WORKING PAPER: IV

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

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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 (5th – 6th centuries CE) record gifts made to the temple of Jayaswami or Narayana belonging to the queen mother by the trading community of Vadrapalli 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 5th 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, *brāhmaṇa*s, kings and nobles. The donations involved such activities as casting of Buddha images, building *stūpa*s and *vihāra*s, 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 *liṅga*s and *mukhaliṅga*s 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 3rd century BCE to 13th 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 Jaggadala 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 19th and 20th 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, Gaṇesa, 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 *Sūtrakṛtānga* 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 Suvarnadvipa (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 Subhakarasimha (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 Narasimhavarman and visited a temple of Avalokitesvara 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 *Mahavairocana sutra* 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 *dhamma* 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 Suvarnadvipa, 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 8th and 9th 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 7th to 14th 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 11th and 12th 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 inter-disciplinary 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 (Chirapravati, 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 14th century and continued until the 18th 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.[1] 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 13th and early 14th 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 9th to the 15th 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[2]. 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 12th 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 Boddhisattva 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 12th 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 15th 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, Bodh 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

1. http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/576 accessed on 10 October 2017.
2. http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/668 accessed on 11 October 2017.

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