodumanal, Tha Kae was occupied from the end of the first millennium BCE to the late first millennium CE. Judith Cameron has suggested that probably this shows the transfer of technology from India to Thailand along with fibre and iron during the early centuries of the Common Era.

Textiles fragments were found at the burial site of Pontanoa Bangka in Sulawesi, one of the Lesser Sundas on the eastern border of the Indian Ocean and were radiocarbon dated to CE 500. The fragments were of cotton and were decorated with "stamped (squares within larger squares), a decorative technique unique to India." There is continuing evidence for import of patterned and other textiles from India to the Indonesian archipelago in the period from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century. This is further corroborated by late eighth century Sanskrit inscriptions from central Java and by the strong Pala influence on local statuary. Textiles, especially cottons were imported into Southeast Asia from India, not only as clothing and as gifts in ceremonies, but also used as adornments around images in temples and to decorate ceilings. Another prominent use is as manuscript covers and their further reproduction in murals. A study of patterns in the eleventh and twelfth century temples of Pagan shows a strong influence from Eastern India.

In addition to local consumption, Indian textiles were also re-exported to neighbouring countries such as Japan and China. These examples can be added to, but this may not be necessary, as the major role of Indian textiles has been well established by



references quoted above. To further strengthen the argument, the movement of crops needs to be brought into the dialogue, before we move on to a section on understanding the structure that framed economic activity, as evident in early Sanskrit literature.

### 3. Movement of Flora and Fauna across the Seas

The earliest evidence of contacts between Southeast Asia and India is perhaps provided by archaeobotanical studies of various crops and plants found in archaeological contexts. The movement of these perishable items was the result of travel by small-scale fishing and sailing groups across the Bay of Bengal. These movements are often reflected in the adoption of loan-words from the people who introduced certain plants into a geographically contiguous society. In this regard, lexical data becomes an important tool of analysis. The adoption of new plants and crops also altered the landscape where these were imported and cultivated. Several Southeast Asian plants and spices revolutionized the cultural landscapes – or, rather, seascapes – of the Indian Ocean.

Certain trees and plants are believed to have been introduced from Southeast Asia to India in ancient times and from there to the Middle East, East Africa, and Europe. Examples include sandalwood (*Santalum album* L.), the areca palm (*Areca catechu* L.), betel pepper (*Piper betle* L.), banana (*Musa* spp.) and citrus cultivars (*Citrus* spp.), ginger (*Zingiber officinale* Roscoe), and galangal (*Alpinia galanga* (L.) Willd). Several spices too, featured actively in exchange with Southeast Asian participants. These included cloves (*Syzygium aromaticum* (L.) Merr. Et L.M. Perry), nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans* Houtt.), and Sumatran camphor (*Dryobalanops sumatrensis* (J.F. Gmel. Kosterm). Many of these were indigenous to the relatively isolated regions of present-day Indonesia. A significant factor facilitating the integrative potential of these maritime communities was their large cargo-carrying vessels, which not only facilitated transformation of the local settlements into centres of commerce and production,

but also linked the local groups into regional and trans-regional networks.

The terms for certain plants and crops used in India, indicate origins in Southeast Asia, such as spices like the clove. Conversely certain crops of Indian origin were introduced to Southeast Asia as well. These include staple crops such as rice and lentils, as well as fruits such as jackfruit. The site of Khao Sam Kaeo (KSK) located 8 kms from the coast on the Tha Tapao River has been dated from 4<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. Phu Khao Thong (PKT) lies in the Kra Isthmus and though smaller than KSK overlaps it in terms of chronology, with dates ranging from 200 BCE to CE 20. Rice was the dominant cereal at both sites and was identified as a Chinese domesticate. The excavators suggest that labour intensive wetland rice agriculture (of *indica* rice) was introduced in the middle of the first millennium CE.

It has been suggested that many of the pulses found at archaeological sites may have been for the consumption of the Indian community settled in peninsular Thailand. Indica rice is the dominant species cultivated in modern Thailand, and wetland rice agriculture is practised throughout the region today. Therefore, it is posited that labour-intensive wetland rice agriculture (of *indica* rice) was introduced after sustained Indian contact in the middle of the first millennium CE, and associated with the development of Indic states in mainland Southeast Asia.

Faunal remains also indicate movement of certain animals across the sea. How were these exchanges in the first millennium BCE organized? In the next section we discuss the evidence from early Iron Age sites in peninsular India that is usually marginalized in studies on inter-cultural contacts.

### 4. Iron Age Sites in First Millennium BCE

Southeast Asian archaeologists have long recognized that the earliest archaeological evidence for iron in mainland Southeast Asia coincides with the earliest evidence for interregional maritime trade

and exchange. It is significant that the dates for the introduction of iron in mainland Southeast Asia range around 500 BCE and are later than those in large parts of India. It has been suggested that in the first phase, iron was largely used for weapons and for thwarting the “predatory imperial ambitions of the Han Dynasty of China,” especially in the region of Yunnan and north Vietnam. In large parts of mainland Southeast Asia, the increased use of iron also led to intensive agriculture and expansion of irrigation facilities. Archaeological excavations at sites such as Noen U-Loke in Thailand have shown that water was brought through channels into moats around sites and these large water control structures date to the late Iron Age between about 100 and 500 CE.

These early beginnings also provide a different perspective on trans-oceanic exchanges, as traditionally trade has been linked with urban centres and the Mauryan state. Archaeological evidence from Iron Age sites in peninsular India offers a long pre-Mauryan prehistory of exchange and trade, both overland and coastal and presents several analogies with coastal sites across the Bay of Bengal. Chronologically, the Iron Age megalithic sites span several centuries, from 1200 BCE to 300 CE, and extend across all regions of peninsular India with the exception of the western Deccan or present state of Maharashtra. These Iron Age sites are often associated with mortuary monuments, such as urn burials and terracotta sarcophagi, marked on the surface by large standing stones, though there is regional variation from stone circles to enormous standing stones at sites in north Karnataka, as also dolmens. There is evidence for exploitation of mineral resources and their exchange across the peninsula. 7 habitation sites, 148 burial sites and 22 habitation-cum-burial sites are known to have been located in the vicinity of gold resources. Not only was gold mined, but also exchanged as is evident from finds of gold ornaments at widely dispersed sites. This is further supported by the fact that 60% of the megalithic sites were located in regions with no known mineral or ore resources nearby.

Another correlation that is increasingly evident is with tanks or reservoirs, for example at the site

of Hire Benkal where in addition to the stupendous standing stones, settlement sites, both megalithic and Early Historic have also been identified. It would seem that these tanks were largely for collecting run-offs or rain water and were filled only during some months of the year. Another difference lay in the fact that there was no mechanism for the distribution of the water.

Surveys undertaken by Moorti and Brubaker have provided an overview of the hierarchies within megalithic sites. Of the total number of 1933 sites discovered so far, the largest concentration (34%) is in Karnataka, followed by 31% in Tamilnadu. A more recent survey of published literature suggests a similar database of 2207 megalithic sites. Of these 1668 were cemeteries, 55 were habitations, 128 were both habitations and burial sites, and the association of 356 sites was unclear. A study of site sizes indicates that the larger megalithic sites were found along major routes of communication. These routes are known to have continued in the subsequent periods. Perhaps the most interesting is the stretch extending from the Palghat gap and Coimbatore to the Kaveri delta. An analysis of the dimensions of sites indicates that there were at least 26 large settlements, each capable of supporting a population of approximately 1000 people.

It is no coincidence that those in coastal areas score over others located further inland, in terms of the richness of grave goods. The lower Krishna valley on the Andhra coast was more intensively settled by Megalithic communities than other parts of Andhra. A similar situation may be envisaged for the Tamil coast where the littoral Megalithic settlements of Souttokeny and Moutrapalon near Pondicherry and Adichanallur further south have yielded a wide variety of grave goods. Adichanallur was extensively excavated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is one of the largest known mortuary complexes, containing several thousand megaliths and covering an area of some 114 acres and far richer in terms of gold ornaments and beads as compared to other contemporary sites.

In addition to the variations in site sizes indicating the presence of large towns and smaller villages,



archaeological excavations at Kadebakele on the Tungabhadra River in Koppal district of Karnataka has provided insights into their adaption and reuse over the extended period from 1500 BCE to fifteenth century CE when the site was in existence. There are indications that the mortuary monuments continued to be restored and revisited and that there are indications of occasional feasting around them.

One especially significant site for this paper is Kodumanal on the northern bank of the river Noyyal, a tributary of the Kaveri. The site straddles the ancient route from the Palghat gap eastward to Karur and Uraiyur along the Kaveri. Hundreds of inscribed potsherds were found at the site in stratified contexts, with inscriptions in Prakrit, Sanskrit and Tamil. The Kodumanal finds gain further significance in view of data now available from Sri Lanka. The finds of pottery sherds inscribed with Brahmi letters from Iron Age levels in Anuradhapura have raised several questions regarding the traditional view of the introduction of writing from north India to Sri Lanka. These diverse communities in peninsular South Asia used at least four languages, viz. Prakrit, Tamil, Old Sinhala and Sanskrit, which were all written in the Brahmi script, with some evidence for the presence of Kharosthi as well.

In addition to the trading systems of the north, these Iron Age communities also participated in an extensive coastal exchange network which included sites in Andhra, Tamil Nadu, the Malabar coast and northern Sri Lanka. How was this system organized in peninsular India? An issue that needs further research at this stage relates to the overlap between the Iron Age networks comprising of small-scale communities of South and Southeast Asia in the first millennium BCE, though inscriptions from coastal sites in India refer to associations of merchant groups and communities termed *nigama*/ *nikama* and *goṣṭhī*.

### **The *Nigama* and the *Goṣṭhī***

The Pali dictionary derives the meaning of the term *nigama* from the Sanskrit root *gama* with the prefix *ni*. The compound term thus has the sense of coming together or meeting. On the basis of early Buddhist texts, Wagle defines the *nigama* as a *gama* composed

of more or less integrated members of various kin groups and occupational or professional groups. It is therefore a larger and more complex economic and social unit than the village or *gama*. A significant association of the *nigama* in peninsular India, especially in the coastal regions is with Buddhist monastic centres. Two prominent sites need to be mentioned: one is that of Bhattiprolu; and the other is Amaravati, both on the Andhra coast.

The terms *nigama* and *negama* are found inscribed on unbaked clay sealings from several sites in north India. The earliest of these date from the Mauryan period. Beyond the northern plains, there are references to the *nigama* in inscriptions from early Buddhist sites. The *nigama* of Karahakata in the Deccan is mentioned in the second century BCE inscriptions of the Buddhist site of Bharhut in central India.

The Buddhist site of Bhattiprolu, a village on the Guntur – Repalle railway line in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh is significant on several counts. It provides details of second century BCE practice of relic worship in coastal Andhra, but more importantly patronage for the setting up of the stupa came from the local chief or raja Khubiraka and members of the *goṣṭhī* of *nigama*putas and *nigama*. The term *goṣṭhī* has been translated as committee or association and also occurs in the inscriptions of the Buddhist sites of Sanchi and Mathura in central and north India respectively. The name Khubiraka has wider prevalence and occurs as Kuyiran (Tamil) or Kubira (Old Sinhala) both derived from Sanskrit Kubera. Variants appear as Kupiro at Bharhut in central India, Kubirako from Bhattiprolu in Andhra, Kubira in Sri Lanka cave inscriptions and Kuviran in early Tamil cave inscriptions.

Similarly, there are references to the *nigama* of Dhanyakataka along the east coast in Andhra. Both the *goṣṭhī* and the *nigama* existed at Dhanyakataka. It is significant that both Dharanikota and Amaravati are located at the point up to which the river Krishna is navigable and may be defined as landing places for the coastal traffic. The Krishna takes a sharp turn at this spot and the association of Amaravati with the river is preserved in a stele discovered during

clearance of the site in 1958-59. Engraved on one of the faces is the legend: “the *goṣṭhī* called Vanda at Dhanyakataka” together with the representation of waters. It may be mentioned that Amaravati was the largest and longest lasting Buddhist site on the Andhra coast, which continued to be revered by pilgrims from across the seas well into the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The term *nigama* also occurs in the region around Madurai in Tamilnadu where fifty-five inscriptions in Tamil-Brahmi have been dated between the second century BCE and the second century CE.

From the third and second century BCE to the second century CE, many of the intersecting networks combined into larger systems as evident from the distribution of specific pottery types, such as the Rouletted Ware. Further evidence of the interlinkages between peninsular India and parts of Southeast Asia is provided by the distribution of Rouletted Ware (RW), which was long considered to be a marker for Indo-Roman trade. Painsstaking analysis of the pottery from archaeological excavations at Tissamaharama in Sri Lanka has led to an unbroken chronology and sequence from fifth century BCE to twelfth century CE.

Detailed analysis of Rouletted Ware was undertaken during archaeological excavations in the vicinity of the monastic site of Tissamaharama, one of the most revered temples in southeastern Sri Lanka and the capital of the ancient kingdom of Ruhuna. The Sri Lankan Chronicle, the *Mahavamsa* refers to prince Vijaya and his followers landing on this part of the coast in the fifth century BCE. The results from archaeological work at Tissamaharama have provided insights into the participation of coastal centres in Sri Lanka in maritime networks as early as the fifth century BCE, as well as the development of urban centres in close proximity to monastic establishments.

It is then evident that in the third-second centuries BCE, it was the *nigama* and its members whose presence is attested to in peninsular India, especially in coastal regions. What was the relationship between the *nigama* and the political dynasties, as also with religious centres. These issues have been discussed

in earlier publications. Here I will draw on data from early Sanskrit texts to highlight some of the differences with current understanding of terms such as economy and trade.

## 5. Economic Activity as Described in Early Sanskrit Literature

The accepted modern definition of economy relates it to the production and distribution of goods and services and considers it as distinct from politics and religion, but this distinction is not reflected in early Sanskrit texts, such as the *Arthaśāstra*, where politics and economics are not treated as separate domains, but are dealt with as one unit. The king is responsible for protecting the productive territory of his kingdom and guards it against internal and external threats. It is this protective role that provides him authority to collect taxes from the inhabitants. Kingship thus governs both the political and the economic domains. In addition to being in-charge of economic activities of his kingdom, the king was also responsible for regulating it and for maintaining law and order. It is evident that the historical conditions under which the *Arthaśāstra* was written were very different from the environment in which the present economy operates and this distinction needs to be kept in mind when using terms such as trade, markets, ports, revenue, taxation, etc in the context of early South and Southeast Asia. It is also important to emphasize the fact that the *Arthaśāstra* is not a historical document, but a normative text, though it does provide valuable insights into conceptualization of various aspects of the economy. It also needs to be ‘read’ in the context of early Buddhist sources, as also the data from inscriptions and archaeology, as will be done in this paper.

The *Arthaśāstra* accepts *artha* as one of the legitimate and desirable pursuits of life, though riders were attached to this goal, which was not absolute. Thus, the quest of *artha* was to be subordinated to that of *dharma* or ‘that which upholds the regulatory order of the universe’, and the seeking of *kāma* or pleasure was to be subordinated to that of *artha* and *dharma*. *Artha* has been variously translated as material, social and human capital.

Nevertheless, important points to be kept in mind when consulting the *Arthaśāstra* are the several references that it makes to inter-regional trade and the sea in Book II (2.28.1-13). The Controller of Shipping (*nāvādhyakṣa*) is mentioned, as also collection of taxes from fishing and sailing communities; those diving for conch-shells and pearls; and traders. The *Arthaśāstra* makes a distinction between local trade transacted in fortified cities of the interior, identified as *nagara*, from that originating at distant places and exchanged at the *pattana*, located either on sea coasts or on river banks of the interior. Dharmasthas are mentioned and their duties in regulating market transactions at frontier posts are discussed in Book III (3.1.1).

One aspect that Trautmann makes no reference to in his book is the ritual economy of the period and the extent to which the religious shrine or temple was a motivating factor in channelling economic activity as also being able to monitor transactions, such as trade. Olivelle nevertheless does refer to the social role of the temple as discussed in the *Arthaśāstra* and contrasts it with the absence in the *Dharmaśāstras*. He mentions that references in the text indicate the enormous wealth of temples and their political clout, as evident from the mention of an overseer of temples. In legal disputes relating to temple property, “we see the temple or the temple god emerging as a legal entity with legal rights that can be defended in a court of law.” These references to the religious shrine need to be compared with data from inscriptions and archaeology, but before that a discussion of early Buddhist texts and wealth generation would be relevant, as it provides a different perspective to that in the *Arthaśāstra*.

Early Buddhist Canonical texts, such as the *Nikāyas* and the *Vinaya* texts expound on the subject of money: how to earn it legitimately and how to effectively use it to accumulate this-worldly and other-worldly gains. Nevertheless Buddhist writers were aware of the imbalance and disparity of wealth found within society and the fact that in reality money can subvert justice and that lack of it can result in an abject humiliation of a person. Craving

for money, however, does not bring happiness, because such cravings are impermanent, without substance and false. The emphasis is on *dāna* or giving for a meritorious cause, such as the Buddhist Sangha.

The most frequently used term in the texts for money is *bhoga* and it is listed among the ten most desirable things. The other nine are beauty, health, virtues, life of continence, friends, truths, understanding, *dharma* and heaven. Money is referred to as bringing two kinds of happiness: one is happiness resulting from the lawful acquisition of money and its expenditure on meritorious deeds; the second is happiness due to absence of debt. In the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha explains to the merchant Anathapindika or feeder of orphans and the helpless, five good reasons to acquire money. Not only do Buddhist texts extol the virtues of the merchant Anathapindika, but his generosity in the purchase of Jetavana for gifting to the Sangha is prominently sculpted at the second century BCE site of Bharhut in central India, with an inscription identifying the scene, as also at other sites, such as Bodh Gaya, Sannathi, Amaravati, etc. Thus it is evident that endorsement for economic activities such as trade and generation of wealth was provided by several normative text such as the *Arthasastra* and the Buddhist Canon.

This was by no means limited to the early period, but continued well into the present. The Hindu temple was an important institution for cultural integration and several religious shrines were located in coastal areas. Monastic and temple-centred religious institutions formed an important intermediate group between the state and the family. Thus the temples and monasteries were not merely centres of devotion and worship, but were also principal institutions in the period from 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century for establishing laws and enforcing them on their members. This is a theme that will be discussed at length in the next Working Paper. Here we continue with a focus on institutions involved in providing support to economic activities, such as the guilds that developed in early medieval India.

## 6. Merchant Guilds

The inscriptions of the corporate body termed Ainurruvar start with a eulogy of the guild and list its members, as mentioned in the Introduction. The earliest eulogy is to be found in the mid-tenth century Kamudi record from Tamilnadu, whereas the Bedkihal inscription is the earliest from Karnataka dated to 1000 CE. These inscriptions eulogise the Ainurruvar as descendants of Vasudeva, Kandali and Mulabhadra who transacted business in eighteen pattanam, thirty-two *velapuram* and sixty-four *ghattikasthanas*. In addition to these common elements, the inscriptions refer to the charter that the Ainurruvar had in which their rights and duties were detailed, as also the dharma of merchants that they practiced.

A constant catchphrase is their close association with Aihole in Karnataka through its deity Parmesvari or Bhagavati. Their association with Aihole remains enigmatic, as the earliest records at the site, i.e. the Gaudaragudi and Lad Khan temple inscriptions refer to the term five hundred but in relation to brahmanas, termed *mahajanas* or *caturvedins*. Karashima suggests that the brahmanas may have taken the lead in initiating commercial networks, but their relationship to the Ainurruvar that comprised of a diverse range of groups remains unclear (Karashima 2009: 143). It is significant that in the case of the inscriptions from Kolhapur, the guilds contributed to Jain temples and Jain ritual worship of the Tirthankara.

The association of merchants and trade-guilds in administration occurs widely in many of the texts of the period as well and has been a feature of early administrative structures in India. Some of the merchant guilds such as the Ayyavole known as the Vira Bananjas in Karnataka had linkages with other regions. In their inscriptions, they refer to themselves as being resident in thirty-two coastal towns, eighteen *pattanas* or market towns, and sixty-four *ghatikā-sthānas* or establishments for learned men. They had their own banner with a hill symbol and usually met in different places on weekdays and made donations to temples from the cess on commodities sold in the market.

In the twelfth century merchants who proclaimed their south Indian origin financed the construction and endowment of a Hindu temple modeled on the Meenakshi temple of Madurai at Quanzhou, the premier China international port of that era. After the thirteenth century there are no further records of the guilds; by the fifteenth century numerous sources describing the Melaka emporium detail instead the critical role of two south India-based networked merchant communities: the Chulias (Tamil-speaking Muslims) and the Kelings/Klings (Chetti, Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada Hindu merchants). In the fifteenth century, the Italian traveller, Niccolo Da Conti described the Chulia traders as “... very rich, so much so that some will carry on their business in forty of their own ships, each of which is valued at 50,000 gold pieces.” Another group of traders settled in the Malay peninsula and in north Sumatra were from Gujarat who traded in several varieties of cotton cloth.

In the final analysis, the vibrant trade networks that extended across the Bay of Bengal had several partners. Nigamas as well as trade guilds from the Indian subcontinent were vital partners in these networks along with local trading systems of Southeast Asia. Evidence for this dynamic cultural interchange is evident in the archaeological record, as also in inscriptions both in South and Southeast Asia. In the next Working Paper, we will discuss the part played by religious shrines, especially those located in the coastal areas and their role both as institutions of learning and also as consumers of commodities.

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**WORKING PAPER: III**

# **SHARED RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE**

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# Shared Religious and Cultural Heritage

Himanshu Prabha Ray and Susan Mishra

## 1. Introduction

In this Working Paper, I address the theme of cultural integration through the institution of the religious shrine or Hindu temple, especially with reference to those located on or near the coasts both in India and in Southeast Asia. A discussion on the coastal shrine is critical for this paper to dispel the myth that due to restrictions stipulated in the Law Books or the *Dharmasastras* on maritime travel, the Hindu population turned to agrarian pursuits and production, away from trade and maritime transport.

It is significant that while the origin myths of most of the temples associate their founding with a royal patron, yet there is little historical evidence for this during most of their existence. An analysis of the data from inscriptions establishes that temples and monasteries were not merely centres of devotion and worship but were also principal institutions in the period from 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century for establishing laws and enforcing them on their members. Several inscriptions document complex arrangements for the use of temple resources, whether these were lands or else revenues from shops and markets. In the larger temples, we find mention of several classes of temple employees such as administrators, treasurers, accountants, temple women, cooks, sweepers, artisans, watchmen, etc. Resources for temple rituals, processions and for the large number of employees were generated through surplus agricultural production on temple lands and from donations in

cash and kind from trading groups. The inscriptions also provide a record of legal transactions conducted and in addition to the temple archives on income and expenditure form a valuable source of information on the legal jurisdiction of the temple. A good example of this is the study of the early seventeenth century archives of a temple in Kerala.

The formulation of the role of the religious shrine in the ancient period, as discussed in this paper is different from that which is generally accepted by historians of ancient India. Historians have tended to credit royalty with the establishment of Hindu temples at the instigation of brahmanas who provided legitimisation to their rule in return for generous gifts and land grants. Brahmanas are linked to the spread of Puranic religion and for the dissemination of Puranic ideas, practices and institutions like *vrata*, *puja*, *tirtha* and temple-centred *bhakti*. Three processes have been postulated for historical development in what is termed the early medieval period (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>): expansion of state society; assimilation and acculturation of tribal peoples; and integration of local religious cults and practices. The temple is seen as having played a major role in this integration of peripheral areas and tribal populations. This neat trajectory of religious expansion and integration is not reflected in the archaeological record, which highlights a complex mosaic of cultures from the first millennium BCE onwards that continued to retain their identity.

In Gujarat coastal temples were dedicated to a variety of deities, ranging from the non-Sanskritic fertility goddess *lajja-gauri* whose shrine dated to 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE was excavated from the site of Padri in the Talaja tahsil of Bhavnagar district of Gujarat hardly 2 km from the Gulf of Khambat to temples of Surya or Sun and other gods along the Saurashtra coast from the sixth century onwards. From the 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century, the primary route was along the coast from Dwarka on the Gulf of Kachchh to Somnath on the Saurashtra coast and Bhavnagar at the head of the Gulf of Khambat. The coastal centres of Somnath and Dwarka were well-known for their magnificent temples, though the beginnings of these sites date to the early centuries of the Common Era. We start with the nature of the early temple in western India and changes in its interactive circuits across the Ocean over time.

## 2. The Hindu Temple along the Coasts

The first issue that needs to be addressed is: do we know of coastal shrines and how early are they? Gujarat has a coastline of 1600 kms most of which lies in Saurashtra bounded by the Gulf of Kachch in the north and the Gulf of Khambat in the southeast. The region was settled at least from the third millennium BCE onward. A survey of published sources on the archaeology of Gujarat shows at least 683 Harappan sites, both early and late. These are largely located around the Gulf of Kachchh and in Jamnagar district, while Junagadh district is a blank, with the exception of the coastal site of Prabhas Patan, 4 kms south of Veraval at the mouth of the Hiran river. The earliest evidence of a coastal structural shrine comes from Padri in the Talaja tahsil of Bhavnagar district of Gujarat hardly 2 km from the Gulf of Khambat. The site has third millennium BCE beginnings, but was again occupied around the first century BCE. The 7.14 hectare site with a 3.2 m thick habitational deposit has provided data for three cultural periods. Period I is Early Harappan (3000-2600 BCE), Period II is Mature Harappan (2500-1900 BCE) and the third period is Early Historic (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to 1<sup>st</sup> century CE).

A distinctive feature of the Gujarat seaboard is the series of temples located along the coast, which

provide insights into the communities who inhabited the space between the ocean and the hinterland; their histories and attempt at constructing their cultural environment. How does archaeology help provide insights into the religious life of the communities? It is here that archaeological data on settlement sites helps identify the support base of religious sites. For example, while sites along the coastline of Saurashtra with temples, such as Kadvar, Mangrol and Porbandar served as intermediate ports and also subsisted on fishing, at Dwarka and Valabhi agriculture and bead manufacturing formed the backbone of economic activities, and at the sites of Roda, Akota and Broach agricultural activities were of prime importance. Another source of information is the finds of sculptures of deities often without any architectural associations, which need to be factored into any discussion of the early religious landscape in the subcontinent.

In secondary writings these coastal temples have been attributed to the Maitraka dynasty who ruled Gujarat from 475 to 776 CE with their capital at Valabhi situated at the head of the Gulf of Khambat. It is generally assumed that the patrons of the temples were the kings. But was that the case and if so, why did the kings build temples along the coast far away from their capital at Valabhi. Here we examine the issue through a discussion of the inscriptions of the Maitraka dynasty. More than one hundred and twenty copper-plate charters of the Maitraka dynasty written in Sanskrit are preserved in museums, especially in the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. Nearly half of these records list the town of Valabhi as the location of Maitraka rule and it was at this site in Bhavnagar district that most of the copper-plates were found. In the early charters of the sixth century, the place of issue is generally given as Valabhi, though from the seventh century onward, these seem to have been issued from victory camps by the kings. The epigraphs mention date of issue, but identifying the era used in the records has been a problem for historians. The charters comprise of two plates held together by rings, one of the rings bearing a Maitraka seal showing a bull and the legend *śrībhāṭakkaḥ*, the founder of the dynasty.

The purpose of issuing the charters was to record land donations to religious establishments. They start with a eulogy of the king and list officials involved in the writing of the charter and authorization of the grant. Of the nineteen kings described in the charters, sixteen are labelled as devotees of Shiva; though there are also references to rulers devoted to Vishnu, the Sun-god, the Buddha and occasionally to goddesses. A majority of the donations are to individual brahmanas and only a few mention Hindu temples. Jain institutions are completely missing, though Buddhist monasteries do find mention as recipient of grants.

The records however, celebrate Vedic learning and mention the Vedic Sakha affiliation of the brahmanas to whom land was donated. Fifty per cent of the brahmana recipients of the grants were Yajurvedins, almost 30 per cent were Sāmavedins, some 20 per cent Ṛgvedins, and only six of the recipients were Atharvavedins. Most of the brahman donees lived in and around Valabhi and the endowments had to be used for the practice of daily rituals.

Another early centre of religious architecture on the west coast is the site of Cotta Chandor in Chandor district in south Goa on the banks of the river Paroda leading to the sea, which was subjected to excavation for two field seasons in 2002-2004. The complete plan of a brick temple complex datable from third to eleventh century CE was unearthed and five phases of structural activity were identified. Though three phases of construction were identified, these were marked by continuity of religious beliefs and in the last phase the sculpture of Nandi was added to the temple complex. Politically, the Kanara coast was controlled by the Kadambas from CE 350 to 550 and several families are known who ruled from centres further inland, such as at Banavasi and Halsi. The Silaharas followed the Kadambas in Goa from 750 to 1020 CE, but the Kadambas re-emerged in the tenth century. The Panjim plates refer to king Guhallā Deva of the Goa Kadambas undertaking a pilgrimage to the temple of Somnath on the Saurashtra coast, but hardly had he reached halfway, when the mast of his ship broke and he was forced to take shelter with a ruler friendly to him. This was the port of Goa where

a rich Muslim merchant by the name of Madumod of Taji origin and the wealthiest of all the seafaring traders, came to the help of the king. In return the king gave him much wealth. This record tells us for the first time of Arab traders settled on the Goa coast in 11<sup>th</sup> century CE.

Another important coastal site is that of Mahabalipuram on the Tamil coast 60 kilometres south of the present city of Chennai. Mahabalipuram is located on the River Palar, which joins the sea at Sadras, about 50 kms to its north and is known for the almost four hundred caves and temples most of them built in the seventh and eighth century, which now form a part of the World Heritage site. The site comprises of rock-cut cave temples, nine monolithic shrines known locally as rathas, three structural temples referred to as Shore temples and several rock-cut images that dot the area along the coast. A fascinating representation on the rock face is that of the descent of the river Ganga on earth.

Human activity in the area started in the Iron Age and continued well into the present. There is also evidence for a lighthouse on the rocks behind the temples and caves. Archaeological work in and around Mahabalipuram has helped unearth the long prehistory of the site, starting from the second and first millennium BCE Iron Age Megalithic period. Burials, cairn circles, jars with burials were found on the western side of Mahabalipuram at the site of Punjeri about 1.5km away. The Tsunami of 2004 brought to light another temple in the area. Recently, remains of two temples were excavated, one to the south of Shore temple and another massive brick temple of Subrahmanya near the Tiger Cave at Saluvankuppam, near Mahabalipuram.

Seventh-century inscriptions refer to it as ‘Mamallapuram’ or close variants; ‘Mahabalipuram’ appears only after the 16th century, and (with Seven Pagodas) was used in literature written in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The site is also known for some important inscriptions. The early seventh century Mandagapattu inscription of the Pallava king Mahendravarman I reads that he ‘brought into existence a temple without utilizing either timber or lime (mortar) or brick or metal’, and

the temple was dedicated to ‘Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva’. One of the earliest inscriptions that refers to the ten incarnations of Vishnu including the Buddha was inscribed at the entrance to the sanctum of the Adi Varaha cave. In his *Avantisundari Katha*, the Sanskrit scholar Daṇḍin who is said to have lived in Tamil Nadu and was associated with the Pallava court praised artists for their repair of a Vishnu sculpture at Mahabalipuram. However, Daṇḍin’s authorship of this text is disputed.

These references can be added to and are important not only as indicators for the presence of religious shrines in coastal areas of India and donations of land to the temples, but more importantly of travel and pilgrimage by the coastal route that provided inter-connectedness to the shrines. These records also underscore the vibrant coastal network in the ancient period. Another aspect that appears constantly in the copper-plate grants is the incorporation of merchant guilds in administration of the shrine and the city by the king.

### 3. The King, the Merchant and the Temple

“The king must protect the conventions of heretics, corporate bodies, guilds, councils, troops, groups and the like in towns and in the countryside. Whatever their laws, duties, rules for worship or mode of livelihood, he must permit them” (*Nārada Smṛti* 10.2-3).

The *Nārada Smṛti* places the onus of protecting customary rights of corporate bodies on the king, the one institutional figure that was likely to be the cause of their erosion and thus attempts to minimize the possibility of confrontation between the two. The legal system on the ground in the early medieval period was graded into several levels of law from the rules of the *Dharmasastras* to the regional and community-based conventions to localized standards. Several medieval texts on judicial procedure contain discussion on the conventions and legislation by corporate bodies and how these should be handled by the ruler. Writers of the *Dharmasastras*, such as Katyayana, Brhaspati and Manu state that the king was obliged to sanction and enforce those regional

conventions that had the consensus of local leaders. This means that local consensus was the real source of *dharma*, as it applied to corporate bodies.

Relevant to this paper is the copper-plate charter of Visnusena in Sanskrit, issued from Lohata in the Kathiawar region. D. C. Sircar, the editor of the inscription has identified Lohata with the town of Rohar on the Gulf of Kachchh. The find-spot of the copper-plates is unknown, but on palaeographic grounds it is dated to 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century CE. The inscription states that the king Visnusena was approached by the community of merchants from Lohata to endorse customary laws prevalent in the community and which had been continuing for several generations. The king assures protection to the community of merchants established in the region and endorses their continued functioning. The inscription then provides a detailed list of seventy-two trade regulations or customary laws to be followed by the merchant community.

Some of the regulations include the following: that merchants staying away for a year were not required to pay an entrance fee on their return. Other clauses specify duties that were to be paid. A boat full of containers was charged twelve silver coins, but if the containers were for religious purposes, they were charged only one and a quarter silver coin. In the case of a boat carrying paddy it was half this amount. The exception to this was a boat carrying buffaloes and camels, where no reduction is allowed. Other items, which were frequently transported by boat included dried ginger sticks, bamboo, wine, leather, and bulls. The variety of taxable objects mentioned in the inscription is an indication of the diverse nature of trade in the region. These included oil mills, sugarcane fields, wine, cumin seed, black mustard and coriander. The inscription also refers to a tax on dyers of cloth, weavers, shoemakers and retailers hawking goods on foot. Others such as blacksmiths, carpenters, barbers, potters, etc. could be recruited for forced labour under the supervision of officers. Thus the record makes a distinction between commodities meant for religious purposes and the temple, as opposed to those to be sold in the market and underscores a differential in taxation.



This leads to the question of the role of merchants as local administrators and especially their involvement in temple administration. Important evidence for this comes from copper-plate inscriptions, such as the first set of three copper plates from Anjaneri, near Nasik 168 kms inland from Mumbai on the west coast, which confirms this position of merchants and entrusts the *nagara* with the administration of the temple estate, including disposal and investment of the revenues. The record refers to Bhogashakti granting eight villages for providing materials for worship of the god Narayana, for repairs to the temple and for the maintenance of a *sattr* or procession in the town of Jayapura. The merchants are asked to select five or ten of their number to supervise the great annual festival of the god, which would be attended by many pilgrims from afar and last a whole fortnight in the month of Margasirsa (December). The merchants were in turn exempted from payment of octroi duties and the obligation to pay for the boarding of royal officers. A postscript to the plates records endowments by Tejavarmaraja who donated pasture land in a village to the south of Jayapura. He also deposited a hundred rūpakas with the guild of merchants. The interest on this amount was to be used for providing bdellium or *guggulu* for worship of the deity.

Also relevant for this discussion is the Anavada inscription of 1291 CE found near Patan, an ancient city in north Gujarat said to have been founded in 745 CE. The inscription records gifts to a temple dedicated to Krishna by *vanjārās* or itinerant merchants, *nau-vittakas* (knowledgeable about ships) and *mahajanas*, which according to the inscription included *sādhu* or *sāhukāra*, *śresthi*, *soni* (goldsmith), *thakkura* or *thākura* and *kamsara* or brazier. These sub-categories of trading groups no doubt also reflected their economic status and growing clout. These and other records confirm the role of merchants and trading groups not only as patrons of temples, but also involved as administrators both of religious shrines, as also towns and cities.

This is further confirmed by 9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century inscriptions of three families of the Silahara dynasty, one of whom ruled north Konkan comprising of

about 1400 villages with their capital at Sthanaka or present Thana on the west coast. The second family ruled over south Konkan and had 900 villages under its dominion. This family rose to power in the modern state of Goa and had their seat at Chandrapura or the present Chandor. A third family ruled in the interior over the present districts of Kolhapur, Satara, Sangli and Belgaum. Most of the inscriptions of this branch have been found at Kolhapur, which perhaps represented their capital.

The form of government was monarchical and the Silaharas assumed long titles indicative of their lineage, power, learning, liberality, wisdom and so on. Most of their inscriptions are in Sanskrit and they called themselves *pāścima-samudrādhipati* or 'lords of the western sea-board' and Konkana Cakravarti or masters of Konkan. In theory the king had absolute power, though in practice there were several checks and balances in place. The administrative structure included the counsellor or *mantrin* and the minister or *mahāmātya* who are mentioned in several records along with the heads of different administrative units, such as *rāṣṭrapati*, *viṣayapati* and *grāmapati* or village headman. Committees comprising of merchants, artisans and trade-guilds and referred to as *mahājanas* are mentioned with regard to the administration of towns and villages. Local religious institutions were also represented in these committees and are termed *pañcamāṭha-mahāsthāna* or the five religious groupings of Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Buddha and Jina.

This association of merchants and trade-guilds in administration occurs widely in many of the texts of the period as well and has been a feature of early administrative structures in India. Some of the merchant guilds such as the Ayyavole known as the Vira Bananjas in Karnataka had linkages with other regions. In their inscriptions, they refer to themselves as being resident in thirty-two coastal towns, eighteen *pattanas* or market towns, and sixty-four *ghaṭikā-sthānas* or establishments for learned men. They had their own banner with a hill symbol and usually met in different places on weekdays and made donations to temples from the cess on commodities sold in the market.



Several inscriptions from early medieval India document complex arrangements for the use of temple resources, whether these were lands or else revenues from shops and markets. In the larger temples, we find mention of several classes of temple employees such as administrators, treasurers, accountants, temple women, cooks, sweepers, artisans, watchmen, etc. Resources for temple rituals and for the large number of employees were generated through surplus agricultural production on temple lands and from donations in cash and kind from trading groups. The inscriptions also provide a record of legal transactions conducted and in addition to the temple archives on income and expenditure form a valuable source of information on the legal jurisdiction of the temple.

Further south on the Malabar coast, many settlements as also temples appear from the ninth century onwards, such as the coastal centre of Kollam or Quilon facing the Arabian Sea. The ninth century copper plate inscriptions of Sthanu Ravi found near Quilon record a contract between the local authority and a group of resident Christians from the Persian Gulf allowing them access, free of certain taxes, to the fort which protected the port market and was maintained by the merchant groups *Anjuvannam* and *Manigrammam*. The Quilon copper plates are significant in connection with trading rights granted to the Christian church and twenty-five persons from West Asia are signatories as witnesses. The market was located within the precincts of the fortified settlement, while the church was situated outside the fortification wall. Through these grants the *Anjuvannam* and the *Manigrammam* guilds became the rightful occupants of the coastal centre or *nagaram* and were responsible for collection and remission of customs duty and for fixing the sale prices of merchandise transacted in the coastal town of Kollam. They were also granted the customary seventy-two rights by the rulers.

The early eleventh century Kochi plates of Bhaskara Ravivarman record the grant of the title *Anjuvannam* and privileges in trade to Joseph Rabban, a Jew in Muyirikkodu or Mujiri, now identified with Pattanam. The third set of inscriptions, the thirteenth

century Kottayam plates of Vira-Raghava records the grant of the title *Manigrammam* and privileges to Ravikkoran, a merchant in Kodangalur.

Different views have been expressed about the identity of *Anjuvannam* found only in coastal towns both on the Malabar and Tamil coasts. After a careful analysis of the inscriptions, Subbarayalu equates them with the Hanjamana found on the Konkan coast in Marathi-Sanskrit and Kannada inscriptions. It denoted a trading body composed of West Asian sea-going merchants traversing the Ocean as far east as Java and occurs in inscriptions from the ninth century onwards. By the eleventh century it largely comprised of Muslim traders and became a permanent part of the local community in coastal villages. Its presence as a trade guild continues until the thirteenth century after which there no further references to it.

This brief survey of copper-plate grants shows the presence of a population with multiple religious affiliations and included in addition to Hindus, Buddhists and Jains. The shrine was an important locale in the cultural landscape; it not only brought diverse groups together, but more importantly placed merchant groups in a special position as administrators as also as adjudicators of customary law and traditional practices. At this stage it is necessary to bring in the evidence of the early Hindu temple in Southeast Asia and at sites defining the sailing world.

## 4. Coastal Temples and the Sailing World

It is important that these sites be viewed not as a monument or a group of monuments, but located within their wider context, which also included other sites in their vicinity. For instance, My Son and the port of Hoi An – both World Heritage sites in Vietnam; the numerous rock cut structures found at Mahabalipuram on the Tamil coast and slightly further inland; and the archaeological and structural remains of the pre-Portuguese period in Goa. Archaeology shows that many of these coastal sites existed as important landing places prior to the construction of grand religious edifices,

which may have stemmed from a need by the sailing world to provide anchorage – both physical and cultural on sailing routes. We start this paper with Mahabalipuram, 55 kms south off Chennai on the east coast of India and then move on to the Sun Temple at Konarak; Elephanta island and the churches at Goa, before discussing My Son temple and the port of Hoi An in Vietnam and the churches in the Philippines.

The temples at Mahabalipuram and Konarak were often referred to as pagodas by European travellers. While Mahabalipuram was known as Seven Pagodas by seamen, the Sun temple at Konarak was termed as the Black Pagoda. Interestingly another temple site, not inscribed in World Heritage list, yet referred to in sailors' accounts is the White Pagoda or the temple of Jagannatha in Puri, Odisha and the Chinese pagoda at Nagapattinam on the Tamil coast.

Recent underwater archaeological explorations have brought to light remains that may have belonged to other shrines at the site. The underwater structures, especially the long walls having 2 to 3 courses, scattered dressed stone blocks of various sizes and stones having projections are considered to be man-made in nature. What is important is the continued habitation at the site and its links with other centres along the east coast of India, as also across the seas. The thirteenth century Sun Temple at Konarak in Odisha was known as the Black Pagoda to European sailors and served as a navigational point for sailors in the Bay of Bengal. The site seemed to have been an important port from early times. The name Konarak is in most likelihood derived from the name of the presiding deity Konarak, which means the Arka (sun) of Kona (corner). Recent archaeological excavations at Kuruma brought to light a ruined Buddhist monastery, 8 kms north-east of Konarak and at Khalkatapatna, an ancient sea-port, 11 km south-east of Konarak on the left bank of the river Kushabhadra substantially attested the maritime importance of Konarak.

In 1983–84, soil was brought from Khalkatapatna for construction of the Marine Drive road between Konarak and Puri. While digging for soil, archaeological remains were noticed. The excavation

brought to light a brick jelly floor which could have served as a loading and unloading platform. Other findings included Chinese ware, Celadon ware, egg-white glazed and glazed chocolate wares of Arabian origin and local wheel-turned dark grey pottery. No structural remains were found during excavation. Oven and hearth were noticed, including numerous ring wells connected with houses. Khalkatapatna port extended from Tikina, Ashram and Garudeshwar and beyond. According to the local people, Tikina was a boatbuilding centre. The findings suggest that maritime trade contacts of Khalkatapatna existed with the Persian Gulf countries, China and other Southeast Asian countries. This could be corroborated with the findings of stamped ware sherds of Kottapatnam and Motupalli on the Andhra coast and comparable with Kota China of North Sumatra and Bagan of Burma, which are datable from 12th to 13th century CE.

The rock-cut caves on the island presently known as Elephanta on the west coast are located about 10 kilometers off Mumbai, the financial capital of India and have been dated to between the fifth and eighth centuries. Landing quays sit near three small hamlets known as Set Bunder in the north-west, Mora Bunder in the northeast, and Gharapuri or Raj Bunder in the south. The island has a long history and continued in the possession of the political dynasties who ruled the mainland. There are seven cave excavations on the island and the primary cave, numbered as Cave 1, is about 1.5 km (0.93 mi) up a hillside, facing the ocean. The temple complex is dedicated primarily to Shiva and depicts him in various forms and also shows mythological events associated with him. The gigantic images of the deity show him in a variety of forms, both benign and meditative. The eastern part of the island has Buddhist monuments in the form of a few caves, of which two are complete and one contains a stupa. The current name of the site is attributed to the Portuguese who named it Elephanta after a colossal stone statue of an elephant found near the landing place.

Archaeological excavations at Rajbandar brought to light brick ruins of ancient port town extending to the hill on which Cave 2 is located. The ancient jetty

was known as Rajghat. Also noticed were a Buddhist brick built ruined building, silver Kshatrapa and Roman coins (1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century CE), small copper Karshapanas (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE/CE) and a 15 meter long brick jetty cum wharf. The height of the wall was raised over a period of 700 years. Also recovered from the site were Roman Amphorae, Red Polished ware and a structure dating to 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to 7<sup>th</sup> century CE.

Two lead coins with three peaked hill on the obverse and a wheel on the reverse were recovered from Morandar. One of the coin had the character 'ye' in Brahmi. At Rajbandar were found carnelian bead, rolled and unrolled pottery few Chinese ware and a brick wharf of the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE. Large bricks were found lying scattered around the Shetbandar village, along with RPW, and below a wall miniature bowls, spouts and jars were recovered. The brick size at Shetbandar suggests habitation in Gupta period. Coins belonging to the Kalachuris of 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> century CE are found in abundance. Thus, the island provides evidence for settlement contemporary to the rock-cut sculpture, which was an important landmark on that part of the coast and was probably, linked to the archaeological site at Chandor further south on the coast near Goa and already discussed above. Though a nationally protected site, Chandor has not so far been inscribed and this credit goes to the somewhat later Portuguese architecture. In the next section of this paper, I discuss one of the prominent coastal sites of Southeast Asia.

## 5. My Son Sanctuary, Vietnam

The site of My son in Vietnam is located in a valley surrounded by mountains. The Thu Bon river connects the upland and the lowland with an estuary in Hoi An. Under the kingdom of Champa (9-10th century), the city possessed the largest harbour in Southeast Asia. My Son's wonderful natural environment was the reason Cham rulers chose the My Son Valley for their sanctuary. The monumental area of My Son Sanctuary lies 300 meters above sea level and is surrounded by a row of high hills and is accessible only through a narrow gorge. Cham kings believed My Son was the residence of the god Shiva whose presence helped protect the empire.

My Son Sanctuary monuments are set in a beautiful verdant valley shadowed by Cat's Tooth Mountain (Hon Quap).

Originally, the My Son Sanctuary had only a wooden temple, which burned down in the sixth century. In the early seventh century, King Sambhuvarman (Reign from 577 to 629) built the first temple in brick that still exists. Then, other dynasties continued to restore it by building more temples in brick to worship the Gods of Hinduism, but especially Shiva. This area was discovered in 1885 by a group of French soldiers. Ten years later (1895), archaeologist Camille Paris made the first exploration. Since then until 1904, many researchers and archaeologists have visited here to reveal the secrets, including Louis Finot, Henri Parmentier and others.

My Son, popularly known in ancient times as "Srisana Bhadresvara" was the royal sanctuary, while Hoi An, an ancient town sometimes called the "Port of Great Champa" was the centre of maritime trade. Sinhapura Tra Kieu was known as the "City of Lion" or the "Lion Citadel" and was the centre of royal power.

While excavating and restoring the tower Groups of K and H at the My Son Sanctuary (Duy Phu commune, Duy Xuyen district, Quang Nam province), the group of Indian archaeological experts and their Vietnamese partners have unexpectedly discovered an ancient road and walls underground. Besides, these experts have found several valuable objects at the foot of the ancient towers such as two stone lion-man statues and terracotta items dating back to the 11th-12th centuries. The road is 8 metres in width and between two parallel walls built with terra-cotta bricks. Initially, the ancient road is believed to lead to the ceremony sphere at the

The site has 70 tower temples dating from the fourth to thirteenth century CE with different architectural patterns. The temple towers are constructed in groups and each group is surrounded by a thick all of bricks. These have been classified using letters- A,B,C D E based on the classification carried out by Henri Parmentier (1904: 805-96). The A group has 13 temples of which the main temple of

the site is A 1 dated to the tenth century CE dedicated to Shiva. It is 24 meters high and is the tallest one of the site. Temple A 10 was built before 875 CE but is currently in a severely damaged condition.

This brief overview of some of the coastal religious architecture in the ASEAN – India region shows a close relationship between landing places, ports and religious architecture. In secondary writings, researchers have tended to privilege commercial interactions rather than ritual connections in trans-oceanic contacts, though rigorous documentation and analysis of find-spots and spaces within which coins and commodities have been found conforms closely to ritual. Similarly, the functioning of the medieval merchant guilds from peninsular India show their close association with temples. For example, the inscriptions of the corporate body termed *Ainurruvar* indicate that they transacted business in eighteen *pattanam* or market towns, often coastal, thirty-two *velapuram* or harbour areas of ports and sixty-four *ghatikasthanas* or centres of learning generally associated with temples (Karashima, 2009: 143). This is further supported by the Barus inscription from north-west Sumatra. The inclusion of centres of learning as spaces for conducting activities of the merchant guilds underscores the role of religious shrines in social and cultural integration rather than merely being places of worship.

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**WORKING PAPER: IV**

# **OF SCRIPT AND LANGUAGES: DECIPHERING THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE LITERATE WORLD**

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# Of Script and Languages: Deciphering the Transactions of the Literate World

Himanshu Prabha Ray and Susan Mishra

## 1. Introduction

The deep involvement of temples and other religious institutions with a range of activities including economic transactions was discussed in Working Paper III. There are references in inscriptions to the presence of *pathsala* or school attached to temples, as also medical centres and arrangements for distribution of medicinal herbs. Inscriptions from the Buddhist site of Kanheri near Mumbai and a temple in Gujarat suggest that this practice had its beginnings around the middle of the first millennium CE. A sixth century inscription from Buddhist caves at Kanheri near Mumbai refers to a donation by *vaidya* or physician. Three copper plates from central Gujarat dated in the reign of the Huna Toramana (5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE) record gifts made to the temple of Jayaswami or Narayana belonging to the queen mother by the trading community of Vādrapalli on the west coast of India. The copper plate states that itinerant mendicants visiting the temple, as also devotees should be provided with medicines. These are aspects which need to be brought into the discussion.

Texts dated to the beginnings of the Common Era, such as the *Apadāna* are replete with descriptions of stupa construction and relic worship conceived within a cosmic soteriological framework. There are references to individuals or groups of individuals

organizing festivals at a time when construction or expansion or renovation of a stupa was proposed and similarly at the time when it was completed. It is accepted that texts relating to the Buddha's biography were recited on these occasions as well as performed. Thus, the setting up of a stupa was an occasion when the king, the lay devotee, the stone-carver and the monks and nuns came together in celebration of the life of the Buddha. In this paper, these traditions of learning are explored through three sets of World Heritage sites. These include the Nalanda monastic complex in India; Borobudur and Srivijaya in Indonesia; and Ayutthaya and Wat Si Chum in Sukhothai, Thailand. We start the discussion with the expansion of Buddhism across Asia and the special interest that it developed in writing and manuscript cultures.

## 2. Buddhism across the Seas

The Buddha is said to have preached in Magadhi, the language of Magadha in eastern India. The school that we know today, which performs its rites and liturgies in a language which has come to be called Pali, was codified primarily by Buddhaghosa, a Buddhist scholar and commentator, in 5<sup>th</sup> century Sri Lanka at the Mahavihara. This ordination lineage is the most widespread at present, while the Sarvastivadin and Dharmaguptaka Vinaya lineages

are active in Tibet and East Asia respectively. We know very little about most of the others, though there are indications that several *nikāyas* or monastic lineages were present at the Buddhist complex of Nalanda. In Tibet and China, for example, the language used and the means through which the texts were authenticated were very different from those in large parts of India. The emphasis on understanding the linguistic diversity of the different *nikāyas* in history is critical to an appreciation of the role of scholars, learned monks and local communities in the development of visual traditions within the different parts of the ASEAN – India region.

“Ancient Buddhist texts functioned both as sources of knowledge and as objects of veneration. Wherever Buddhism spread, written works served to transmit and reinforce the religion’s doctrines, rituals, and institutions in new locations. The importance of written texts to Buddhist culture can hardly be exaggerated. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the oral transmission of Buddhist texts continued on for many centuries even after monks began putting sutras into writing”.

Another important element in the spread of Buddhism is the language used to preserve the Buddha’s teachings. In Suvarnabhumi or Southeast Asia, the classical Pali tradition was cherished and preserved by copying, reciting, studying and writing in Pali even after literatures in local languages had developed. In the 1920s, digging at Khin Ba mound in central Myanmar led to the recovery of a relic chamber sealed by a stone slab. The relic chamber contained several sacred finds, the most extraordinary being a book of twenty gold leaves bound by a gold thread. A perfect replica of a palm-leaf manuscript, the “golden book” contains a series of Pali texts and is one of the earliest examples of inscriptions on gold leaves. Both at Sukhothai in Thailand and at Pagan in Myanmar, Pali continued to be used for citations from texts and also for compositions, though it was written in the Khom script at the former site. In contrast, Cambodia and Laos have few Pali inscriptions. Thus, it is evident that the choice of language to be used was deliberate and taken after much reflection.

How does this discussion on the use of language for the teachings of the Buddha to be compared with the physical manifestations of Buddha dhamma? Recent archaeological research in Myanmar supports the presence of a complex cultural landscape known as the Pyu ancient cities, which provide the earliest testimony of the introduction of Buddhism into Southeast Asia. The best known of the Pyu sites are those of Beikthano, Halin and Sriksetra dated from 200 BCE to 900 CE. The Pyu ancient cities provide the earliest testimony of the introduction of Buddhism into Southeast Asia. The monastery and stupa at Beikthano show several similarities with those from the site of Nagarjunakonda in the Krishna valley in coastal Andhra.

In contrast, Thailand has had a head-start with World Heritage sites such as the historic city of Ayutthaya and that of Sukhothai inscribed in 1991. In a paper published in 1995, Thongchai Winichakul argues that as elsewhere, the study of the past was closely related to the nation and that there was little change in it from the nineteenth century until 1970s. He lauds Srisakra Vallibhotama’s efforts at providing depth to the Thai past by focusing attention on prehistory and the early beginnings of the state, long before the thirteenth century Sukhothai kingdom that had been seen as the precursor to the present Thai state in the national narratives. Vallibhotama highlighted the contribution of settlements, urban centres and regions to an understanding of the pluralistic and diversified Thai past and this was developed further by Dhida Saraya in her work on Dvaravati, the early history of Siam. More recently an edited volume published by the Siam Society highlights contributions in art and archaeology.

Archaeological research during the last few decades has deepened the past of Thailand and challenged the notion of a unified superimposed Dvaravati kingdom. During the Iron Age, dating between 2000 and 200 BCE large settlements based on rice agriculture, bronze and iron production with extensive inland and trans-oceanic exchange and trade networks are known from central and northeast Thailand. Many of the sites provide evidence of burials with an impressive array of grave goods

followed by large settlements, which have in the past been termed as urban centres leading to the emergence of the state. Especially relevant for this paper is the site of Ban Don Ta Phet in central Thailand that commands the eastern approaches to the Three Pagodas Pass, a route that linked the Chao Phraya plains with the Gulf of Martaban and the Indian subcontinent. Radiocarbon dates suggest a fourth century BCE date for the beginning of the site. It is significant that several aspects of the material culture present similarity across the Irrawaddy, Chao Phraya and Mekong river valleys.

Details available from recent archaeological excavations thus support continuity of settlement in the river valleys from the Copper-Bronze age to the Iron Age and the expansion of wet-rice agriculture from the middle of the first millennium CE onwards. There is evidence for inter and intra-regional trade and exchange, as also long-distance networks through the Gulf of Siam. Thai scholars have suggested that the Thai term ‘*muang*’ literally ‘coming together of communities’ best describes these economically, socially and politically self-contained units. It is largely these communities that accepted and adapted Buddhism.

Prapod Assavirulhakarn has convincingly shown that Pali Buddhism was present in the western part of mainland Southeast Asia from around the fifth or sixth centuries CE onwards and did not come only later in the twelfth century after the reforms in Sri Lanka that unified the Theravada Saṅghas there, as previously thought. Old Mon inscriptions in a variant of the Brahmi script record donations by people from different groups to Buddhist monastic centres and include commoners, dancers, ascetics, *brāhmaṇas*, kings and nobles. The donations involved such activities as casting of Buddha images, building *stūpas* and *vihāras*, repairing damaged images or freeing caged animals. A second category of epigraphs comprises of extracts from the Buddhist Canon and several religious formulae in Sanskrit and Pāli.

This diversity in language and script indicating complexity of Buddhist traditions adopted in the region is matched by a variety of religious affiliations

at archaeological sites. Khok Chang Din is a cluster of twenty historic sites at the foothills of Khao Dok, southwest of the moated settlement of U Thong, which have yielded bricks, stones, shards including Tang ceramics. The site was identified in the 1960s, but subsequent excavations by the Fine Arts Department unearthed a terracotta vessel filled with silver coins stamped with the conch symbol from site 18. At site 5, laterite bases of a rectangular structure were discovered, as also finds of stone Śiva *liṅgas* and *mukhalingas* now displayed in the U Thong National Museum (Skilling 2003: 87-95).

Thus, it is evident that both Buddhism and Hinduism coexisted in ancient Thailand. Secondary writings often divide Buddhism into two opposing camps, *viz.* Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. This classification is however erroneous, since “Hīnayāna” is a polemical term that even in Mahāyāna texts is used in specific contexts. Assavirulhakarn reminds us that monks affiliated to different “sects” sometimes lived in the same monasteries and lay support was given to members of different communities even by the same person. Even today, most Buddhists in Thailand do not think of themselves as “Theravāda” Buddhists but rather simply as supporters of the Buddha’s *sāsana* or religion, and include in their practice ideas from both “Hīnayāna” and “Mahāyāna” traditions, as well as many practices that are not derived from Buddhism at all, such as the worship of local spirits (2010: 71-112). This leads to the issue of identifying centres of learning and the circulation of knowledge in the ASEAN – India region.

### 3. Nalanda Mahavihara and Its Revival

The archaeological site of Nalanda Mahavihara (Nalanda University) located around 70 kilometres southwest of Patna, the provincial capital of Bihar, was inscribed on the World Heritage list in 2016. The nomination dossier dates the mahavihara, which covers an area of 23 hectares, from 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE to 13<sup>th</sup> century CE. The excavated remains date from the sixth century CE onward and excavations have exposed extensive remains of six major brick temples and eleven monasteries arranged on a

systematic layout and spread over an area of more than a square kilometre. Monastery 1 is the largest and it was here that several copper plates were found including the one by Devapala. The written records from Nalanda such as inscriptions, seals and copper plates are all royal records and we know very little about the members of the Buddhist Sangha at the site or the community of monks who studied there. It is also important to emphasize that the monastery was rebuilt nine times and there is no clarity on the changes that were introduced over time.

Even though Tibetan sources underscore only the Tantric aspect of Nalanda and other Buddhist sites such as the five great Mahaviharas in north India at Vikramasila, Nalanda, Somapura or Paharpur, Odantapura and Jagadala known for their Vajrayana preceptors, there is need to contextualize the site of Nalanda within a multi-religious context and to underscore the ‘creation’ of its ‘Buddhist’ identity in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Frederick Asher suggests new possibilities of examining the site of Nalanda beyond the currently defined limits of the *mahavihara*, which is restricted to the area excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India from 1915 to 1937 and again from 1974 to 1982.

Archaeological Survey of India’s record of Nalanda describes it as the birthplace of Sāriputta, a disciple of the Buddha. Several dynasties are linked to the site as patrons, many of them with emblems on seals showing Hindu deities such as Lakṣmī, Gaṇeśa, Śivalinga and Durga. It is said to have been destroyed by the Muslim general Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji in the twelfth century, though the Tibetan monk Dharmasvamin is known to have visited it in 1234 and found monks and pundits there. The king and queen of Bengal repaired many of the structures at the site in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. There was a change in Buddhist presence at the site soon thereafter, but Hinduism and Jainism continued to thrive. This account of the monastic complex shows the continued survival of Nalanda well into the fifteenth century.

The Pali *Dīgha* and *Samyutta Nikāyas* refer to Nalanda as one of the places where the Buddha halted, while the Jain *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* mentions that

Mahavira, a contemporary of the Buddha, spent a rainy season at Nalanda. The crest for Nalanda was a wheel flanked by two deer symbolizing the first sermon. A copper-plate grant of the Sumatran king Balaputradeva related to the Sailendra rulers of Java records the grant of land to the monastery. The inscription, dated to 860 CE and written in Devanagari and proto-Bengali script, states that a king of Suvarṇadvīpa (Sumatra) named Balaputradeva gave an endowment for Nalanda. The claims for Nalanda as a university arise from inscriptions, and textual accounts, but have so far found little support from archaeological data.

The World Heritage site is inextricably linked to the project of reviving the ancient university and the establishment of the international university close to the site. Though the project of reviving ancient Nalanda was conceptualized in the 1990s, it received widespread attention in 2006 when the then Indian president, APJ Abdul Kalam mooted the idea while speaking in the Bihar Legislative Assembly. The project received support both from the State Government and the Centre and in 2007 the Nalanda Mentor Group was constituted to guide the university chaired by the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and including among others Singapore’s ex-foreign minister, George Yeo, who is the current Chancellor of the university.

In January 2007 the Government of India shared the proposal with the sixteen Member States at the East Asia Summit in Philippines and again at the fourth Summit held in October 2009, at Hua Hin, Thailand. To reinforce the university’s international character, an inter-governmental Memorandum of Understanding came into force at the 8th East Asia Summit in October 2013. Till date 17 countries have signed the MoU, including China, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and Portugal – countries which had little interaction with ancient Nalanda. The international Advisory Board includes members such as the Thai princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, Indonesia’s former Foreign Minister Mr. Hassan Wirajuda and British economist Lord Meghnad Desai. In response to a question in the Lok Sabha, the Minister of State, Ministry of External Affairs



stated on April 23, 2015: “Nalanda University is a non-profit public-private partnership with significant contribution from the Government of India. Foreign governments and entities have made voluntary contributions. It is not obligatory for foreign students to pay the University in foreign exchange. The foreign exchange likely to be earned in future will depend on such contributions. An amount of Rs. 2727.10 crore has been approved by the Government for the establishment of Nalanda University, of which Rs. 47.28 crore has been released till date.”

An important aspect of discussion relevant here relates to the presence of Buddhist monks from Southeast Asia and China at Nalanda. For example, in the seventh century Xuanzang is known to have studied the Yogacara doctrine at the monastic complex. Most of what is known about monastic life at Nalanda is preserved in the travelogues of Chinese monks who undertook pilgrimages to India. Later Chinese accounts note that the Chinese Emperor Wu Di of the Liang dynasty organized a delegation to Nalanda in 539 to collect Buddhist texts. After the return of the expedition, Nalanda’s fame in China grew sufficiently to inspire several more Chinese monastics to make the long and hazardous journey to India (Shoshin, 2012: 61-88). In addition there are examples of Buddhist monks from India also travelling to different regions of Asia.

#### 4. Learned Monks and Itinerant Scholars

The Buddhist monk Vajrabodhi spent three years in Srivijaya identified with sites on Sumatra, between 717-720 CE enroute to China. He was followed by two of his disciples, the Sri Lankan monk Amoghavajra (704 – 774 CE) and Subhakarasiṃha (637 – 735 CE) who played important roles in the transmission of Buddhism to Southeast Asia and China. Vajrabodhi’s father was a Brahmin and an acarya in Kanci and he had studied the sutras, abhidharma and so on in Nalanda monastery. He thereafter went to South India at the invitation of Pallava king Narasiṃhavarman and visited a temple of Avalokiteśvara on the coast. Vajrabodhi then sought the King’s permission to pay homage

to Buddha’s tooth in Sri Lanka and to travel to the kingdom of Srivijaya and China. Vajrabodhi revised two important texts, the *Mahāvairocana sūtra* and the *Vajrasekhara*. Amoghavajra translated several Javanese texts into Chinese and also attracted several disciples, one of whom Huiguo (746 – 805) continued his teachings and one of his disciples founded the Shingon or ‘True Word’sect in Japan.

Providing a link between the Western Himalayas, Andhra and Indonesia was the renowned *dharmma* teacher Atisa (982 – 1054). Atisa was born in the village of Vajrayogini of Vikrampur region identified with Dhaka in present Bangladesh. At a young age he was ordained as a Buddhist monk and studied with several famous teachers, such as with the master Dharmakīrti of Suvarṇadvīpa, identified with Sumatra from 1012 to 1024. He travelled to the Indonesian archipelago on board a merchant ship along with his students. On completion of his studies, he returned to Vikramshila. In 1042 he arrived in Tibet at the invitation of the king of Tibet and is considered the father of Tibetan Buddhism. This example illustrates the mobility of scholars as they traversed large parts of South and Southeast Asia in search of knowledge, as also the close connection that were forged between religious institutions and learning. This brings me to the monument par excellence dedicated to Buddhism, i.e. the stupa at Borobudur, which was referred to in Working Paper I for the representation of sailing ships.

#### 5. Borobudur in Central Java

Julia Gifford has argued that the visual programme of Borobudur was designed to be contemplated in the context of ritual, devotional and possibly meditative practice and not merely as visual illustration of contemporary texts (Gifford, 2011: 3). Borobudur was a centre for pilgrimage in the past, as it is at present and is best described in Buddhist terms as an architectural mandala that incorporates a hierarchically organized version of the bodhisattva path. It is significant that the temple has no inner space where devotees could worship.

It is suggested that leading monks promoted specific texts, which were then adapted to suit ritual

practices that required appropriate architecture (Chemburkar 2017, 205). One such was the Yoga Tantra text the *Sarvatathagatatattvasangraha* of the eighth century, which formed the basis to represent the monument as a mandala at Borobudur and at Tabo in the western Himalayas, even though architecturally the two monuments of Borobudur and Tabo are different. This recourse to texts to explain architectural development needs re-examination in view of the rich sculptural representations at Borobudur, but more importantly in the context of the interconnectedness of the site with that in the western Himalayas, further underscoring travels by teachers such as Atisa.

The 1460 reliefs on Borobudur are often seen as representing texts with a view to impressing Buddhist wisdom on the believer's mind, as formulated by N. J. Krom in 1926. This perspective reduces narrative reliefs to a corollary of the written text and is one that Julie Gifford argues against. She proposes that while some relief panels in the first and second galleries may be compared with Buddhist texts, their fundamental function was to articulate a ritual space for the worship of the Buddha. Narrative art by its definition must represent more than one event from a story, which is then organized both spatially and in a chronological sequence. An example of narrative art is often seen in the 120 relief panels in the first gallery that depict life scenes of the Buddha as narrated in the first century CE Sanskrit text, the *Lalitavistara*. One of the popular scenes is that of the Great Departure of prince Siddhartha from the palace shown in ten relief panels. However, it should be emphasized that rather than linear narration, the relief panels underscore the temporal nature of existence. The relief panels from the *Gaṇḍavyūha* in the third and fourth galleries picture visually descriptive passages of the text and present panoramic rather than narrative art. Gifford suggests that these were meant to encourage the devotee to imagine the panorama of a purified field emanated by the Buddha and were designed "to create a ritual space in which one could at least symbolically achieve some of the benefits of visualization meditation".

Clearly the monument at Borobudur was a part of the complex rituals associated with Vajrayana Buddhism that extended in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries across the Bay of Bengal. But, as shown by the next example, there were several diverse philosophical strands in Buddhism around this time.

## 6. The Kingdom of Sriwijaya

Indonesia has four natural and four cultural sites inscribed on the World Heritage list and nineteen sites on the Tentative List. Both the sites so far inscribed on the island of Sumatra are natural sites, while all four cultural sites are located on the island of Java. The Muara Jambi Temple Compound Site on the Batanghari river in Sumatra has been on the Tentative List since 2009 and comprises of at least 82 ruins of ancient buildings made of brick construction dated from 7<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century CE.

Inscriptions dated to the seventh and eighth century in Old Malay with extensive vocabulary in Sanskrit found in the region of Palembang in south-eastern Sumatra have provided the bulk of evidence for a study of the kingdom of Sriwijaya. Data from these inscriptions is said to be corroborated by other sources such as Chinese, Arab and Indian. Recent research on these inscriptions and other sources has defined Sriwijaya as a maritime kingdom with central and district level administration. Rather than focus on the inscriptions and the structure of the kingdom, it is important for this paper to trace the archaeological beginnings of settlement in the area; relationship with inland Megalithic groups; the inter-island networks of the southeast coast of Sumatra; and finally the wider linkages of the Sriwijayan kingdom with South Asia. But perhaps the first question to reflect on is the significance of Sriwijaya to contemporary Indonesian society. In a thought-provoking paper, Truman Simanjuntak invokes the past of the present Republic of Indonesia to instil a sense of pride, on account of Sriwijaya's extensive maritime contacts and its control of routes through the Melaka and Sunda Straits and second as an ancient centre of learning on par with Nalanda in eastern India, as discussed in the next section. He bemoans the fact that while the name has been used



to instil a sense of regional pride, there has been little attempt to research its cultural legacy and inculcate the deeper cultural values of pluralism, education and tolerance.

Close links between kings of Sriwijaya and Buddhist and Hindu temples on the Tamil coast, especially the shrines at Nagapattinam are evident in the inscriptional record. The cultural context of Nagapattinam locates it within a multi-religious sacred geography, which preceded and succeeded the establishment of the Buddhist vihara at the site in 1005. The Kayarohanaswami temple in Nagapattinam is dedicated to Shiva and is said to have sixth century origins, though the present structure is dated to the eleventh century. Several 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century inscriptions engraved on the temple walls provide valuable information. In addition to the setting up of the vihara, the king of Srivijaya gave a set of ornaments and jewels to the silver image of Nakaiyalakar (the handsome lord of Nagapattinam) according to an inscription carved on the wall of the Shiva temple thereby corroborating a plural sacred landscape at Nagapattinam. A second record refers to donations of several types of lamps by the agent of the king of Srivijaya, while a third mentions donation of gold coins from China for worship of an image of Ardhanarisvara installed on the premises of the temple by the king of Kidar identified with modern Kedah. Several seventh century Tamil saints, such as Saint Thirunavukkarasar (Appar) are known to have compiled devotional couplets in praise of Nagapattinam and its shrines. Tamil tradition also refers to the semi-legendary saint Shahul Hamid of Nagore, whose sixteenth century shrine is situated a few kilometres to the north of Nagapattinam.

The two sets of Leyden copper plates, the Larger Leyden Plate and Smaller Leyden Plates in Sanskrit and Tamil refer to the establishment of the Cudamanivihara at Nagapattinam at the initiative of the kings of Srivijaya. Construction started during the reign of the Chola king Rajaraja I (985-1016) and was completed under his son and successor Rajendra I (1012-1044). The Smaller Leyden Plates in Tamil refer to nine units of land attached to the Nagapattinam vihara. The larger plates contain a Sanskrit portion, consisting of 111 lines and a

Tamil portion, consisting of 332. The Sanskrit text states that in the twenty-first regnal year, the king gave the village of Annaimangalam to the lofty shrine of Buddha in the Chulamanivarma Vihara, which the ruler of Srivijaya and Kataha, Mara Vijayottungavarman of Sailendra family with the *makara* crest had erected in the name of his father in the delightful city of Nagappattana. After Rajaraja had passed away, his son Madhurantaka caused a permanent edict to be made for the village granted by his father. It is mentioned that the height of the vihara towered above Kanaka Giri or Mount Meru. Nagapattinam finds mention in the 1467 Kalyani inscription of the Burmese king Dhammaceti. Some Burmese monks who were ship-wrecked are said to have visited Nagapattinam and worshipped there. During demolition of the monastery at Nagapattinam by the French Jesuits in 1856 a large number of Buddhist bronze images were recovered. These have been discussed in an earlier publication and need not detain us here. Another site that needs to be brought into discussion is that of Wat Si Chum in Thailand.

## 7. Wat Si Chum, Sukhothai, Thailand

The historic town of Sukhothai in Sukhothai and Kamphaeng Phet Provinces was inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1991, as indicator of the beginnings of the Thai State. It is a serial property consisting of three physically closely related ancient towns comprising of Sukhothai, Si Satchanalai and Kamphaeng Phet. Sukhothai was the political and administrative capital of the first Kingdom of Siam from the 13th to 15th centuries. It is celebrated for its distinctive Siamese architectural style, reflected in the planning of the towns, the many impressive civic and religious buildings, their urban infrastructure, and a sophisticated hydraulic system.

The old town of Sukhothai is surrounded by earthen ramparts and moats and contains the remains of sixteen Buddhist monasteries, four Hindu shrines, two living Buddhist monasteries (wat) and four ponds. More importantly it is associated with the codification of law, which provided the foundation for the first Thai state. King Ramkhamhaeng is considered the Founding Father of the Thai Nation. He is credited with the creation of the Thai

alphabet and the establishment of Buddhism as a state religion. Of interest to this paper is one of the Buddhist temples in Sukhothai, named Wat Si Chum, which lies outside the old town on the north-west. It contains a large seated stucco image of the Buddha, which is now enclosed within a structure, though the roof no longer exists. The Buddha image is locally known as Phra Achan loosely translated as the Teacher Monk. This section draws on an interdisciplinary study of the temple that discusses several complex and unresolved issues. The objective is to move beyond discussions of the physical remains and aesthetics in order to underscore the philosophical underpinnings of religious architecture.

The inscriptional record from Sukhothai refers to several lineages of Buddhist monks and teachers in the area. Inscription I of king Ramkhamhaeng refers to a forest monastery built north-west of the city for a renowned monk from Nakhon Si Thammarat in south Thailand. Another important monk named Anomdassi resided at Red Forest Monastery at Si Satchanalai. A long inscription found near the Wat associates it with an aristocratic monk, Mahathera Si Sattha of the royal line. There is mention of some of the monastic lineages with close ties with Khmer and Sri Lankan monasteries. An interesting passage in inscription 2 from Wat Si Chum refers to Si Sattha as reincarnated in Krishna, Rama and Vishnu (lines 37-39) and in line 40 mentions Sri Dhanyakata, located about a kilometer west of the monastic complex of Amaravati on the Andhra coast. Dhanyakataka continued as an important centre of Buddhist pilgrimage in the fourteenth century, especially on the maritime route to Sri Lanka.

In addition to the inscriptional data, Wat Si Chum is famous for engravings of one hundred Jataka stories on slabs of phyllite, a metamorphic rock, which are now housed in the museum at Sukhothai. Many of the Jataka narratives refer to the Bodhisattva's birth as a Brahmana, but he then left his privileged life to become an ascetic. It is significant that this feature of the Jataka stories is represented for the first time in Thai art at Wat Si Chum, whose construction is dated to the third quarter of the fourteenth century (Chirapavati, 2008: 33). Peter Skilling has suggested that the rich literature on the past lives of the Buddha

was meant to celebrate the glory and prowess of Sakyamuni Buddha and as Buddhism spread across Asia, the jatakas developed into a transregional and transcultural literature. The jataka stories 'circulated as texts, both orally and in written form, both in Indic originals and in local vernaculars. They were represented in painting and in sculpture, and recited and enacted at ceremonies and festivals'. Several scholars have suggested that ritual was essential to the political functioning of the Thai states and the link between Buddhism and the Thai State is further corroborated by the site of Ayutthaya.

## 8. Historic City of Ayutthaya

The capital shifted from Sukhothai to Ayutthaya at the head of the Gulf of Siam in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and continued until the 18<sup>th</sup> century when it was destroyed by the Burmese. It was never rebuilt and the new capital shifted to Bangkok. It is suggested that there was a conscious effort to replicate the urban template and architectural form of Ayutthaya at the new capital. At present is known for the extensive archaeological remains that have acquired World Heritage status.<sup>1</sup> Wat Phutthaisawan or the Monastery of Buddhist Kingship was one of the first temples to be built at Ayutthaya after the Siamese defeated the Khmers.

Scholars have suggested that from the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> century, Ayutthaya increasingly claimed a share of the maritime trade of the declining Sriwijaya kingdom. It also had wide-ranging maritime links with the Mughal courts in India to China and Japan. Nevertheless Buddhism continued as an essential component of the State. Before we conclude the discussion on the spread of Buddhism across the ASEAN region, it is vital to bring in evidence from Cambodia and the World Heritage site of Angkor inscribed in 1992 and stretching over 400 square kilometres.

## 9. Angkor Archaeological Park

From the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Angkor was the centre of the Khmer kingdom and the monumentality of religious and secular structures in the area testify to the prosperity and importance of the site. Villages involved in rice farming continue to exist within the

Archaeological Park and provide continuity between the past and the present and add to the diverse cultural matrix of the region<sup>2</sup>. Both Hinduism and Buddhism coexisted at Angkor, though a chronological bracket is sometimes suggested for the two: Hinduism is supposed to have been dominant until the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when it gave way to Buddhism. This is an issue that requires further research within the larger context of Southeast Asia.

Within the archaeological park, the famous Angkor Wat temple which has Hindu affiliation coexists with the Buddhist Bayon temple dedicated to the Bodhisattva Lokeshvara. The Bayon has been described as a complex structure having passed through several architectural and religious phases. One of the characteristic features of the temple are the two concentric galleries sculpted with bas-reliefs. While the internal gallery is complete in its ornamentation and represents mythological subjects of Hindu inspiration, the outer gallery, was dedicated both to scenes of everyday life and to certain historic episodes. They contain scenes of everyday life: markets, fishing, festivals with cockfights and jugglers and so on and history scenes with battles and processions. Between the third and the second enclosure there are traces of sixteen chapels where Buddhist and local divinities were housed.

The temples of Preah Khan and Ta Phrom have yielded in situ inscriptions, which provide detailed information and indicate that in both cases the temple complexes were large, had several groups associated with them. For example, there are references to over one thousand teachers at Preah Khan. Both the temples were built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by Jayavarman VII and while Ta Phrom was dedicated to the king's mother as Prajñāpāramitā, Preah Khan was built five years later to the king's father as Bodhisattva Lokeshvara. Three small temples surround the Buddha temple: the one to the north is dedicated to Siva, and the one to the west to Visnu, while the one on the south is for the deceased king and queen.

Built in the Bayon style is the temple of Ta Prohm also known as Rajavihara and located at the edge of the eastern Baray at about one kilometer from Angkor Thom. The temple continued with

additions and expansions being made until the reign of Srindravarman at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The main image, of the temple was of Prajñāpāramitā, and the northern and southern satellite temples in the third enclosure were dedicated to the king's guru, Jayamangalartha, and his elder brother respectively. The temple's inscriptional record states that the site was home to more than 12,500 people (including 18 high priests and 615 dancers), with an additional 800,000 people in the surrounding villages working to provide services and supplies. The stele also notes that the temple amassed considerable riches, including gold, pearls and silks.

It is this underlying ideology of moral and spiritual virtues that link Buddhist World Heritage sites in the ASEAN – India region, notably those at Sukhothai and Ayutthaya in Thailand; Borobudur in Indonesia; Ta Phrom in Angkor, Cambodia; Pyu sites in Myanmar; with those in India, such as at Sanchi, Ajanta, Ellora, Bodhi Gaya and Nalanda among others. Clearly there is a need not only to study the art and architecture of Buddhist World Heritage sites across Asia, but also to research the scholarly lineages resident at these monastic centres, which led to a sharing of knowledge, both through texts, as well as recitations and performances.

## Endnotes

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**WORKING PAPER: V**

# **TRAVELS BY LEADERS IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

**Himanshu Prabha Ray**

**Susan Mishra**



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# Travels by Leaders in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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## 1. Introduction

This is a draft paper on the theme ‘Indian Leaders Travelling to Southeast Asia’ which was also one of the themes of the Bibliography compiled for the project ‘Sailing to Suvarnabhumi’. This draft will cover only the travels of Rabindranath Tagore and Subhas Chandra Bose in the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to various countries in Southeast Asia. In addition to them there were several other leaders and intellectuals who visited Southeast Asia, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, P. J. Mehta, Chittaranjan Das, R. C. Majumdar and Periyar E. V. Ramasamy. These travels led to fostering of linkages and forging of socio-cultural and political ties between Indian and Southeast Asian regions prior to Independence. The paper shall not focus on a chronological account of travels by Tagore and Bose, but shall highlight the impact their travels had on both sides of the Bay of Bengal through the following sub themes:

## 2. Swadeshi and the Concept of Alternative Nationalist Education

Rabindranath Tagore established a college called Visva Bharati at Shantiniketan in 1921 whose motto was ‘*Yatra viśvam bhavatyeka nidam* (Where the world makes its home in a single nest)’. The college was a meeting point of global cultures where both the west and the east would converge on themes of art, culture and education. Tagore believed in

constructive swadeshi characterized with *atma shakti* or self-reliance, in which education was to play a major role. The journeys undertaken by Tagore were an intellectual quest to find India’s past glory and an attempt to forge cultural and educational ties between India and Southeast Asia and pursue artistic and educational dialogues across the Bay of Bengal. His entourage on his voyages to Southeast Asia invariably consisted of intellectuals and artists- Nandlal Bose (painter), Kalidas Nag and Kshitimohan Sen (Sanskrit scholar) in 1924; Suniti Kumar Chatterji (philologist), Surendranath Kar (painter) and Dharendra Krishna Deva Varma (musician) in 1927. He set out on a three and half month Southeast Asian tour on 12 July 1927 on board the French ship Amboise. Rabindranath Tagore ‘embarked on this pilgrimage to see the signs of the history of India’s entry into the universal to collect source materials there for the history of India and to establish a permanent arrangement for research in this field’.<sup>1</sup> Rabindranath Tagore undertook the journey primarily to study the remains of Indian civilization and establish close cultural relations between India and Southeast Asian region. A direct result was the close interaction of scholars from Visva Bharati with the cultures of Southeast Asia and alternatively the study of Indian past in Southeast Asia.

Prafulla Kumar Sen, popularly known as Swami Satyanand Sen, taught at the Visva Bharati, and

went to Thailand in 1932 where he was appointed as a professor at the Chulalongkorn University. This was the result of the 1927 visit of Tagore to Thailand when the Thai Government asked him to suggest a specialist in Indian civilization and literature. Swami Satyanand taught Sanskrit at the University and also mastered the Thai language. He also established a Thai Bharat Lodge which fostered Indo Thai cultural and educational linkages.<sup>2</sup> The institution imparted physical, spiritual and education among the Indian youth. In his ten years in Thailand he delivered numerous lectures and in addition to many articles also produced ten books in Thai language. He is also credited with the translation of the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and biographies of Gandhi into Thai.<sup>3</sup>

Rabindranath Tagore's perceptions on education played a leading role in conceptualizing the 'Taman Siswa' (garden of pupils), in Indonesia, by the educator Ke Hadjar Dewantoro (1889 – 1959). "Taman Siswa was an influential and widespread network of schools that encouraged modernization but also promoted Indonesian culture and symbolised syncretism between new (Western) ideas and traditional (mostly Javanese) ways of teaching.<sup>4</sup> Tagore's ashrama style education at Santiniketan in 1901 could have served as a role model."<sup>5</sup> Conversely, Tagore also took an interest in Taman Siswa and during his visit to Java he and his team visited the school in Yogyakarta and Suniti Kumar Chatterji observed all the classes at Taman Siswa from close quarters to compare its educational approach with that of Visva Bharati. Close cultural interactions between Visva Bharati and Taman Siswa were fostered through travels of students and teachers to and from these educational institutes. Many dance teachers, such as Mrs Ammu Swaminandan, Shantidev Gose and Nataraj Vashi, were sent to observe and learn the classical Javanese dance forms.<sup>6</sup> Taman Siswa also established exchange student program with Tagore's schools in Bengal in 1928<sup>7</sup> and students such as Ki Soebaroto, the painter Rushi Rusli (1916-2005) and Affandi from Indonesia studied in Santiniketan. During his stay at Santi Niketan from 1932 to 1936, Rusli was recommended to consider the art of the Buddhist

temples at Borobodur in his home country as a fountainhead for motifs in his paintings.<sup>8</sup> He spent six years in India studying painting, fine art of mural and relief, architecture, as well as eastern art philosophy of Santiniketan tradition and thought.<sup>9</sup> Kartika Affandi also studied at Santiniketan and was advised by the Visva Bharati administration that his two-year grant would be given all at once which would facilitate Affandi's travel around India for studying Indian painting.<sup>10</sup> He also exhibited his paintings in India.<sup>11</sup>

The region of Myanmar/Burma had close relations with India since ancient times- economical, religious as well as political. While the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah was exiled in Rangoon, the last Burmese emperor Thinbaw was exiled to India as a prisoner of war. Political connections and sympathies were augmented by the British conquest of Burma which made Burma a part of British India. On the educational front as well there was a flow of students in both directions. Many Burmese students visited Universities and Colleges in Bengal to pursue further studies. "For the Burmese the Hindu College, Calcutta University and the Calcutta Medical College were popular amongst students for higher studies, and the Judson College and Rangoon College were affiliated to the Calcutta University."<sup>12</sup> Their stay in India for educational purposes exposed them to the concepts of swadeshi and satyagraha which were then implemented by them in the Burmese struggle for independence. Many Bengalis from the University of Calcutta were sent to Burma as officers of the lower rungs of the administration.<sup>13</sup> U Ottama termed as the 'Gandhi of Myanmar' had close relations with India as he studied in Calcutta for three years and travelled around India. He was also elected as the President of the Hindu Mahasabha and had attended the Madras Session of the Indian National Congress in 1927.<sup>14</sup> U Ottama was the leader of the General Council of Buddhist Association (GCBA) and he adopted the method of boycott while protesting against various Acts of the British administration and was instrumental in promoting the idea of Home Rule Burma.<sup>15</sup>

The National education movement in Burma was an essential force in the nationalist movement.<sup>16</sup> Tagore made three trips to Burma in 1916, 1924 and 1927<sup>17</sup> The Burmese poets and literary personalities were inspired by Tagore's idea of national education. Artists like Kodaw Hmaing, socialists like U Pakhau Cha rendered support to national education and colleges. Kodaw Hmaing was popularly known as the 'Tagore of Burma' as his writing bore similarities with that of Tagore and he also opposed Imperialism.<sup>18</sup> Burmese artists were influenced by the artistic ideals of Santiniketan as seen in the works of Bagi Aung Soe who is considered the pioneer of modern art in Burma. Soe was sent on a Burmese scholarship to Santiniketan after Min Thu Wun visited Santiniketan and interacted with Rabindranath Tagore. Soe was sent to study and understand the art at Santiniketan and bring about a similar revival of traditional Burmese artistic traditions.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Revival of Buddhist Linkages

Rabindranath Tagore believed in Universal Brotherhood embracing the whole of humanity and he opposed divisions and discriminations based on religion, territory, geography, caste etc. For him religion was Universal, which is identified with love and compassion and human spirit. "Cherish towards the whole universe immeasurable *maitri* in a spirit devoid of distinctions of hatred, of enmity. While standing, sitting, walking, lying down till you are asleep, remain established in this spirit of *maitri* that is called Brahnavihara."<sup>20</sup> Much of these ideals of Tagore seem to have stemmed from his knowledge of Buddhism. He appreciated the way Buddhism was preserved and being practiced in Southeast Asia, even though it had disappeared from India. "I am a disciple of the Buddha. But when I present myself before those holy places where the relics and foot-prints of the Buddha are found I come in touch with him to a great extent."<sup>21</sup>

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a renewed interest shown by scholars in the field of Buddhist studies and its various aspects such as language and philosophy. Pali was accepted as an independent subject for post-graduate studies by the University

of Calcutta in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Department of Pali attracted a number of Asian as well as European scholars. Rabindranath Tagore realized the importance of Tibetan language for a study of Buddhist literature and thus he introduced Tibetan language as a course at Visva Bharati. In 1921 Sylvain Levi joined as a visiting professor at Visva Bharati and through his erudite scholarship scholars became attracted to Tibetan language and Pali, and this along with Sanskrit helped discover the hidden treasures of Buddhism. Through the support and encouragement of Prof. Vidhusekhara Bhattacharya a number of important works in Pali, Tibetan and Buddhist Sanskrit languages were brought out. It is at Visva Bharati that Tibetan studies became an independent subject of study, and thus the institute became a major centre for Tibetan studies in India and the world.

Tagore visited Siam (Thailand) as a pilgrim, "It has been my desire for many years to have the opportunity to visit Siam for two main reasons. The first is that Siam is country in the East, and the second is that his majesty the King of Siam is a devout Buddhist like myself. The hospitality and welcome extended to me have been above my higher expectations."<sup>22</sup> "In Bangkok he met prince of Chantabun in Bangkok, who had published multiple volumes of the Pali Tripitaka in Thai script."<sup>23</sup> Tagore carried back with him a set of the published volumes of the Tripitaka gifted by the Prince of Chantaburi<sup>24</sup> and a decorated box for the scriptures gifted by the Royal Institute.<sup>25</sup>

The following poem by Rabindranath Tagore was printed on blue satin and encased in Benares brocade, was one of the poems presented to the King and Queen of Siam.<sup>26</sup> This poem reflects his thoughts on the Buddhist linkages between India and Thailand and the preservation of Indian culture in Thailand.

"I come, a pilgrim, at thy gate, O Siam,  
to offer my verse to the endless glory of India  
sheltered in thy home, away from her own  
deserted shrine,  
To bathe in the living stream that flows in thy  
heart,

whose water descends from the snowy height  
of a sacred time on which arose, from the deep  
of  
my country's being, the Sun of Love and  
Righteousness  
I come from a Land where the Master's words  
Lie dumb, in desultory ruins, in the desolate  
dust  
Where oblivious ages of the pillared stones  
The records of a triumphant devotion  
I come, a pilgrim, at thy gate O Siam  
To offer my verse to the endless glory of India  
Sheltered in thy home, away from her own  
deserted shrine  
To bathe in the living stream that flows through  
thy heart"<sup>27</sup>

(*Kusalasaya*, Karuna-Ruang Urai, 2001: 42)

Rabindranath Tagore hoped that he would receive support from the King of Siam in establishing a Buddhist Chair at Visva Bharati. "We have different Chairs in our University, but we have no chair of Buddhism, and it is essential that one should be established....I therefore have come to Siam to seek your co-operation and your help in the desire to establish a chair in Buddhism, and also, if possible, to bring a message into a wider perspective."<sup>28</sup>

U Ottama, a leading figure of the Burmese Independence movement had close associations with India, as mentioned above. "He went to Calcutta with the help of wealthy Shan Woman. He studied three years in Calcutta until he passed tenth-standard examination and he passed the entrance examination to Calcutta University."<sup>29</sup> On his return to Burma he learnt the Tripitaka under the guidance of Yesagyo Sayadaw Ganthasara and was ordained as a monk at the age of 20 years with the support of U Tun Aung Kyaw, the representative of Bombay Burma Company. On his second visit to India he studied English, Sanskrit and Nagari at the Hindu College and on the request of Director of Indian Archaeological

Department discussed Buddhist scriptures with him for about one year. U Ottama "later became lecturer of Pali at the Bengal National College in Calcutta. U Ottama was the leader behind the formation of the General Council of the Sangha Samettgyi (GCSS) and he asked the sangha not to keep aside the problems faced by people."<sup>30</sup> He supported the Young Men's Buddhist Association in Burma whose motto was Nationalism, Buddhism, National Culture and Education. When Rev: U Ottama returned to Burma, he enthusiastically helped and guided that Association. There was Young Men's Buddhists Association in which a majority of its members was laymen. Thus, the GCSS was the parallel association for the monks. In Burma Buddhist philosophy and teachings such as non-violence were integral ideas in the freedom movement. U Ottama: 'When Lord Buddha was alive, man had a predilection for Nirvana. There is nothing left now. The reason why it is so is because the government is English... Pongyis pray for Nirvana but slaves can never obtain it, therefore they must pray for release from slavery in this life.'<sup>31</sup> "U Wisara characterized the British as 'wrong-viewed' (in the Buddhist sense), and encouraged monks and laity to attain 'right view' by meditating jointly to 'eliminate the mental defilements so as to attain nibbana'. The GCSS, of which both monks were lead members, exhorted its members to preach 'The Four Noble Truths of Loki Nibbana' in which the path to freedom from samsara coincided with national Independence."<sup>32</sup>

Rabindranath Tagore's trips to Southeast Asia were the crucial driving force in the revival of a glorious Indian past amongst scholars. He visited Bali and Java on the invitation of the Dutch Colonial Society or the Dutch East Indies Art Circles. Tagore's word during his farewell that he was going on a pilgrimage of India beyond its political boundaries to find what could be seen of the remains of the ancient culture,<sup>33</sup> and that "he was looking at India when he was walking down the Borobudur galleries"<sup>34</sup> echo the intellectual undercurrents in India of finding Indian remains in Southeast Asian countries and similarities between their religion, culture, art and architecture. His visits inspired historians, archaeologists and art historians of the Calcutta based Greater India Society



to study and locate India within the wider Southeast Asian context. “Rabindranath Tagore was invited to be and became the ‘*purodha*’ or spiritual guide of the Society. From 1934 to 1958, the Society published 18 volumes of the *Journal of the Greater India Society*, with a gap in the period 1947 to 1954. The topics in its articles through its two-decade existence cover a wide range—political history, literature, religion and philosophy, sculpture and iconography, architecture, etcetera. Their unifying theme was, of course, the historical connect with India.”<sup>35</sup> Kalidas Nag who had travelled with Tagore had laid the foundations of the Greater India Society the main focus of which he outlined in the article *Greater India: A Study in Indian Internationalism*, which was republished in the *Journal of the Greater India Society* in 1926, and primarily dealt with the spread of Indian culture and civilization to Southeast Asia in the ancient times. This Society was vital in “reviving India’s past glory against imperialist propaganda that India had no past of its own except the countless invasions from outside. He wanted India to be acknowledged as a modern nation on a par with countries of East and West.”<sup>36</sup> The historian R C Majumdar published *Champa: History and Culture of an Indian Colonial Kingdom in the Far East 2nd-16th Century AD* in 1927 and in 1936 published the first volume of *Suvarnavdipa: Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East*, followed by a second volume. In south India the works of Nilakanta Sastri highlighted the ancient connections of the Cholas with Southeast Asia and the relevance of maritime connections. His works include. *The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom from the Earliest Times to the Sixteenth Century* (Luzac, 1929), *The Cholas* (University of Madras, 1935), *South Indian Influences in the Far East* (Hind Kitabs, 1949) and *South India and South-East Asia: studies in their history and culture*. Geetha Book House (Mysore, 1978) to mention a few. In the field of art history the works of Ananda Coomaraswamy projected a pan Indian view of art. He had made several visits to India and befriended Abinandranath Tagore and along with Sister Nivedita co-authored *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists* which featured the illustrations of Nandlal Bose and Abanindranath Tagore.<sup>37</sup> His 1927 publication *Indian and Indonesian Art*, covered

*the art of India, East Asia and Southeast Asia and put forth the view that Indian influences spread in these regions by land as well as sea.*<sup>38</sup> These monographs and articles were based on the inscriptional, archaeological and literary evidence available to the scholars in both India and Southeast Asia.

#### 4. Revival of Traditional Dance, Textiles and Handicrafts

“Textiles are an important medium in cultural studies because of their universality and mobility. They circulate within specific cultural milieus and also serve as a vehicle for the transmission of ideas between cultures. .... Textiles lie at the heart of the exchange mechanisms of many societies. These processes are not only economic: many social, political and spiritual contracts are sealed through the giving and receiving of cloths.”<sup>39</sup>

Batik textiles are thought to have originated in India, travelled via sea as an important trading commodity to Southeast Asia, and after Rabindranath Tagore’s visit to Indonesia in 1927 the craft was revived in Bengal.

‘Batik is a process wherein dye-resistant wax is utilized to create elaborate patterns and designs. The first step in batik making is to stretch a piece of cotton or silk onto a frame and paint (“*cat*”) or stamp (“*cop*”) a design on the fabric using a mixture of beeswax and resin. Painting designs are done using, a pen-like instrument or *canting* which is used to draw the hot wax onto the fabric. The tip of the *canting* is usually made of copper so that the wax flows smoothly onto the cloth. The dye is painted onto the fabric between the intricate wax pattern. After the dye dries, these first two steps can be repeated to produce multiple layers of design and colour.’<sup>40</sup>

As has been rightly stated by Deboshree Banerjee, “.... a vital aspect to be considered while studying a culture through its textiles are the routes that textiles follow when they are exchanged between cultures.”<sup>41</sup> Here a discussion on the traditional art of Batik shall be taken up to highlight the cultural influences between India and Java that lasted for centuries. The

story of batik encompasses both sides of the Bay of Bengal highlighting a continued cultural tradition and exchange of artistic influences crucial to the long term survival of traditional crafts,

Theories and discussions abound on the origins of batik, its spread to Southeast Asia and comparative analysis of Indian and Indonesian batik. Many scholars believe that the roots of this ancient craft can be traced to Indian textiles, which found their way to Southeast Asia along with textiles such as chintz and Patola,<sup>42</sup> for instance John Guy is of the opinion that technique of batik and many of its designs in Southeast Asia were inspired by imported Indian textiles.<sup>43</sup> According to scholars like Maxwell Indian elements were ‘absorbed, adapted and transformed’ wherein some were ‘replicated’, and others were reinterpreted to form a part of Javanese batik textiles.<sup>44</sup> Kahlenberg, is of the opinion that while in the first millennium Indian influence spread to Java, the next millennium witnessed the adaptation of the religious aesthetics gradually paving the way for an indigenous and distinct style in the region.<sup>45</sup> The artisans of Southeast Asia gradually mastered the art of batik and were able to produce textiles with indigenous materials that were less expensive and more affordable as compared to the expensive imported Indian textiles. The import of Indian cloth in Southeast Asia began to decline in the mid seventeenth century and the Javanese not only favoured their own textiles, but exported them from the 1680’s to Borneo, Sumatra and the Straits of Melaka.<sup>46</sup>

Even though batik most likely had its origins in India, it travelled across the seas to Southeast Asia where it was adapted and transformed to suit local needs and continued to be practiced over the centuries. Tagore’s visit to Indonesia completed the circle of story of batik textiles, when he decided to revive the craft at Santiniketan. Tagore had received several pieces of batik fabric as gifts, such as sarong, kemben, selandang, which contained traditional motifs and patterns, and these he hoped would help in re-establishing the native art of batik. According to Ashish Basu, Tagore’s experience during his trip to Java was the source of inspiration behind batik

revival.<sup>47</sup> The key figures in promoting the revival of batik at Santiniketan were Surendra Kar and Tagore’s daughter-in-law Pratima Tagore.<sup>48</sup> The study of batik was thus introduced at the Viswa Bharati University in Santiniketan and it became one of the main subjects of the curriculum, and “over the years revolutionized the craft scene in the locality of Santiniketan, giving it a distinct identity of Santiniketan art.”<sup>49</sup>

Tagore’s revival of the batik was part of his ‘constructive swadeshi’ ideals that aimed at revival of rural industries and the collection of folk art to be able to halt their decay. Tagore established the ‘Bichitra’ studio, which was primarily concerned with the revival and promotion of folk arts and crafts. This aim was to be achieved by the use of local and inexpensive material and technique, just as in the case of the Javanese batik which helped it survive as a traditional craft for centuries. In 1922 Tagore’s daughter-in-law introduced batik, lac work and calico printing in ‘Bichitra Studio’ at Santiniketan. It was later shifted to Sriniketan and renamed ‘Silpa Bhavan’ where tanning, wood work, basket weaving and cane work were imparted.<sup>50</sup> “In 1930 Nandalal Bose established the Karu Sangha, a handicraft co-operative, in Kala Bhawan with an aim to improving the economic life of the artisans.”<sup>51</sup> At the Karu Sangha the artists would live together and devote a certain number of days in a month to commercial orders and commissions. Various artistic creations and handicrafts made by artisans of the Karu Sangha were sold in the stalls of the Satui Poush or village style fairs held at Santiniketan<sup>52</sup>. These fairs served as nodal points for cultural exchange and implementation of Tagore’s ideas of revival of folk traditions through performances of *kathakaras*, *jatakas*, folk songs and dances.

The nationalist movement in Burma was associated with rejection of foreign textiles and promotion of the *longyi* or traditional dress. The Wunthanu movement in Burma, established by U Ottama in 1921, “focused on the government’s economic policies, which undermined local industries and impoverished the Burmese common folk, and advocated the use of local goods and a



boycott of imported products.”<sup>53</sup> Wunthanu derives from Pāli and means “supporting [one’s] own race.”<sup>54</sup> Joining the nationalist movement meant boycotting foreign products in order to strengthen their own economy.<sup>55</sup> Ikeya says that the Burmese nationalists or *thakins* chose to wear slippers and *longyi* instead of Western dress out of an interest in reviving traditional Burmese culture as an antidote to the negative effects of colonialism.<sup>56</sup> The Buddhists and women folk in Burma took to wearing home spun and coarse cloth as a symbol of their protest against colonial rule. According to Mendelson, U Ottama, “wrote and spoke about the wanthanu rekhita taya—the points of law to be observed by nationalists—including the wearing of homemade cloth and boycott the tinned and other foreign foods”<sup>57</sup> U Ottama in his nationalist struggle propagated the boycott of foreign cloth in Burma and promotion of homespun clothing,<sup>58</sup> and the *pinni*. Burmese cloth in the eyes of the Burmese national student was a symbol for national identity and support to the national economy,<sup>59</sup> and the Burmese dress was worn by the radical nationalists.<sup>60</sup> The *pinni-yaw* became one of the most widely known symbols of anti-colonialism in Burma.<sup>61</sup>

On his various tours Rabindranath Tagore made it a point to witness the dance forms of the place, and these he would then incorporate within the artistic heritage of Santiniketan. Tagore is credited with reviving Kathakali, Mohiniattam and Kuchipudi, and these had become a part of the syllabus at the Kala Bhavan. What is today popularly known as the Rabindra Nrtya is the net result of Tagore’s experimentation with various classical dance forms that he saw during his travels. These dance forms were eventually made part of the syllabi at Santiniketan and the main protagonists in the revival and continuity of the ‘classical’ dance forms were the girl students and women at Santiniketan.

“The Tagorean dance tradition, reflecting the modernism of Renaissance Bengal, provided the first watershed in modern dance. Tagore’s foremost contribution was to provide the context for the emergence of “respectable” middle class women in the world of performing arts... With his new dancers

Tagore asked for a new rank of educated audience, consisting of both men and women. Indeed, in his day, he served the valuable purpose of making dance accessible to middle class women.”<sup>62</sup>

The Kandyan dance of Sri Lanka had its origins in the Kandy region of Sri Lanka, and under the Kandyan dynasty underwent transformations, and during the rule of the south Indian dynasty of the Nayyakars the dance moved outside the confines of the royal household.<sup>63</sup> On his visit to Sri Lanka Tagore witnessed a performance of the Kandyan dance on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1934, which was later integrated into his dance dramas, as seen in the character of Kotal in dance drama *Shyama*.<sup>64</sup> The Mayar Khela had elements of Southeast Asian dance forms.<sup>65</sup> Tagore sent “Santidev Ghose, a music and dance teacher at Visva Bharati, to Java and Bali to study the traditional dance forms and versions of the *srimpi*, *golek*, *legong* and *kebyar* were studied at Santiniketan.”<sup>66</sup>

The dance performances witnessed by him were to influence his dance dramas as well, “The narrative as well as abstract movement components of Balinese dance made a deep impression on Tagore’s mind and would feature in his own dance drama experiments on his return to Santiniketan.”<sup>67</sup>

On 6<sup>th</sup> November 1919 Rabindranath Tagore visited the Bishnupuriya Manipuri village of Machimpur where he saw *Ghostha Lila* being performed in Manipuri dance style. The dance performance with its subtle movements and variety impressed him so much that he asked Mr. Tanu Singha to look for a Manipuri teacher who was versed with Bengali. This finally resulted in Guru Nileswhar Mukherjee travelling back to Santiniketan with Tagore to become the teacher for the Manipuri Dance department at Santiniketan which was established soon after their arrival.<sup>68</sup> The influence of Manipuri dance is evident in the compilation of ‘*Chitragada*’ in which Tagore incorporated various elements of Manipuri dance.

Another dance form that caught Tagore’s attention was Kathakali, and in 1931 when he sent Shantidev Ghosh to Kerala to find out the

whereabouts of Kerala Kalamandalam that was just opened and learn the dance form so as to be able to teach it at Santiniketan.<sup>69</sup> Tagore invited a number of Kathakali dancers to Santiniketan, such as Guru Gopinatha and Ragini Devi (1935), Guru Shankaran Namboodiri, and after Poet Vallathol visited Santiniketan Rabindranath Tagore asked him to send a Kathakali teacher. In 1937 Shanti Dev's visit to Kalamandalam resulted in the Santiniketan having its first Kathakali teacher as Kulu Nair.<sup>70</sup> "In 1938 with lot of experimentations, the dance drama Shyama was created in a new style. The dance drama included a number of dance forms such as Manipuri, Kathak, Bharatanatyam, Kathakali and Kandyani dance forms."<sup>71</sup>

Tagore's daughter-in-law Pratima Debi was encouraged to learn dance and she went on to produce the first dance drama at Santiniketan, *Natir Pujo*, in 1926 along with Guru Nabakumar Singh. This drama was staged in 1927 in Jorasanko, in Kolkata, and the characters were played primarily by the young women students at Santiniketan.<sup>72</sup> She was the driving force behind Tagore's compilation of dance dramas and he composed the *Mayar Khela* in a new format and she herself transformed poems like *Samanya Kshati*, *Dalia* and *Kshudita Pashaan* for performance purposes. Pratima held dance classes in the ashram to train girls in dance performances.<sup>73</sup> In the late 1930's Mrinalini Sarabhai taught Bharatanatyam at Santiniketan, and in 1939 travelled to Bali and Java where she studied *srimpi* dance at Kridha Beksa Wirama, gave a performance in Yogyakarta and also studied dance at Bali for a short period under I Mario.<sup>74</sup>

Saumyendranath Tagore or Sreemati danced to the recitation of Rabindranath's poems- *Juhlan* and *Shishu Tirtha* in her own unique dance forms which were influenced by Manipuri, Kathakali and Hungarian, and Hainamati danced with a recitation of *Dushamay* from Kalpana.<sup>75</sup> Tagore on his trip to Saurashtra and Gujarat saw some women dancing with cymbals in their hands. A family from the same village was invited to Santiniketan to teach dance and music to the girls.<sup>76</sup>

"As Santiniketan expanded to include women as students and village welfare as objectives, curriculum innovations were required. These often took place through extra-curricular activities such as the 1910 drama *Lakshmi Puja*, which was staged and performed by female students. Tagore brought in dance teacher from Banaras to train the girls and when they left, he personally taught them."<sup>77</sup> "Tagore took it as a challenge to introduce dance into his dramatic compositions, train women students to participate in them and travel all over India and abroad with them".<sup>78</sup>

## 5. Role of Women: Rani of Jhansi Regiment

On 9 July 1943, Bose asked both men and women to join as volunteers and stressed the need for women to equally share the burden of the freedom struggle. The women responded by joining the struggle and the creation of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment.<sup>79</sup> "Rather than drawing on India's rich collective (sub-) conscious with several goddesses known for their use of violence, Bose opted for a real woman of flesh and blood as his role model."<sup>80</sup> With the arrival of Subhas Chandra Bose the structure of the INA changed, as he invoked the revolutionary spirit and the will to fight amongst women by providing them an equal footing in the rejuvenated Azad Hind Fauj. The Rani Lakshmi Bai Regiment was formed under the guidance and leadership of Dr Lakshmi Swaminathan, who was secretary of the Women's section of the Indian Independence League in Singapore. Her duties entailed touring various parts of Burma, Malaya and Thailand to open more centres, collect funds and provide amenities to soldiers.

Lakshmi Swaminathan as Minister in Charge of Women's Organisation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India) convinced twenty young women to join her and on 12 July 1943 and her efforts in recruiting, which included home visits, led to the creation of 1500 strong women regiment from Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, and Ipoh. The regiment consisted of women from diverse religious, educational and economic

backgrounds. In Ipoh, she was invited by two Christian Indian girls, Ponnammah (b. 1925) and Rasammah Navarednam (b. 1927) to convince their mother to allow them to join the regiment.<sup>81</sup>

A women's camp was started on 23 October 1943, in Singapore which was followed by many more in Malaya and Burma. Besides being trained in nursing, social service and general welfare work, Subhas put them on an equal footing as far as military training was concerned. They were trained in various aspects of military exercises such as weapon training, tactics, map reading and general subjects. They were trained to use rifles, bayonets, sub-machine guns, machine guns, revolvers, grenades, swords and daggers. They wore the soldiers' uniforms and had to observe strict military discipline. They were taken out on route marches and had to cover between six and forty miles at times.<sup>82</sup>

Women joined the INA for various reasons- Lakshmi Nair's father had just died, there was no money for food in the home of her stepmother and her father had hated the English. Rani Muniammah's father lost his job in the rubber estates in Malaya and so she joined the regiment in order to survive. The inspiration for the fifteen-year-old, Rasammah Navarednam was banned book, *Jallianwala Bagh—The Amritsar Massacre* which described the killing of innocent Indians. Janaki Bai, a Rajput, grew up on a large coconut estate in Malaya, where her father, El Fateh Singh, a Rajput, worked as assistant manager and when a young man from the Indian Independence League in Selangor came looking for volunteers to join the Ranis, she and a Christian girl signed to join the army.<sup>83</sup> Manavati Arya of Burma, who even prior to the arrival of Subhas Chandra Bose, had shown interest in the freedom movement by working as a civilian with the Indian Independence League.<sup>84</sup> She sold all her jewellery for the struggle and joined the INA,<sup>85</sup> where she held the post Lieutenant Captain. "She worked out a detailed proposal for the increased participation of women in the freedom struggle which impressed Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose so much that he appointed her Secretary-In-Charge of Women and Children in the provisional government of the Azad Hind."<sup>86</sup>

Saraswathi Rajamani belonged to a family that owned gold and tungsten mines in Rangoon. She as a teenager emptied all her jewellery in the INA donations box and when Bose came to return her jewellery to her father, she did not allow him to take it back. It was then that Netaji told Rajamani he needed something even more valuable than jewels. "If I really wanted freedom, he told me, I would have to spill my blood," recounted Rajamani, "I stepped forward without batting an eyelid. There and then, I joined the Azad Hind Fauj."<sup>87</sup>

In Malaya was Janaky Devar was responsible for the uneducated women recruited from the rubber plantations. She first heard Bose at the Selangor Club maidan in Kuala Lumpur and was so overwhelmed that she took off her jewellery to demonstrate her support for the Indian National Army. Her desire to join Netaji's armed force was met with resistance by her family members, yet she did not succumb and finally managed to join the Rani of Jhansi Regiment and eventually became second in command. A list of women who joined the cause for freedom under Bose included, Chinnammal, Subaranjitham, Rukmani, Vellayammal alias Malai Ammal of Vyasarpady, Radhambal of Red Hills, Pattammal of Rayapuram and Jeyalakshmi Ammal of Korukkupet from Madras were sepoy in Regimental No.8240 of Rani of Jhansi Regiment. Thanapackiam from Thanjavur District, was served in Indian National Army as a Nursing sepoy in Rani of Jhansi Regiment with Regiment No. 84370, Lakshmi Devi Lieutenant in Rani of Jhansi Regiment, Meenakshi served as a sepoy in fifth Guerilla Regiment. The prominent women sepoy in the Ramanathapuram District were Chinnammal and Kamakshi Ammal who served in Indian National Army as a Chairman for the women section, Indian Independence League Hanthawaddy East, Burma and Indian Independence League. Others include Mangammal, Vijayam, Maragatham, Muthammal, Dhanuskodi Ammal, Kalimuthammal Nagammal, Puranam, Muthulakshmi Ammal.<sup>88</sup>

"The regiment was trained as vakayda soldiers. Each chose her line of work according to her aptitude, her preference- if she liked nursing, she'd take that up. Some chose to be part of the military

police. Others were soldiers doing administrative work. There were three lady doctors in the Jhansi Regiment - Dr Narula, Dr Gyan Kaur - who became Gyan Puri later - and Dr Lakshmi herself.”<sup>89</sup> As Rasammah expressed it, “They became soldiers for India’s freedom and their own liberty.”

## 6. National Identity

“Of the nearly 30 million people who left the Indian shores between 1840 and 1940, all but two million of them travelled back and forth between eastern India and just three destinations- Ceylon, Burma and Malaya.”<sup>90</sup> In Burmese nationalist leader Ba Maw’s opinion Subhas Chandra Bose, “personified the spirit of long and passionate Indian revolution and the wider Asian revolution that could change the face of Asia.”<sup>91</sup>

A brief account of the history of the Indian National Army (INA) reveals the changes it underwent under the able leadership of Bose which led to a feeling of unity and brotherhood amongst the vast number of Indians residing in Southeast Asia. During the war Japan had occupied Malaya and many Indians were taken prisoners of war. These were recruited by Captain Mohan Singh,<sup>92</sup> Pritam Singh and Fujihara to form the first Indian National Army. An estimated 40,000 Indians<sup>93</sup> were placed under the charge of Captain Mohan Singh. Thus the first phase of INA constituted primarily of Indian prisoners of war, and members of the Indian Independence League set up under Rash Behari Bose. Mohan Singh had expressed that it was Subhas Chandra Bose who should be the right leader of the INA. After the arrest of Captain Mohan Singh the responsibility of the INA fell on the shoulders of Rash Behari Bose. In the Bangkok Conference of June 1942<sup>94</sup> the Imperial Government of Japan was asked to bring Subhas Chandra Bose to Southeast Asia. Bose thus travelled from Germany to Tokyo aboard a Japan submarine. He arrived in Singapore along with Rash Behari Bose, on 2 July with an aim to reorganise and lead the IIL and INA and was given a prodigious welcome by the Indians. On 8 July 1943 he took formal charge of the INA and renamed it as the Azad Hind Fauj.<sup>95</sup>

Bose believed in ‘total mobilization’ and envisaged the INA as constituting not only Indian soldiers but civilians as well. His movement stressed on ideals of equality and unity among his followers who belonged to different castes, religions and regions of India. “The psyche of labouring Indians as well as those in the British army regiments and those in white collar colonial occupations and traders was altered so that they too felt that they could bring down a mighty empire and be free.”<sup>96</sup>

The civilians in the new INA were mostly Tamilians from Madras. The famines in the Madras Presidency had forced numerous Hindus, Muslims into labour migration and some of them were recruited by Kannagi in Melaka.<sup>97</sup> There were an estimated 21,000 Indian employed in the plantations of Sumatra. “The INA included a significant number of Tamil plantation workers in Malaya, instilling in them an unprecedented level of political mobilization and commitment...Tamil plantation workers who joined or supported the INA during the war felt a sense of citizenship for perhaps the first time, as citizens of the Provincial Government of Free India: Subhas Chandra Bose’s government in exile.”<sup>98</sup> As shown by Rajesh Rai - Nearly 30,000 Indians died while building and maintaining the Thailand-Burma “Death” Railway, 78,000 civilians from Malaya and Singapore were deployed on the rail project.<sup>99</sup> Other Indian communities comprised former Hindu and Muslim sepoys from Bengal and Sikhs.

Bose’s army was based on egalitarian principles and the higher ranks were open to all irrespective of gender, religion, region, caste or economic background. Bose also asked the trustees of the Chettiar temple of Singapore to contribute towards the INA.<sup>100</sup> They agreed on the condition that he would visit the temple, provided that his officers accompany him to the temple<sup>101</sup> and are allowed to enter the temple premises irrespective of their caste or religion. The temple authorities agreed, and Bose entered the temple with Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and Christian officers who were treated with respect, applied tilak by the temple priest and also given Prasad. This act of Subhas Chandra Bose clearly



brought the unity of Indians living on foreign soil for a common cause.

Those who could not physically be a part of the INA in the fight for freedom contributed in monetary terms by donating all their material possessions. These donations made by innumerable Indians across Southeast Asia were essential to the survival of the INA as it funded the food, uniforms and weaponry and other activities of the army. “While voluntary donations were often generous, Bose never hesitated to persuade, cajole or even threaten Indians for a greater flow of capital for the cause. Much of the fund raising was undertaken at public meetings, where Bose’s oratory would often inspire all those present to contribute in whatever way possible for an Azad Hindustan.”

Habib belonged to Dhoraji in Saurashtra, migrated to Rangoon and became a rich businessman. On 9<sup>th</sup> July 1944 he handed over all his cash, jewellery and landed estate estimated to be worth one crore and three lakhs for the cause of freedom to the INA.<sup>102</sup> Subhas Chandra Bose granted him the title of *Sevak e Hind*.<sup>103</sup> The other person to have received this title was Srimati Betai who also gave up all her worldly material possessions to Bose.<sup>104</sup> On 29<sup>th</sup> January on Bose’s 48<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration, Netaji was weighed in gold and a total of 2 crores and 80 Kgs of gold was collected.<sup>105</sup> In all his charismatic personality and fiery speeches, he encouraged Indians in Burma and Malaya to donate all their wealth, which amounted to an estimated 5 crores from Malaya and another 5 crores from Burma.

“The war years also brought about a sense of Indian identity which was lacking before the declaration of the IIL and INA. Indians in both organisations were involved for a single purpose-liberating India...This sense of unity of purpose cut across linguistic, regional, caste and religious divides amongst Indians”.<sup>106</sup>

This feeling of unity had spread across the Bay of Bengal and its repercussions were felt by the British Empire on the Indian soil. The Red Fort trials, which began on 5 November 1945, were the

inspiration behind mutiny on board the HMIS Talwar by Balai Chand Dutt who had served in the RIN for 5 years and resented the discrimination and racism faced by Indians. The psychological impact of the INA trials triggered military mutinies across Indian shores in February 1946. On February 17 when the naval ratings demanded better and decent food, the British sneered at them and on the following day on February 18, “1500 ratings walked out of the mess hall in protest”.<sup>107</sup> The next day 60 RIN harboured at Bombay, 11 shore establishments and the barracks “pulled down the Union Jack and hoisted flags of the Congress, Muslim League and the Communist Party.”<sup>108</sup> By the morning of 20<sup>th</sup> February the strike had spread to other ports across India- Calcutta, Karachi, Madras, Vizag and Cochin. “In all, around eighty ships, four flotillas, twenty shore establishments and more than 20,000 ratings joined the mutiny.”<sup>109</sup> Thus within a span of merely 48 hours the British had lost its control over the navy. The striking naval rankings were also supported by about 1000 RAF Indian men, the Gurkhas, who refused to open fire on Indian soldiers, and the Signals Training Centre at Jabalpur who mutinied as well. Even though the British authorities were able to put down the mutiny, yet this mutiny made the British realise that they could no longer blindly trust the loyalty of Indian soldiers employed in the British armed forces, which was the mainstay of colonial rule in India. Justice P.B. Chakravarty of Calcutta High Court disclosed that when Lord Attlee had visited the Governor’s Palace in Calcutta, Chakrabarty had a discussion with him regarding the factors that led the British to leave India. Amongst the various reasons given by Attlee, “the erosion of loyalty of the Indian army towards the British crown and the navy personnel due to the military activities of Netaji was the principal cause for the departure of the British from Indian soil.”<sup>110</sup> Thus, it is evident that travels by Indian leaders in Southeast Asia not only contributed to the demise of colonial rule in India, but also helped forge strong ties between several Southeast Asia and Indian leaders. An appreciation of this phase of India and Southeast Asia relations needs to be researched further.

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