

# ACT EAST: ASEAN-INDIA SHARED CULTURAL HERITAGE



**RIS**

Research and Information System  
for Developing Countries

विकासशील देशों की अनुसंधान एवं सूचना प्रणाली

**AIC**

ASEAN-India Centre at RIS



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ASEAN-INDIA SHARED  
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*First Published in 2019 by*



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ISBN No.: 81-7122-140-8

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Cover Design: Sachin Singhal

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## Foreword

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### **Ambassador (Dr.) Mohan Kumar**

*Chairman, RIS*

ASEAN-India relations are firmly embedded in culture, commerce and connectivity (3Cs). Shared historical ties, culture and knowledge have continued to underpin India's sustained interactions with Southeast Asia. Culture is the key to the India-ASEAN partnership.

ASEAN-India relation is one of the cornerstones of India's foreign policy and the Act East policy (AEP). Starting as a sectoral partner of ASEAN in 1992, India became a dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1996, a summit-level partner in 2002 and strategic partner in 2012. On January 25, 2018, India and ASEAN celebrated 25 years of its partnership, at a Commemorative Summit in New Delhi, with the participation of Heads of State/Government from all the ten countries of ASEAN and India. For the first time, all the ten ASEAN leaders also attended India's Republic Day Celebrations on January 26, 2018, in New Delhi, as Guests of Honour. At the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit, held on 25 January 2018, our leaders have outlined their vision on the future of ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership, where they have identified cultural relations as one of the key areas of ASEAN-India partnership.

The ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) in collaboration with the Indian Mission to ASEAN in Jakarta, Indonesian Foreign Affairs Ministry, and ASEAN Secretariat organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on "ASEAN-India Cultural Links: Historical and Contemporary Dimensions", held at Jakarta on 19 January 2017. Several scholars and experts from India and ASEAN presented their research papers at this Conference. This publication *Act East: ASEAN – India Shared Cultural Heritage* is an outcome of this Conference. This book presents essays on India's cultural links with Southeast Asia, with particular reference to cultural heritage.

I would like to record my appreciation of the efforts that have been put by my colleague, Dr. Prabir De and his team, in putting together this volume. I wish to thank Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, RIS for his support and cooperation.

I am certain that this publication will be a valuable reference for policymakers, academics and practitioners.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mohan Kumar', with a horizontal line extending from the end.

**Mohan Kumar**

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## Preface

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### **Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi**

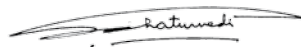
*Director General, RIS*

India attaches the highest importance to its historical relations with South East Asia, with ASEAN being at the centre. This is emphatically reflected in India's "Act East" policy, which in fact is culmination of its earlier, "Look East" policy. While the economic dimensions of ASEAN-India partnership are the key to deepening the relationship, the historical linkages is the corner stone of this strong edifice. This relationship also draws sustenance from promoting people-to-people contacts at different levels in the backdrop of rich history of civilizational links, and in this context added emphasis is given to three dimensions of ASEAN-India relations: culture, commerce and connectivity.

RIS since early nineties has been engaged in providing policy research inputs for strengthening ASEAN-India cooperation, when India became a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of ASEAN. Among other initiatives, the India-ASEAN Eminent Persons' Lecture Series was also launched in December 1996 to facilitate people-to-people interactions. Later, the ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) was set up at the RIS.

In order to discuss the special significance of cultural issues in the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership, the AIC at RIS, in collaboration with the Indian Embassy to ASEAN in Jakarta; Indonesian Foreign Affairs Ministry; and ASEAN Secretariat organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on "ASEAN-India Cultural Links: Historical and Contemporary Dimension" at Jakarta on 19 January 2017. Many eminent scholars and experts from ASEAN and India participated to deliberate on various facets of the shared historical and cultural heritage between India and South East Asia. The present volume contains 15 papers that were presented at this conference. They deal with several aspects of ASEAN-India civilizational linkages with particular focus on cultural heritage.

I am sure researchers and policy makers would find the publication useful and relevant for their work. I also take this opportunity to thank Dr. Mohan Kumar, Chairman, RIS for his consistent support. Thanks are also due to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) for its support for organising the above said conference. I also compliment my senior colleague Dr. Prabir De and other researchers at AIC for bringing out this valuable publication.



**Sachin Chaturvedi**

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## Acknowledgments

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The *Act East: ASEAN-India Shared Cultural Heritage* has been edited by Dr Prabir De, Professor, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) with the assistance of Ms. Sreya Pan, Research Associate, RIS.

This book is an outcome of the 2nd International Conference on “ASEAN-India Cultural Links: Historical and Contemporary Dimensions”, organised by the ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) in collaboration with the Indian Embassy to ASEAN in Jakarta, Indonesian Foreign Affairs Ministry, and ASEAN Secretariat, held at Jakarta on 19 January 2017.

We thank all the contributors for their contributions to this volume. We wish to thank Dr Mohan Kumar, Chairman, RIS and Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, RIS for their guidance. Our sincere thanks are to Mr Anurag Bhushan, Joint Secretary (ASEAN Multilateral), MEA; Col. Sandeep Puri, the then Director (ASEAN Multilateral), MEA; and Dr Madan Sethi, Deputy Secretary (ASEAN ML), MEA for their cooperation. We also wish to extend our thanks to Mr Suresh Reddy, former Indian Ambassador to ASEAN and Mr Rakesh Upadhyay, First Secretary, Indian Mission to ASEAN and other colleagues at the Mission for helping us to organise the second International Conference on “ASEAN-India Cultural Links: Historical and Contemporary Dimensions” at Jakarta.

We would like, in particular, to acknowledge the financial assistance under the ASEAN-India Fund, extended by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India through the ASEAN Secretariat to ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at RIS for organising the aforesaid conference.

This volume has benefited greatly from the assistance and support by the RIS Administration. Copy editing of the Report was carried out by Mrs Shashi Verma. Mr. Tish Malhotra along with Mr. Sachin Singhal coordinated the production of the Book.

Views expressed in this volume are those of the authors and not the views of the Governments of India or ASEAN countries, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) or the ASEAN Secretariat. Usual disclaimers apply. For any further queries on the Book, please contact at [prabirde@ris.org.in](mailto:prabirde@ris.org.in)



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## Abbreviations

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AD	Anno Domini
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
AEP	Act East Policy
AIC	ASEAN-India Centre
AIR	Artist in Residence
AMCA	ASEAN Ministries Responsible for Culture and Arts
APSC	ASEAN Political-Security Community
ASCC	ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASEAN-COCI	ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information
ASI	Archaeological Survey of India
BCE	Before Common Era
BV	Bujang Valley
BVAM	Bujang Valley Archaeological Museum
CE	Common Era
DU	Delhi University
EFEO	École Française d'Extrême-Orient
ICCR	Indian Council for Cultural Relations
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IHC	Indian Heritage Centre
IIM	Indian Institute of Management
IIT	Indian Institute of Technology
IPMDB	Indo-Pacific Monochrome Drawn Beads
ITEC	Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation
JNU	Jawaharlal Nehru University
LEP	Look East Policy
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MVS	Mahāvairocanasūtra

NCCA	National Commission for Culture and the Arts
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PGW	Painted Grey Ware
PIO	People of Indian Origin
RIS	Research and Information System for Developing Countries
SEA	South East Asia
SHK	Śaṅ Hyaṅ Kamahāyānikan
STTS	Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ZOPFAN	Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

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# Introduction

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Prabir De

India and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) are home to 1.8 billion people and have an economic size of US\$ 3.8 trillion and a substantial share of world resources, economic and otherwise. Both share land and maritime boundaries to each other. Overtime, India's relations with ASEAN have grown from strength to strength.

ASEAN-India relations are firmly embedded in culture, commerce and connectivity (3Cs). India's 'Look East Policy' (LEP) was in force for more than two decades, and thereafter, it has been transformed into a more serious 'Act East Policy' (AEP) with ASEAN at its core. The ASEAN-India relations have gained constant momentum throughout this period. The collaboration between ASEAN and India has accelerated across a range of economic and strategic issues, including trade and investment, connectivity, energy, culture, people-to-people contacts, and maritime security. Starting as a sectoral partner of ASEAN in 1992, India became a dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1996, a summit-level partner in 2002 and a strategic partner in 2012. On 25 January 2018, India and ASEAN celebrated 25 years of its partnership at a Commemorative Summit in New Delhi with the participation of Heads of State/Government from all the ten countries of ASEAN and India. For the first time, all the ten ASEAN leaders also attended India's Republic Day celebrations on 26 January 2018 in New Delhi as Guests of Honour.

Shared historical ties, culture and knowledge have continued to underpin India's sustained interactions with Southeast Asia. Our cultures and values are closely related, which is clearly evident from history of civilisational contacts. The process of acculturation of India and Southeast Asia began in ancient times from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century onwards. The exchanges via trade, the influence of Sanskrit and Indian epics in Southeast Asia and technological innovations between the two regions are well documented. The commonalities between India and Southeast Asia provide a platform for building synergies with the countries of the region. Therefore, culture is the key to the India-ASEAN partnership.

At the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit held on 25 January 2018, the leaders of ASEAN countries and India welcomed the cultural initiatives undertaken by India and ASEAN countries. This is a reflection and outcome of the strong people to people connect between India and the ASEAN countries, which plays a critical role in strengthening ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership.

Cultural heritage means significant cultural values and concepts; structures and artefacts; sites and human habitats; oral or folk heritage, including folkways, folklore, languages and literature, traditional arts and crafts, architecture, the performing arts, games, indigenous knowledge systems and practices, myths, customs and beliefs, rituals and other living traditions; the written heritage; and popular cultural heritage. India's own definition of culture, traditions and heritage fits well with the Southeast Asia's declaration and the commonalities between them provide a platform for building synergies with the countries of region. This is where socio-cultural issues in ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership, the policy instrument through which India attempts to promote economic integration and strategic objectives in the region, assume special significance.

The ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) in collaboration with the Indian Embassy to ASEAN in Jakarta, Indonesian Foreign Affairs Ministry, and ASEAN Secretariat organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on "ASEAN-India Cultural Links: Historical and Contemporary Dimensions", held at Jakarta on 19 January 2017. Gen. (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Retd.), Minister of State for External Affairs (MEA), Government of India delivered the Keynote Address, while the Special Address was given by H.E. Retno Marsudi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia. Besides, H.E. Le Luong Minh, Secretary General of ASEAN and H.E. Nguyen Quoc Dzong, Dy.



Foreign Minister, Vietnam delivered Special Remarks. Amb. Preeti Saran, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India delivered the Valedictory Address. Amb. Suresh K. Reddy, Indian Ambassador to ASEAN gave the Opening Address. Several scholars and experts from India and ASEAN presented their research papers at this 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference. The Conference is a direct outcome of India's renewed thrust on civilizational links with Southeast and East Asian countries as well as to document them comprehensively under the Act East Policy (AEP).

Our shared cultural linkages help us to understand and confront contemporary challenges. We aim to deepen ASEAN-India ties, based on our rich cultural affinities, and there is a need to create greater awareness of the linkages between India and ASEAN. This 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference dealt with important dimensions of historical and cultural relations between India and Southeast Asia. Some of the objectives of this Conference were to identify (i) emerging challenges to ASEAN-India strategic partnership through people to people connectivity and cultural relations, and (ii) the feasible policy options to overcome the challenges from the perspective of ASEAN community blueprints. This book is an attempt to deal with such objectives.

## Chapter Outline

This book presents 15 research papers, which were presented at the aforesaid Conference. It presents several dimensions of cultural heritage between India and Southeast Asia. In particular, the book has three distinct sections on India's shared cultural heritage with Southeast Asia.

Himanshu Prabha Ray in her paper (Chapter 2) has focused on the historical cultural-maritime linkages of the region and the importance of the coastal areas in bonding the South and Southeast Asia from the prehistoric time to modern era. The diversified nature of region embrace the cultural interchanges across Bay of Bengal in different forms. To understand the plural nature of South and Southeast Asian societies, there is a need to explore more studies on cultural heritage.

V. Selvakumar in his paper (Chapter 3) has presented the commercial interactions between India and Southeast Asia in the medieval period and possible measures for cultural and academic cooperation in the contemporary period. The author has recommended to enhance present

cooperation in the field of academic research in different historical eras, and to enroot regional prosperity and better mutual understanding of South and Southeast Asian peoples' activities.

In his paper (Chapter 4), K. Rajan has presented the merchandise linkages of South and Southeast Asian nations in the different historical periods, which were well documented in Brahmi script and Prakrit language. History reveals that commercial activities had enhanced cultural and civilizational association of the region. Author in this context has presented the nature of trade that existed between 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE and 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE.

Mya Mya Thaung in her paper (Chapter 5) has indicated that historical Indianization was widespread throughout Southeast Asia, and Myanmar was also past in it. Historical evidences and documents reveal that Indian civilization had great influence on the religious practice, art of writing, coins, votive tablets and inscription, and India and Myanmar had very strong civilizational linkages.

Garima Kaushik in her paper (Chapter 6) has brought a different angle in context of ancient archaeological evidence of women contribution in Monastic Buddhism in the Southeast Asia. Author has argued that there is a need for archaeological expedition to unveil degree of women engagement in the religion activities, and their role of power and authority within it.

In his paper (Chapter 7), Umakanta Mishra has explored the role of Indian state Odisha as an important region in the transmission of esoteric Buddhism in maritime Asia between 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. The Indian Buddhist monks carried *mantras*, *maṇḍalas* and icons to Java and other Southeast Asian nations. Parts of Odisha present early epigraphic, sculptural and architectural evidence of *maṇḍala* stūpa and *maṇḍala* sculptures are based on the twin texts of the *MVS* and *STTS*, which also efflorescenced in the art, iconography and architecture of Borobodur, Mendut and Sewu. These early religious exchanges between the South and Southeast Asian made a glorious history of mutual engagement.

Haji Mohammad Abdoh Bin Haji Awang Damit in his paper (Chapter 8) has presented the artistic dimension of historical linkages of South and Southeast Asian region in the form of *Mudra*. Along with the movement of Hinduism and Buddhism from India to Southeast Asia, Indian dance

form also influenced the traditional and classical dance of the Southeast region. The author has highlighted the similarities in the hand-gestures of ASEAN dance with Indian dance forms. The author has proposed to explore the origins of hand-gestures of Southeast Asia's classical and traditional dances, and has argued that it had originated from a single-source, hypothetically from India.

Sophana Srichampa in her paper (Chapter 9) has presented the perspective of ASEAN-India partnership in light of cultural diplomacy. From religious connection to natural resources the similarity persists in rice culture consortium, alternative medicine practice and other potential cultural diplomacy collaborations like films/movies, books, etc. The e-mapping of Indian diaspora in Southeast is another evidence of our shared cultural values.

Nilima Chitgopekar in her paper (Chapter 10) has argued the necessity of digitisation to build more synergies between South and Southeast Asian nations. Digitisations will make easier access to the commoners to deepen their knowledge on ancient cultural affinities of South-Southeast Asian region.

Niharika Gupta in her paper (Chapter 11) has argued that the ASEAN-India region needs to create more spaces for engagement and academic association in order to deepen awareness of the region's historical and civilizational links. The author has also highlighted Sahapedia's contribution in this endeavour and encouraged people to relate local cultural forms with trans-local patterns and to document multi-ethnic histories through a tool for cultural mapping.

In her paper (Chapter 12), Nalina Gopal has discussed the cultural affinity of Southeast Asia in terms of religious connection, popular mythological influence and age old trading network of the region. Author has described how art history and social history approaches are depicted in the permanent galleries of the Indian Heritage Centre situated in Singapore, which tell the story of Singapore's Indian communities within the larger context of Southeast Asia. The collection of the Centre, its use of technology and its position as a model community museum has also been illustrated in this paper.

Andrik Purwasito in his paper (Chapter 13) has attempted to build a bridge that connect the spirit of ancient cultural link to modern regional cooperation of South and Southeast Asian region.

Mohamad Shawali bin Haji Badi in his paper (Chapter 14) has discussed the role of museums in context of cultural and civilizational linkages of the region. India and Malaysia have signed the Cultural Exchange Programme Agreement 2015-2020 to strengthen cultural relations through the social institutions like museums. The author has recommended implementing the Agreement in order to strengthen our cultural bonding.

Joefer B. Santarita in his paper (Chapter 15) has explained Indian influences in the Philippines performing arts and also found Sanskrit elements in the languages of the Philippines. The author has presented artefacts and textiles to show regional affinities. To promote regional cultural empathy, author has urged to develop more people to people contract to support the cultural diplomacy.

Nguyen Thi Thu Ha in his paper (Chapter 16) has explored the cultural linkages between India and Vietnam. Author has argued that both the governments have extended their efforts to strengthen ancient linkages by ensuring cultural cooperation between the nations. Author has mentioned that Vietnam has revised its policies in the field of culture and international cultural cooperation to strengthen mutual cultural relations.

## **Concluding Remarks**

As India's engagement with the ASEAN moves forward with support of the Act East Policy, the socio-cultural linkages between the two regions can be utilized effectively to expand collaboration, beyond economic and political domains into areas of education, tourism and people to people contact. Several new ideas, therefore, emerge from this book, which may be taken up for implementation in order to deepen the cultural relations. We should continue our efforts to preserve, protect, and restore cultural heritage that represent the civilisational bonds between ASEAN and India.

## **Part I**

Shared Cultural Heritage: Towards A Sustainable Future

*Himanshu Prabha Ray*

Commercial Interactions between India and Southeast Asia  
during the Medieval Period and Future Interaction between  
ASEAN and India

*K. Selvakumar*

Maritime Relations between Peninsular India and Southeast  
Asia: An Archaeological Perspective

*K. Rajan*

A Study on Ancient Culture and Civilization Links  
between India and Myanmar

*Mya Mya Thaung*



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# Shared Cultural Heritage: Towards a Sustainable Future

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Himanshu Prabha Ray

## 1. Introduction

The historical and cultural links between India and countries of the present ASEAN grouping go back to at least two thousand years if not earlier. The links have deep foundation and are diverse both spatially and temporally.<sup>1</sup> They range from prehistoric maritime exchanges to historical connections starting from the beginning of the Common Era onwards-expansion of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam across the Bay of Bengal to travels undertaken in the early twentieth century by Indian leaders like Rabindranath Tagore. In addition to these historical links, the discipline of archaeology developed in South and Southeast Asia under British, French and later Dutch rules and often the military officials involved was common to both regions.<sup>2</sup> As a result of these early beginnings of archaeology, much of the history of the region was focused on monumental remains such as magnificent temples, splendid sculptures and wonderful Buddhist stupas. This paper has three objectives – first, to highlight the diverse nature of contacts across the seas; second, to illustrate how early archaeological interest in Empires and monumental architecture created a somewhat warped understanding of the past; and third, to suggest that there is an urgent need to initiate dialogue emphasizing the plural nature of societies of the ASEAN-India region,

so that this distinctive feature could be preserved. In the final section, we propose a collaborative research project that would facilitate a shift from current focus on art and architecture to research intellectual foundations of interactions in the ASEAN-India region. In the next section, we start by providing an overview of the diverse nature of interactions across the Bay of Bengal.

## 2. Fishing Communities and Travelling Crops

Recent research on the prehistoric movements of plants and animals across the Bay of Bengal has underscored contributions of small-scale groups as a major focus of cultural history and as agents for the exchange of native crops and stock between Southeast Asia and India. Archaeological evidence for these translocated crop-plants dates to at least the third millennium BCE and draws on historical linguistics, most notably relating to tree-crops and boat technology; with a growing contribution from genetic studies of animals, including domesticated and commensal species. Origins and transoceanic dispersal of plants such as sandalwood, coconut-palm, lime cultivars and ginger provide fascinating though not widely known narrative of sea journeys.<sup>3</sup> Sandalwood is famous for its fragrance, which develops after its dead-wood dries. In some textual sources, the wood is called ‘white sandalwood’ to distinguish it from the inferior ‘red sandalwood’ (*Pterocarpus santalinus*), a tree native to South India. In Indic cultures, sandalwood powder was initially used as a cosmetic, and subsequently attained its ceremonial function in Hinduism and Buddhism. In insular Southeast Asia, sandalwood is traditionally made into a porridge used for its scent and medicinal properties. The presence of sandalwood in South Asia seems to be of considerable antiquity and its use is deeply rooted in the Indic cultures. Sandalwood reference occurs in many Sanskrit texts, such as the late 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE Rāmāyaṇa and in the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century CE works of Kalidasa. The identification of sandalwood in the charcoal records at Sanganakallu in southern India suggests that it was used in South Asia at least in 1400-1300 BCE.

In the light of the antiquity of sandalwood in South Asia, it is difficult to imagine that this tree might be of foreign origin. First, the geographical distribution of species of genus *Santalum* shows on the one hand a remarkable discontinuity in Southern India and the entire area between Nusa Tenggara, Northern Australia and most of the Pacific region on the



other, which, if not caused by massive extirpation in the intervening area, can only be the result of the human-mediated introduction. Second, there is absence of entirely wild populations in the South Asian subcontinent, even though the tree is known for its ability to reproduce quite easily without human intervention.

The ginger plant (*Zingiber officinale*) is a tuber, and its rhizome is widely used as a spice for human consumption. Ginger is thought to have originated in Southeast Asia, although it has not been found in a wild state anywhere. The ginger-plant is propagated by replanting pieces of its rhizome, rather than seeds; its dispersal typically requires human intervention. Its introduction into South Asia is presumably anthropogenic.<sup>4</sup>

Fishing as a subsistence strategy dates back at least 10,000 BCE in the coastal areas of the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea.<sup>5</sup> A few coastal shell midden, open and cave sites with marine shell deposits dating 8000 years ago have been identified in northern Sumatra, western peninsular Malaysia and north Vietnam. At present, many of these sites are found inland, e.g. in Sumatra, on an old shoreline 10-15 kilometres away from the coast, thereby indicating higher sea levels during the middle Holocene. The spread of Austronesian natives throughout island Southeast Asia has been attributed to their success in boat technology. It has been suggested that around 2000 BCE, they had already a boat-building technology based upon 'lashings, protruding pierced lugs, and a hollowed base for the hull with added planks. At this stage, however, they must have adopted their own unique triangular sail and outrigger construction'.<sup>6</sup>

Anthropological studies have pinpointed close interaction that maritime communities maintain with the sea and the extent to which knowledge of the waters and their seafaring is vital to their identity construction. Historically these communities, variously termed sea-gypsies or boat-people, have travelled across waters unhampered and have claimed sovereignty through kinship ties. They have facilitated movement of commodities and have forged links with littoral states. These communities are by no means homogenous and consist of at least three major ethno-linguistic groups, each with their own histories, culture and speech patterns. They are (a) the Moken and related Moklen of the Mergui Archipelago of Burma, with extensions southward into the islands of southwest Thailand; (b) the Orang Suku Laut, of the Riau-Lingga

Archipelago and the coastal waters of eastern Sumatra and southern Johor and, until recently, Singapore; and (c) the Bajau Laut, the largest and most widely dispersed of these groups in the Sulu Archipelago of the Philippines, eastern Borneo, Sulawesi, and the islands of eastern Indonesia.

In addition to the fishing and sailing communities, several other groups also travelled across the ocean. These include merchants and trading groups, often mentioned in inscriptions in Southeast Asia. Foreign and local merchants involved with tax farming appear in the inscriptions from Java, dated from 840 to 1305 CE. The term *kling* refers both to people specifically from India, and is also a general term for foreigners, and in one instance, it occurs as a part of the personal name *-si kling*. Similarly, the expression Colika is said to denote people from south India.

By the ninth century the major states on the islands of Java and Bali, especially the central Javanese state of Mataram had developed complex economic infrastructures and had integrated diversifying agricultural systems into a web of regional and long-distance trade networks. Sanskrit inscriptions from Buddhist sites refer to religious teachers travelling to the region from Gujarat, Sri Lanka and Gaur in Bengal. Mataram also produced maritime Southeast Asia's first standardized indigenous coinage; based on gold and billon (silver-copper alloy) divided into weight-value units integrating local and Indian systems. From the ninth to the mid-fourteenth centuries several merchant associations dominated economic transactions in South and Southeast Asia such as the Ainurruvar, Manigramam, Nanadesi and the Anjuvannam. Associated with these merchant associations were communities of craftsmen such as weavers, basket-makers, potters, leather-workers and so on. Several clusters of Tamil inscriptions have been found on the eastern fringes of the Indian Ocean from Burma (Myanmar) to Sumatra. Trading networks from the east coast of India to the South China Sea are thus well-represented in secondary writings. Also evident from this brief overview is the diverse nature of interactions across the Bay of Bengal, which included religious groups, pilgrims and scholars. This diversity was, however, often been neglected with the focus being solely on trade and trading activity.

The advance of European colonial powers in South and Southeast Asia began as early as sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, largely through commercial imperialism, but from about 1750 to 1825, territorial empires had already been established. It is of no coincidence that interest in the

material heritage of Southeast Asia corresponds with European control of the region. The engagement of the English East India Company with the countries of the Bay of Bengal was of a different order from that of its predecessors. The establishment of colonies in South and Southeast Asia resulted in the introduction of new disciplines such as archaeology, which had far-reaching implications for the cultural identity of the sea and the communities, who navigated it, as will be discussed in the next section.

### 3. The Search for Ancient Civilizations

The mid-nineteenth century was also the period when European powers were looking for possibilities to expand their trade interests in mainland Southeast Asia, especially with China. In this, France saw Vietnam as a springboard, and from 1860s onwards was able to establish foothold not only in Vietnam, but also extend control over Cambodia. In 1863, the Cambodian monarch Norodom agreed to French protection and accepted what the French called their ‘civilizing mission.’ On 5 June 1866, the French Mekong Expedition, to find a channel of communication along the Mekong river to China, was launched comprising Ernest Doudard De Lagree, Francis Garnier, explorer and naturalist and Admiral Louis Delaporte. This expedition did little to find an alternative riverine route to China, but did put Angkor firmly on the map.

In the context of Java, the name of Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781-1826) stands out, first as a Malay translator to the Government of India, and later in 1811 as the Lieutenant Governor of Java, who was soon promoted as Governor of Bencoolen (now Sumatra), who continued his work until 1824 when Java was ceded to the Dutch. Raffles’ *The History of Java* first published in 1817 remained the standard work until the end of the century, and included a chapter on the antiquities and monuments of the region. In 1901, The Dutch Government established a Commission in the Netherlands Indies for Archaeological Research in Java and Madura, which was re-designated in 1913 to Archaeological Service in the Netherlands Indies.

In Cambodia, it was the French naturalist Henri Mouhot’s ‘discovery’ of the temples at Angkor in 1860 that brought the architectural heritage of Cambodia to the notice of the Europeans. Henri Mouhot made accurate drawings of Angkor during his second journey to Cambodia from December 1858 to April 1860. Mouhot’s letters reporting his impressions

of Angkor were first read to the Royal Geographical Society in London in 1862, as it was they who had sponsored his expedition to Cambodia. Mouhot's drawings and illustrations fired the "French imagination and will to imperialism".<sup>7</sup> Mouhot himself urged the French to add it to their crown, before the English snatched it.

In France, the study of Asian religion gained momentum with the establishment and expansion of Musée Guimet in 1889, and the creation of École Coloniale in Paris signifies the emergence of a career colonial service. Founded in Saigon on the initiative of the Académie des inscriptions et belle-lettres in 1898, the Mission Archéologique d'Indochine became the École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) in 1901. At the same time, its seat was transferred to Hanoi. The original tasks of EFEO included archaeological exploration of French Indochina, the conservation of its monuments, the collection of manuscripts, and research into the region's linguistic heritage.

In a strange twist of irony, French writings on the archaeology of Southeast Asia were taken up by Greater India polemicists in their nationalist fervour as they wrote of 'cultural conquest'. Many of the influential thinkers of the society such as P.C. Bagchi (1898-1956) and Kalidas Nag (1891-1966) had studied in Paris with celebrated Indologists Sylvain Lévi (1863-1935) and Jean Przyluski (1885-1944). Not only did the Director of EFEO George Coedès praised these attempts at rediscovery of the Indian heritage of colonization, but these interactions between Indian and French scholars of Further India and Greater India continued well into the 1950s.<sup>8</sup> It is interesting that though members of the Greater India Society wrote about Indian cultural expansion to Southeast Asia, as also India's role in universal history, they contributed little to the study of Buddhism.

This is a trend that continued as the countries of the region acquired independence from colonial rule and started writing their national histories. There was a shift in focus in the post-colonial period from viewing monumental remains as indicators of 'Indianization', a term coined by colonial archaeologists as also members of the Greater India Society to discussing them as markers of local genius. New research in archaeology helped provide wealth of material for tracing the development of the early settled societies from the second and first millennium BCE onward. How does archaeological research provide a different perspective to an understanding of the past in the ASEAN-India region?

Recent archaeological research in the ASEAN-India region supports presence of a complex cultural landscape prior to the introduction of Sanskrit and Indic religions. For example, the Bronze Age of mainland Southeast Asia dates back to 1500-1000 BCE at sites such as Ban Chiang in north Thailand. A variety of commodities including goods such as metal ingots, gemstones, shell, carnelian, fine pottery were exchanged mainly along the river systems, as also along the coastal networks. These goods were used to express social status, and are often found in burials.

There is an evidence of writing in the Brahmi script on seals and on pots as early as the beginning of the Common Era. By the fifth century CE, Sanskrit inscriptions on sacrificial posts (*yupa*) were inscribed in Kutei (Borneo), the present-day East Kalimantan in Indonesia, by Mulavarman, an Indonesian ruler of that period. The inscriptions record the performance of a sacrifice by king Mulavarman at the sacred place of Vaprakesvara and setting up of the sacrificial post by the brahmans. A large number of donations were made on this occasion and included twenty thousand cows, bulls, ghee, sesame seeds and lamps. The genealogy of Mulavarman is recorded, and he is described as the grandson of Kundunga, whose son, Asvavarman was the founder of the polity. Mulavarman is compared to the epic hero Yudisthira, and is said to have defeated his enemies and made them pay tax. The fifth century king Purnavarman of Tarumanagara in west Java had Sanskrit inscriptions adorned on the boulders in the river-bed of Chi Trauma. Three of these inscriptions present a marked contrast not only to those from Kutei, but also to those from the Indian subcontinent. Unlike the *yupa* pillars from Kutei, these records are engraved on boulders and have for their subject matter the footprints of the king and his elephant.

In contrast, a cluster of fifth century inscriptions of unequivocal Buddhist affiliation are found in Kedah on the west coast of the Malay peninsula. This includes engraving of the Buddhist formula on stone – a feature that does not occur among contemporary records from the Indian subcontinent, though the formula is found on terracotta sealings. Three of these inscriptions are made of local stone and bear similar illustrations of Buddhist stupas. Texts very similar to these inscriptions have been found on the island of Borneo and on the coast of Brunei.<sup>9</sup> The most interesting of these inscriptions in Sanskrit is that of Buddhagupta, which refers to the setting up of the stone by the mariner Buddhagupta, resident of Raktamrttika, identified with Rajbadidanga, on the successful completion of his voyage.<sup>10</sup>

The ninth century marked a turning point and several major coastal sites in peninsular Malaysia date to this period such as Ko Kho Kao near Takuapa, Laem Pho near Chaiya and Kampong Sungai Mas in south Kedah known for large collections of Chinese as well as West Asia ceramics. Other characteristic features of these sites are the brick architectural remains that survive and have been unearthed in archaeological excavations as well as stone statuary, both Hindu and Buddhist.<sup>11</sup> The founding of Srivijaya in 670 CE in Sumatra is often described as a momentous event in that it had led to the consolidation of the first Southeast Asian maritime polity, whose influence extended to the Malay peninsula as also to Java and west Kalimantan. Inscriptions, with Sanskrit lexical inputs, dating back to 680s in Old Malay, the centre of manufacturing, commercial, religious and political activity, were identified in the archaeological record on the banks of the Musi river.<sup>12</sup>

Both Buddhism and Hinduism were adopted by communities in mainland Southeast Asia simultaneously at the major sites of the Óc Eo culture, such as Óc Eo and Gò Tháp. The earliest temple along the Vietnamese coast was built of wood in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE by King Bhadravarman, who dedicated the entire valley of My Son to Bhadresvara – one epithet of God Siva. The surviving shrines, however, mainly date back to the tenth century. The kings of various dynasties continued to build Hindu temples and worshiped Siva in form of Sivalinga in My Son. Meanwhile, various groups of Hindu temples were constructed in the coastal plains of Champa from the seventh century onwards and continued to the thirteenth and fourteenth century in the southern realm of the Champa kingdom. Buddhism was also followed by the Cham people. The largest monastery was built at Dong Duong in 875 by the Cham king Indravarman II. Gò Xoài is one of the sites where a Buddhist stupa is clearly defined. Small bronze Buddhas and Avalokitesvara images have been found along the coast of Central Vietnam, while terracotta votive tablets depicting Buddhist triad were discovered from Tra Kieu and produced in a kiln site at Núi Choi (Quang Ngai province), which represents a long history of development from seventh to about twelfth centuries CE. Sanskrit and Chăm languages belong to two distinct language families and yet they co-existed in ancient Vietnam.<sup>13</sup> The seafaring skills of the Chăm and their domination in the south China Sea makes it imperative that any discussion of their art heritage should also include an overview of maritime activities along the Vietnamese coast.<sup>14</sup>

Archaeological research during the last few decades has deepened the past of Thailand and challenged the notion of a unified superimposed Dvaravati kingdom. In 1980s, a careful study of aerial photographs of the central plain of Thailand produced an atlas of 63 moated settlements that have generally been identified as remnants of the Dvaravati Kingdom. During the sixth century, the sea level was appreciably higher and the shallow bay extended inlands many more kilometres than at present, creating an irregular shoreline with numerous peninsulas. Particularly relevant to this section is the Chao Phraya valley, the large fertile lowland, suitable for rice cultivation and accessible to maritime travel through the Gulf of Siam. Buddhism provided a common faith to several contemporary centres and the diverse and the heterogeneous communities inhabited the region. It is also significant that as in India and other parts of Southeast Asia, Buddhist centres co-existed with Hindu shrines and other cultural centres of local deities.<sup>15</sup>

Two aspects of the South and Southeast Asian past are striking—one the diversity; and second the interconnectedness through travel and pilgrimage. It is these two outstanding features of the culture of the ASEAN-India region that will form the leitmotifs of this section. Diversity encompasses a wide variety of groups with distinctive ethnicity, language, religion and culture; and is nowhere more marked than in the range and variety of religious architecture in South Asia from the third century BCE onwards. A shrine not only functioned as a place of worship and ritual, but also a centre for religious festivities and discourses on ethics and moral values. The rulers and other members of elite groups often used it as a platform to further their own agenda by making lavish donations and often inscribing these within the precincts of the shrine. The shrine undeniably was at the core of the cultural life of a community and the focal point of a range of followers, from the lay devotee to the ritual specialist, from the patron to the architect. Poets and scribes engraved their writings in praise of the deity or the genealogy of the patron on temple walls.

The variety and religious affiliations of shrines in South Asia are extraordinary and range from open-air tree shrines to elaborate temples, monumental stupas and colossal mosques. Similarly remarkable is the sanctity accorded to certain locations, which continue to be revered by devotees of different religions. An appropriate example of this is the site of Ellora, in the Aurangabad district of the present state of Maharashtra

in India.<sup>16</sup> The earliest cave excavation at Ellora began in the late sixth century and was dedicated to Siva, followed by Buddhist and Jaina caves over the next several centuries until the tenth century CE. Though a majority of Ellora's Hindu excavations are dedicated to Siva, the two exceptions are Caves 14 and 25, which appear to have been temples to Durga and Visnu (or, possibly Surya), respectively. Cave 16, famous as the monolithic rock-cut Kailasanatha temple, dedicated to Śiva, is admired for its conceptualization and sculptural exuberance. The Śaiva caves shared several architectural features with twelve Buddhist caves at Ellora, which were excavated from 600 to 730 CE. They document the development of Vajrayana imagery from the simple delineation in Cave 6 to the elaborate forms of Cave 12. Much of the excavation activity for the Jain cave-temples was conducted during the ninth and tenth centuries, a time when the Rāṣtrakūṭas had attained paramount sovereignty in the region. Although the Archaeological Survey of India has categorized Jain monuments into five separate cave complexes (Caves 30-34), there are in actuality twenty-three individual cave-temples, nearly all of them containing a shrine and rock-cut Jina image.<sup>17</sup>

Around three kilometres from the caves at Ellora is Khuldabad, known as the valley of saints, as it is said to contain graves of 1500 Sufi saints as well as the tomb of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb and his sons and his generals. Marking the Chisti establishment at the site are the tombs of Sayyad Burhan-al din, a Sufi Saint, who died in 1344, and the mausoleum of Sayyed Zain ud din, another saint, highly revered by the Muslims. On the east side it contains a number of verses inscribed from the Quran and the date of the saint's death in 1370 CE. These tombs are important markers of the fourteenth century Sufi tradition of Nizamuddin Auliya that went from Delhi to the Deccan and established itself in Khuldabad.<sup>18</sup> Ellora is by no means the only example of religious pluralism in South Asia, but instead is one of the many sacred places that have preserved diverse historical memories.

One of the issues that we have mentioned above was that of the mobility in the region and interconnectedness of religious shrines. Buddha *dhamma* permeated across ethnic and political boundaries in South Asia. The Mauryan ruler (317-186 BCE) Aśoka was perhaps the first pilgrim; as his edicts refer to his *dhammayāṭā* or travel for visiting sites associated with the Buddha. Obligatory pilgrimage and rituals thus provided identity and laid the foundation of an extensive religious and cultural ethos extending across the region.<sup>19</sup>



Certain conclusions may be drawn from the brief overview presented above. First, information on seafaring communities from historical and archaeological sources indicates that their make-up cut across ethnic lines. Hence, attempts at categorizing them within present national boundaries have a little support historically. Second, while trade provided an important motive for sea-travel, it was by no means the only reason for travel by sea and needs to be studied within a wider perspective of seafaring activity and maritime networks. Third, the role of religions, such as Buddhism or Hinduism, in motivating and supporting seafaring activity needs to be recognised and accepted. Finally, for an appreciation of cultural interchanges across the Bay of Bengal, it is crucial to highlight the diverse channels of communication, which also included oral transmission by priests and pilgrims, wandering story-tellers, musicians and entertainers. It is only then that a holistic understanding of cultural interaction between South and Southeast Asia would emerge. More importantly, this deep understanding of the plural nature of South and Southeast Asian societies needs to be highlighted in the present scenario of divisive and fragmented identities. This is an issue that has been further expanded upon in the next section, as I suggest a shift in gears to focus on a hitherto neglected area of research.

#### **4. The Way Forward: Researching Knowledge Traditions of the ASEAN-India Region**

The sailing vessels, which were swept by the monsoon winds across the Bay of Bengal, encouraged dialogue between communities of scholars, officials and itinerant intellectuals. The exchange of ideas and beliefs led to the establishment of centres of learning along the littoral but they also sustained and transformed the older centres by the movement of ideas and beliefs across the region. An investigation of the growth and linkages between centres of learning in the region reveal the nature and strength of the otherwise diverse communities which inhabit the littorals. Evidence indicates that intellectual advances in many fields were the result of cross pollination of ideas, which linked different communities. The interchange of ideas across societies and regions created the dynamism necessary for the emergence and sustenance of extensive civilizations and the movement of scholars and students across institutions sustained an early cosmopolitan urge.

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 the 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.<sup>20</sup> 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 connections that were forged between religious institutions and learning.

The disciplines of interest here are of recording, writing and law. Writing facilitated storing of information, and cumulative knowledge promoted new genre of cultural and artistic expression and aided ordering of information under numeric and alphabetic heads and the use of maps.<sup>21</sup> These networks may be identified in the archaeological record by specimens of writing on pottery, seals and sealings and by inscriptions on stone and copper plates. The decimal system originated in India. It gradually replaced the Roman system that was prevalent in Europe, and became the standard system by the 17<sup>th</sup> century CE. The adoption of the decimal system was one of the major factors for the commercial, mathematical and scientific renaissance in Europe. The journey of these treatises of mathematics from South and Southeast Asia to Europe is itself a fascinating narrative that needs both to be restated and celebrated.

A large number of 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 and other 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.<sup>22</sup>

Davis has explored the increased prominence of intermediate-level corporate groups in the creation and administration of law. The corporate groups in question include, among others, merchants, traders, religious specialists, soldiers, agriculturalists, pastoralists, and castes. Such groups or associations are intermediate in two interrelated ways: (i) they mediate practical legal influences from both highly local sources (villages, families, etc.) and elite-level political rulers, and (ii) they mediate theoretical legal influences from local and regional customary law and the elite-level Brahmanical discourses of Dharmaśāstra, the treatises on Hindu law. It is the functioning of these corporate bodies that we explore in this paper, as also the different partnerships between religious shrines and merchant bodies and other occupational groups.<sup>23</sup>

A crucial element in the Asian coastal landscape was the religious shrine. It is important to locate this shrine in context, both physical and social to unravel multiple levels at which sacred sites interacted with a diverse range of communities and negotiated among them. Another aspect of the shrine is its horizontal expansion and additions made to it over time to house a variety of functions of interest to this paper, such as *ghatikāsthāna* or centre of learning, which came to be incorporated in temples, especially in peninsula India from the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century onward.

Eleventh century inscriptions from the temple in Thirumukkudal, on the banks of the Palar river near Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu indicate the existence of a Vedic pathsala attached to the temple, as also a medical centre termed *athura saalai* and arrangements for distribution of medicinal herbs. Inscriptions from the Buddhist site of Kanheri near Mumbai and a temple in Gujarat would suggest that this practice may have earlier beginnings. Sixth century inscription from Kanheri 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 Vadrappalli. Vadrappalli was probably located eight kilometres to the west of Sanjeli and signatories to the donation included traders from Ujjain, Kannauj, Mathura and perhaps Mandasor in central India. A goldsmith constructed a lake near the temple. The copper plate states that itinerant mendicants visiting the temple, as also devotees should be provided with medicines (*bhaisaja*). These are aspects which need further research and analysis.

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# Commercial Interactions between India and Southeast Asia during the Medieval Period and Future Interactions between ASEAN and India

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V. Selvakumar

## 1. Introduction

The ideas of networking and connectivity that have brought people and cultures across the world together in this digitalized, globalized era are not new. These ideas had emerged much before in history, when the cultures of the Indian Ocean sphere had developed extensive exchange networks, and were interacting and exchanging ideas, people and commodities (Chakravarti 2012). The cultural connectivity between India and Southeast Asia (in the Bay of Bengal or Indian region) has been vibrant, continuous and multi-dimensional in nature involving cultural, commercial and political spheres for more than two millennia, and it has mutually benefitted cultural systems that flourished across the Bay of Bengal. The connectivity and interactions between India and Southeast Asia perhaps began in the prehistoric period, and increased connections were established from the early historic period with the ideas related to

various faiths, polity and arts, commodities, and people were constantly flowing, gradually contributing to cultural efflorescence of both these regions. No region, which has been culturally vibrant, can be considered exclusive, and such regions have always interacted with the neighbouring regions, and in the making of the Indian Sub-continent cultures, India's connections with Southeast Asia have contributed significantly in terms of ideas and materials. The Indian texts and archaeological sources have numerous references to interactions between India and Southeast Asia from the early historic period (Majumdar 1953; Cœdès 1964; Nilakanta Sastri 1978; Ray 1994, 1996, 2003). The landscape of Southeast Asia finds a frequent mention in the Indian literature. The early medieval Tamil text of *Manimékalai* refers to *Cāvakam* or Java (Monius 2001). In the medieval and modern period too, intense cultural, commercial and political interactions continued between the regions. This paper focuses on the commercial interactions between India and Southeast Asia in the medieval period, and also discusses about the possible measures for cultural and academic cooperation between India and Southeast Asia. The data for this paper is mainly derived from the inscriptions from Southern part of India, and as a result, the focus of this paper is more on the southern part of India.

Academic research seeks to look at the reality from an outsider's (*emic*) perspective. It is like looking at the reality from a particular direction and a position. Therefore, the context and motive of the perceiver/investigator influences what is perceived and highlighted. The India-Southeast Asia relations could be viewed variously from the perspectives of India/Indians, Southeast Asia/Southeast Asians, and Indian Ocean, or from a completely outsider's position. It is a fact that we live in a much modified, very different 'modern' context with completely different socio-economic and ideological systems. What is the use of historical knowledge? How can it be useful to the contemporary context? The interactions and exchange of ideas that took place in the past can offer clues for future cultural interactions and free flow of people, which became upset and disturbed by the colonial processes and the developments after the colonial period. The ancient connectivity has disappeared from the memories of the people, and society at large, which are very transient, and here, historical research can help in rediscovering or regenerating old connectivity to suit modern context and geo-political situation.



### **1.1 Approaches to Long Distance Interactions**

Long distance interactions, which were earlier investigated from a narrow inter-regional point of view (e.g. India-Southeast Asia and Indo-Roman), are now seen from a global, holistic perspective with improved theoretical understanding and perceptions. What was earlier known as “Indo-Roman trade” in the context of early historic period in India (Warmington 1928; Gurukkal 2016) is now seen from the perspective of Indian Ocean region as “Indian Ocean exchange system.” The ideas of world systems theory (Wallerstein 2004), the processes and networks have influenced new perspectives on the transoceanic, long-distance interactions. The port towns of the Indian Ocean that were located in a specific region dealt with the local goods as well as the goods from faraway region in exchanges, and also witnessed people from various regions, thereby justifying the focus on transcontinental cultural processes. However, we need not completely abandon the perspective of “Indo-Roman” trade, as the interactions did happen at multiple scales— from the local-hinterland exchange (which is of prime importance) through the regional, bilateral exchange to long distance exchanges across the Indian Ocean region. Therefore, the early historic and medieval interactions could be studied as a part of the global system of Indian Ocean trade and also as “Indo-Roman trade” with a different set of research goals. Thus, while Indian Ocean trade and exchange could investigate the processes across the Indian Ocean region from Africa-Europe-West Asia down to East Asia across the India Ocean, the perception of the realms of the Bay of Bengal (or as India-Southeast Asia) and Arabian Sea could be appropriate frameworks for understanding interactions within the sub-regional scales. Although the Chinese trade policies and Chinese trade were an important factor in the medieval Indian Ocean interactions at one level, it is important and meaningful to focus exclusively on the interactions between India and Southeast Asia, as the Indian Subcontinent, South East Asia, West Asia and China in fact acted as independent regional cultural systems.

### **1.2 Research on the Interactions between India and Southeast Asia**

The research on the interactions between India and Southeast Asia was mainly focused in the first three-quarters of the twentieth century with much vigour (Majumdar 1953; Cœdès 1964; Sastri 1978). A few of the early researchers reflected the nationalist/colonial perspectives; and the

Southeast Asian territories were viewed as “Hindu Colonies.” These perceptions reflect the socio-political-intellectual scenarios of the early twentieth century under the impact of colonialism. Later the idea of Indianization was adopted to characterize Indian influence in Southeast Asia (Cœdès 1964; Acharya 2012), and this has been a much debated and discussed subject. Now, researchers are critical of the idea of Indianization and stress the need to carefully and analytically study historical and cultural developments in Southeast Asia. The developments in Southeast Asia were the result of internal dynamic, and the influence of ideas from India had a specific role to play. Similarly, the knowledge, wealth and commodities from Southeast Asia had contributed to the developments in India. In the recent years, researchers have sought to analyze developments in the area of India-Southeast Asia interactions from more realistic terms by critically looking at various source categories. The publications on the interactions by several researchers, including Ray (1994, 2003), Karashima (2002, 2004), Hall (2010), Bellina and Glover (2011), Kulke *et al.* (2009) and Manguin *et al.* (2011) have analyzed the primary sources such as literature, inscriptions and archaeological remains to understand the complex nature of interactions.

Despite the debates on the nature and appropriate labels for the processes that contributed through the Indian ideas, the influence of Indian culture is clearly observable in many areas of Southeast Asia in varied realms, and a more balanced approach is necessary to understand the Indian interactions and how their influences have been incorporated in the historical and cultural developments. India’s cultural connection has been always looked at from the Indian perspectives, and contribution of ideas from the Southeast Asia has not been sufficiently analyzed. It is also necessary to focus on the two-way processes in interactions, and contributions of the cultural ideas of Southeast Asian origin in interactions. Certain terms such as *Prāhu* and *Bangka* used in Southeast Asia for watercrafts have parallels in South India (*Padavu*, *Padagu* and *Vangam*, Selvakumar in press a, in press, b). The use of carved paddle in pottery making, certain type of watercrafts and certain metal (copper and tin), shouldered celts and various plants that are grown in India might have had their origins in Southeast Asia. The traditional knowledge on certain medicinal plants, probably, came to India from Southeast Asia.

**Table 3.1: List of Tamil Inscriptions Found in Southeast Asia and China**

Sl. No.	Location	Medium/ Name of the Temple/Context	Faith/ Religion	Name of the settlement in inscription	Chronology	Remarks and Notes
1	Wat Khlong Thom, Thailand	On a touchstone	-		3-4 <sup>th</sup> Century	The stone was used by a goldsmith whose name was “Perumpattan”
2	Takua Pa, Thailand	Stone	Vishnu images found nearby		9 <sup>th</sup> Century	A tank was dug by Nankurutaiyan and it was maintained by the merchant guilds of Manigramattar and Senamugattar
3	Barus, Indonesia	Stone	-	Matankari Desi Vallaba Uyyakkonda Pattanam, Nakarassenathipathi	11 <sup>th</sup> Century	Mentions about <i>Pathinen bhumi teci tisai vilanguayirattu ainurruvarom</i> , the merchant guild (Subbarayalu 2002)
4	Pagan, Burma	Stone; Nanadesi Vinnagar temple	Vishnu	Pukkam alias Arivattanapuram	13 <sup>th</sup> Century	An individual from Magodayarpattanam, (Modern Kodungallore) Kerala made donation of lamps to the Vishnu temple.
5	Quanzhou China	Stone; Tirukkaniswaram	Shiva		13 <sup>th</sup> Century	Mentions about the construction of a temple for the welfare of Emperor Kublai Khan)
6	Neuseu Aceh, Indonesia	Stone; Found in a Mosque; context uncertain			13 <sup>th</sup> Century	May be related to Ainurruvar, Ayyavole 500 (Karashima and Subbarayalu 2009)
7	New Zealand	On a Ship’s Bronze Bell	-	-	13-14 <sup>th</sup> Centuries	Mentions name of a ship owner Muhaiden Vakkuz

**Source :** Author’s own.

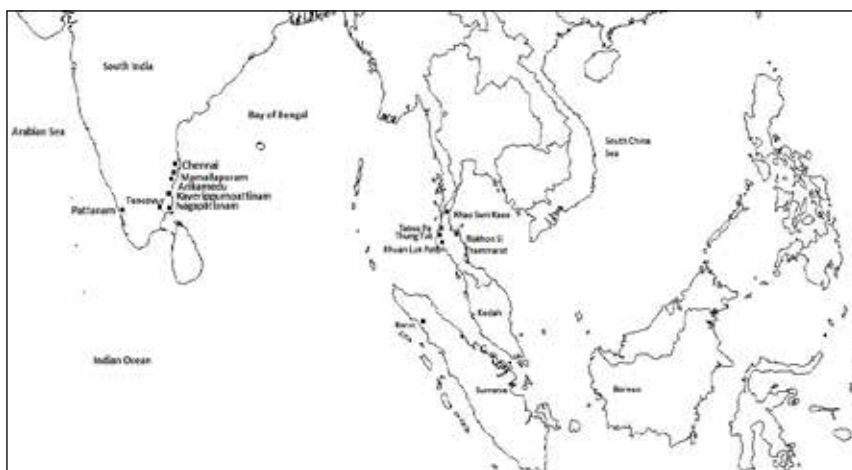
### 1.3 Sources for the Study

The sources for understanding interactions between India and Southeast Asia are found in epigraphical, literary and archaeological sources (Figure 3.1). The interactions between India and South Asia perhaps began in the Early Historic period with a great intensity and archaeological materials of Indian origin; including roulette ware, and beads found at Khao Sam Khao, Sembiran, Buni Complex and several other sites (Glover and Bellina 2011; Selvakumar 2011). The descriptions of the Southeast Asian territories and the idea of *Suvarnabhumi* (golden territory) are often noticed in the Indian literature and the Jataka tales have many graphic descriptions of voyages to Southeast Asia (Ray 2003).

The epigraphical sources are mainly the merchant guild inscriptions distributed across South India (Karashima and Subbarayalu 2009). The Sanskrit inscriptions found in Southeast Asia mainly pertain to political activities. In addition to the inscriptions, sculptures and other material remains found in Southeast Asia (Table 3.1) also serve as important sources for analyzing interactions.

Evidence related to the interactions is reported in the form of archaeological materials, sculptures and temples at several locations

**Figure 3.1: Map of Important Archaeological and Historical Sites in India and Southeast Asia**



*Source:* Author's own.

in Southeast Asia. An earthen ware form (wide-mouthed vessel) often used for cooking, excavated at Kotachina and also at Lamreh (Mckinnon 2011), has parallels in Tamil Nadu, K  rala and Sri Lanka. This type of coarse ware pottery might have been carried by traders from South India as an item of trade or for their own use. These vessel-forms can be broadly dated to the medieval period, more towards the later medieval context. The evidence from these sites suggests that the trade was active throughout and the Indian guilds were active at least till the thirteenth century, when transformations took place in the wider Indian Ocean region.

## 2. Commercial Interactions in the Medieval Period

Interactions between India and Southeast Asia in the medieval period are evidenced in a number of areas such as politics, economics, art and architecture, script, literary and cultural traditions. The highlight of the Medieval interactions has been the conflict between the Cholas and the Sri Vijayas, and the naval expedition of Rajendra Chola to Southeast Asia, which has been extensively analysed by researchers (Kulke *et al.* 2009; Sen 2003, 2009); this paper confines only to the commercial interactions between 800 and 1300 CE.

### *Commercialization*

The process of commercialization and the organization of mercantile activities are well attested from the early medieval period in different parts of India. In the early medieval South India, the development of hinterland territories and settlements through the organization of irrigation and agrarian activities; the rise of *nagaram* (commercial establishment) settlements from ca. ninth century; and the movement of Brahmins and the formation of elite groups with higher consumption power created necessity for the long-distance trade. The formation of a territorial division of *n  du*, which was the ‘basic fabric of agrarian society’ with a *nagaram* each (Hall 1980), suggests the development of commercial activities and the rise of merchant guilds.

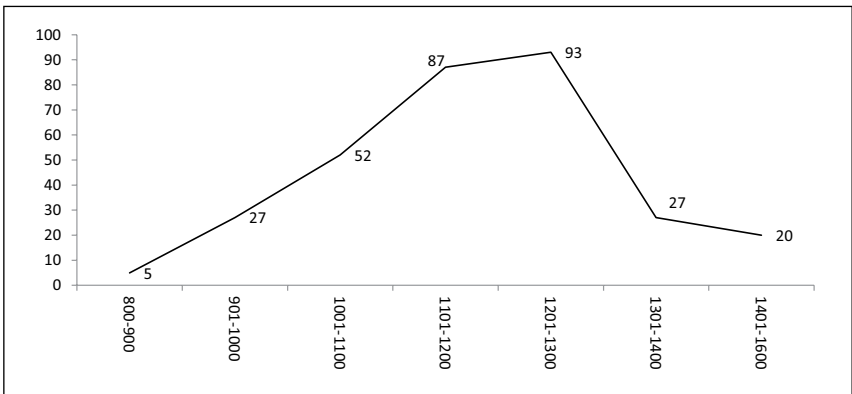
### *The Medieval Merchant Guilds*

The organization of mercantile activities was witnessed across India, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia (in the Indian Ocean) in the early medieval period. The rise of organized merchant guilds and the donation of land and certain rights and privileges for the creation of exclusive commercial

quarters are evidenced by the Terisapalli copper plates of Kerala, which mentions about the merchant guild of Manigrāmattar (Abraham 1988). The merchant bodies had certain degree of autonomy, since they did not use the *prasasti* of the kings in their inscriptions and documents (Shanmugam 2002). The merchant guilds had a powerful role in the organization of trade and commercial activities during this period, and numerous inscriptions from South India, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia stand testimony to commercial and cultural activities of these guilds (Karashima 2002). These inscriptions are mainly concentrated between 900 and 1300 CE (Figure 3.2). The merchant guilds known as Manigrāmam, Patinenvishayattar, Valanjiyars, and Ainurruvar had developed their networks across these regions. The Chola expeditions and expansion to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia in fact supported the movement of the merchants and their activities. The merchants of West Asian origin were also present in the ports of India.

The Tamil inscriptions from Takua Pa in Thailand, Pagan in Burma and Neuseu Aceh in Indonesia are indicators for the strong presence of the merchant guilds of Indian origin in Southeast Asia. The Barus (Varosu in Tamil) inscription found in North Sumatra mentions about the existence of the merchant settlement of Nanadési-Tisaiyāyirattu Ainnurruvar in 1088 CE. Barus, known as Fasnur to the Arabs, was a major commercial centre (Perret 2007; Subbarayalu 2002), and merchants from Southeast Asia, South India and Middle East visited this port for trade purpose.

**Figure 3.2: Distribution of Merchant Guild Inscriptions**



**Note:** Based on the data from Karashima (2002).

**Source:** Author's own.

Apart from the Tamil inscriptions, the Javanese inscriptions too revealed about the activities of the merchants. An inscription found at Cane dated to 1021 CE from East Java mentions “Kling, Aryya, Singhala, Pandikira, Drawida, Campa, Remen, and Kmir” as foreigners, and the term Drawida perhaps indicates the people from the Tamil Region. According to Jan Wisseman Christie, in the inscriptions from Turun Hyang and Garaman of the mid-eleventh century CE, Drawida has been replaced by Colika (Cholas), and Pandikira by Karnataka, and Malyala, referring to Kérala, also occurred (Christie 1998), suggesting changes in the patterns of trade.

## 2.1 Commodities of Exchange

The commodities exchanged during the medieval period included variety of goods and many of them were related to ornamental, ritual and medicinal values. The merchant guild inscriptions listed numerous commodities traded during the period. Precious stones, coral, aloe wood, cloves, copper, tin and camphor (*karpur*) were imported from Southeast Asia; pearl, coral, betel nuts, cardamom, Indian spices, variety of textiles and silk, medicinal herbs, and possibly iron were exported from the Indian ports.

*Akil* or aloe (agar or eagle wood) (Minter 2005) was one of the imports from Southeast Asia to India. The Tamil texts frequently mentioned about aloe, which was burned to perfume women’s headdress. Warmington has suggested that aloe came to South India or Sri Lanka from the eastern parts of Asia, and was exported to the Western world (Warmington 1928). *Akil* is mentioned in the inscription datable from as early as 887 CE (South Indian Inscriptions 3, 167), and it also occurs in later inscriptions (e.g. SII, vol. 8, no.442 of ca 1300) as taxed commodity.

*Pattinappālai*, the text on the Chola king Karikālan, gives a very detailed account of the port of Kaverippumpattinam, and mentions about sandal and *akil* from the western hill or more particularly from Coorg (Kodagu). In this poem, *akil* from Southeast Asia is not found. *Cirupānatruppādai* 154-156 mentions about the *akil* brought by waves. A commentator of *Cilappatikāram* mentions about *Kidāraṇa kārakil*, which means black or the red *akil* from Katāram (Kidāram). There are two types of *akil* wood— white *akil* (*Disoxylum malabaricum*) and red *akil* (*Disoxylum binectiferum*), which is mentioned as black *akil* in the Tamil texts (Rajagopal 2011).

The sense and sensibility to body and dressing were also changing in the course of history, and new types of weaving and variety of clothes were developed in the medieval period, as we find numerous references to clothes in the inscriptions. Perhaps clothes were used more frequently by the people of many sections of the society from the medieval period. The paintings of the Chola period and the Vijayanagara period reveal the variations in the attitudes of the people to clothing. The Tamil text of *Pattinappālai* narrates about the produce from *kāzhakam* (*Pattinappālai* 191-194), which is the Tamil equivalent of Sanskrit *Katāha*, reached the port. It has been argued that this could refer to the iron objects from Bujang Valley (Rahman 1990); although the *Pattinappalai* does not specify the name of the product that came to Kaverippumpattinam. However, other references are very clear that *Kāzhagam* refers to textile. *Kāzhagam* is mentioned as a type of clothe in *Purananuru* 41: 9. It is mentioned as blue cloth in *Kalittogai* 7: 9. Similar references occur in a few early Tamil texts (*Kalittogai* 73: 17; 92: 38, and *Tirumurugarrupatai* 184).

*Tukir* or red coral was another important import from the east, as *Pattinappālai* mentions about the *tukir* from the eastern sea, which refers to the Bay of Bengal and beyond (*Pattinappālai* 191-194). Other poems mention about its use in ornaments (*Puranānuru* 218). The red coral must have come from Indonesia or from the region of the Philippines, since these areas have coral reefs suitable for coral production. Similarly, clove (*Eugenia aromatica*) (Rajan 2011), *karpur* (from *Cinamomum camphora*) or *karpur barus*, lead and copper were also probably imported from Southeast Asia in the early historic period (Minter 2005). It was continued to be imported in the medieval period. Camphor is mentioned in the inscription of Belgaum, and *akil* is mentioned in the Virinjipuram and Piranmalai, Belur and Kovilpatti inscriptions (Karashima 2002).

Ceramics were also traded in the medieval period as a large quantity of Chinese Ceramics appears all across the Indian Ocean. Very limited ceramics of Southeast Asia have come to light. Thai iron painted ware and Thai celadon wares from Sichanari kilns were found at the site of Kotapatnam in Andhra Pradesh (Sasaki 2004).

## 2.2 Political Conditions and Commercial Interactions

The interdisciplinary perspective in history argues that certain aspects of politics and economy cannot be seen in isolation, and investigation



of political economy “as the relations between political structure and systems and the economic realms of production, consumption and exchange” (Sinopoli 2003) is essential to properly contextualize historical development. Unlike the Early Historic commercial interactions, the medieval commercial relationships in the Indian Ocean were intimately linked to political conditions and government policies.

The early medieval period in India and Southeast Asia witnessed several parallel developments in the history. State formation, agricultural expansion, Brahmin migration, ritualized temple worship, bhakti movement and emergence of elite agrarian and mercantile groups are attested in India. The Cholas, the Chalukyas, and the Palas were the important political powers in coastal region of India, while the Sri Vijayas had emerged as an important power in Southeast Asia controlling maritime route that passed through the Malacca straits. Similar processes are witnessed in Southeast Asia, and the kingdoms of Southeast Asia were adopting the ideas of construction of temples and ritual centres, and rituals for the legitimization of kingship and polity that emerged in India. Apart from the role of legitimization, the Sanskrit rituals and ideas, most probably, had magical value in the societal context of Southeast Asia (Ali 2011). Pollock (1996, 2006) conceptualized the development as Sanskrit Cosmopolis.

The policies of the Chinese political establishment too had an important effect in the Indian Ocean trade; and at one level we have to correlate developments in China and the relationships between Southeast Asian and Indian powers. The development of tribute trade in China under the Song realm (Sen 2009) was profitable to many agencies, and this encouraged various kingdoms to send tribute to China, according to Tansen Sen (Sen 2009). The Sri Vijayas sent many embassies to China, and this is reflected in the Chinese texts (Sen 2009). The profit from the tribute trade might have encouraged the Cholas to send embassies to China. The political interference of the Chinese trade in Southeast Asia, probably, presented a case for the Chola military interest in the commercial activities. The Sri Vijaya state itself was involved in trade activities and forced the commodities that were transported through the Malacca straits to be sold directly to them. Interference in the Chinese trade could be the reason for the Chola expedition to Southeast Asia, as as suggested by the researchers.

The Chola kings donated tax-free land for the Chulāmanivarma vihara; built by the Sri Vijaya king Vijayottungavarman at Nāgapattinam port in southern part of India in the early eleventh century and later the Chola expedition to Southeast Asia took place around 1025-26 CE (Kulke 2009). Spencer (1976) argues that the Chola expedition was undertaken for the benefits accrued through plunder raids. Sastri (1957) and Abraham (1988) have argued that commercial interests could be the reason behind such an interference.

The study of the Chinese records by Tansen Sen offers very interesting information to understand relationships among the Cholas, Sri Vijayas and the Chinese establishment. Tansen Sen, based on the references to the Cholas from the Chinese records, argues that the Sri Vijaya misinformed the Chinese scribes about the status of the Cholas as the subordinates to the Sri Vijaya, to gain from the state sponsored trade of the Chinese (Sen 2009). The Songshi records mention about the status assigned by the Song court to the Cholas in a memorial presented to Song Emperor Huizong in 1106 CE. “The Chola kingdom is subject to Sri Vijaya. We wrote to its ruler on coarse paper” (Sen 2009). The Chinese text *Song Hui Yao* mentions that the prefect of Guangzhou requested the Song court to limit embassies from Cholas, Arabs, Sri Vijaya and Java; and this reveals that all these kingdoms were given higher status and treated equally (Sen 2009). By the time of Xining, the Chinese establishment was convinced that the Cholas were inferior to the Sri Vijayas.

The Chinese trade policies further impacted the maritime interactions in the Indian Ocean in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Yuan dynasty of China (1279-1368) encouraged trade activities in the Indian Ocean, and this seems to have resulted in the presence of ceramics of the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries along the coasts of South India (McElney 2006). These trade policies are reflected in the distribution of Chinese ceramics in the Indian Ocean region.

Why did the Sri Vijayas sponsor the construction of a Buddha vihara at Nagapattinam? Why did the Cholas offer tax-free lands to this Vihara? These activities definitely point out to their interest in developing diplomatic, political and economic relationships. The presence of several settlements of Indian merchant guilds in Southeast Asia points out to the fact that Southeast Asia’s strategic location was in the maritime network of the Indian Ocean. The traders of Indian origin were actively engaging

in the commercial activities, and the merchants of West Asian origin were also present in the ports of South Indian coast.

### **3. Looking into the Future Interactions**

The connections between India and Southeast Asia have been very intimate in the past causing important historical developments. But, ‘What is the relevance of the past to the present?’ The issue at stake here is the development of relationships of significance that would have relevance for the future. People-to-people contact through tourism and education, cultural and commercial interactions can help to produce business opportunities and support economies in a mutually beneficial manner. In the globalized contemporary context, several measures have to be adopted for mutual beneficial interactions between these regions in future. Because of the colonial interventions and the formation of nation states that adopted “closed door” policies in the twentieth century, people have forgotten the deep cultural and commercial interactions that these regions were engaged in. The understanding and research on the past can help rediscover and forge new relationships between these regions.

#### ***Approaches to Research***

The interactions between India and Southeast Asia have been viewed from colonial perspectives in the early part of the twentieth century. As a result of the colonial/nationalist perspectives, extreme notions, (e.g. Greater India) were prevalent. From the end of twentieth century, such early ideas have been very critically reviewed, and the research focus has to be shifted to apply rigorous historical research methods with proper analysis of the texts and archaeological sources. We need to decolonize and deconstruct the colonial paradigms and intellectual structures to understand the interactions from a closer to objective perspective.

#### ***Closer Focus on Indian Interactions and Influence***

More detailed studies are necessary to understand interactions between India and Southeast Asia from the early historic period from a micro-regional perspective. The future research can focus on the ideas of convergence of cultural ideas, and how Indian influences were adopted and how local cultures were developed according to their local environmental and cultural contexts.

### ***Collection and Analysis of Primary Sources***

Archaeological surveys and excavations offer ample opportunities for collecting fresh data related to Indian interactions with Southeast Asia. Explorations and excavation of archaeological sites could be very useful in unearthing evidences related to interactions. This is important, especially in the current context where development activities are destroying archaeological sites in many parts of the world. Collaborative excavation of archaeological sites especially the coastal port towns can be very useful to bring to light fresh data, which would enable better interpretations of cultural interactions. Digital archaeology and scientific analyses of material culture can also be very productive for academic understanding.

### ***Heritage Preservation and Heritage Tourism***

The Project Mausam, conceived by the Government of India, can be a good opportunity for developing cultural interactions between the ASEAN and India. This could be beneficial for both India and ASEAN in terms of cultural as well as economic realms. Many of the historical sites that were connected in the past are lying in ruins as unimpressive archaeological sites. For example, a few heritage museums and exhibition centres could be developed at sites such as Arikamedu, Nagapattinam, Kaveripumpattinam, Vishakapattanam and Sisupalgarh in India and at Isthmus of Kra (Thailand), Barus (Indonesia) and several other connected archaeological sites. Some of these heritage sites can be developed as tourist attractions showcasing cultural connectivity. In the existing museums of India and Southeast Asia, separate galleries can be created for India-ASEAN interactions. Disseminating authentic information on the past cultural exchanges between these regions through digital media (website) in various languages would be useful for promoting tourism.

### ***Focus on Local Historical Development***

The exclusive concentration of “Indian influence” could be a fragmentary approach in comprehending cultural and historical developments in the Southeast Asia. Examination of the local historical developments holistically could naturally lead to comprehending and contextualizing interactions between India and Southeast Asia.

### ***Academic Cooperation***

Ancient and medieval societies were exchanging ideas, techniques and people for the welfare of the society, and often such exchanges were mutually beneficial, free from the “modern” or “post-modern” notions. There is an evidence for the presence of Buddhists from the Southeast Asia in the educational establishments of Nalanda for the purpose of learning. Similar academic cooperation and exchange can be organized in the contemporary context under the India-ASEAN initiatives.

### ***Education: Student/Research Exchange Programmes***

In the area of education, serious interactions are essential. Offering fellowships for undertaking post-doctoral and short-term research programmes on certain aspects of cultures and cultural interactions, and exchange of students at the doctoral level and offering training through short-term academic workshops to the students can help in research interactions and development, and in building long-term relationships and in empowering younger generation. Study tours in ASEAN-India regions can be encouraged among the children of schools and college students.

### ***Joint Historical and Archaeological Research Initiatives***

To move beyond the level of seminars that contribute to academic exchanges and dissemination of ideas and findings, undertaking joint research projects in the area of history and archaeology is also equally important. The collaborative projects can help bring in new data and to understand cultural connections and linkages and to foster long-term academic partnerships.

### ***Organizational, Financial and Logistic Support***

Creation of a forum for ASEAN-India Academic and Cultural interaction can be very useful. Offering financial and logistic support to undertake collaborative research projects in the area of history and archaeology can lead to more academic interactions, and shed new light on the processes of interactions. Often to initiate such projects and to achieve meaningful and serious results, sustained, constant support is vital.

## 4. Conclusions

Long distance exchange has been an important mechanism used by societies, not only to tackle the lack of exotic resources necessary for cultural complexity, but also to allow new ideas for cultural and technological development. Such exchanges help the concerned communities mutually, and contribute to cultural enrichment. India and Southeast Asia had strong commercial interactions in the medieval period and the merchant guild network of Indian origin that was present at a few settlements of Southeast Asia and India facilitated these interactions. While at one level the interactions between India and Southeast Asia can be seen as part of the Indian Ocean regional exchanges involving Afro-Euro-Asia region in the west to China in the east, at another level, the interactions between India and Southeast need to be focused exclusively.

The early medieval society in India and Southeast Asia had attained a higher degree of social complexity with state formation and social hierarchy, when compared to the early historic period. Commodities such as copper, eagle wood, tin and camphor of Southeast Asia and pearl, coral, betel nuts, cardamom, Indian spices, variety of textiles and silk, medicinal herbs, and possibly iron were exchanged. Cultural ideas that were exchanged between these regions contributed to immense cultural developments. The Medieval commercial interactions were very well organized with the presence of the merchant guilds of Indian origin. These guilds were active till the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when major transformations took place in the organization of merchant guilds. The interactions of the early period can offer use for the way forward.

In the globalized, contemporary context, serious academic and cultural cooperations between India and ASEAN can be beneficial for both the regions for exchanging ideas and for building long-term partnerships. Shifting away from the colonial paradigms of research, focusing on the local cultural historical developments holistically, working on the microscopic aspects of Indian influence in Southeast Asia, collection of primary archaeological and epigraphical data through archaeological explorations and excavations, and application of scientific analysis, development of heritage sites and heritage tourism, and forging academic research partnerships for undertaking research projects can be useful for developing lasting ties and interactions. To achieve the academic

knowledge production and dissemination, and cultural interactions among various sections of the society through intellectual partnerships, support in-terms of financial, logistic and infrastructure is essential from the India-ASEAN initiative.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank RIS, ASEAN-India Centre, Prof. H. P. Ray, Prof. Prabir De and Dr. Durairaj Kumarasamy for the support in the preparation of this paper.

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## Maritime Relations between Peninsular India and Southeast Asia: An Archaeological Perspective

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K. Rajan

### 1. Introduction

The Coromandel Coast (*cōlmaṇṭala kaṭarkarai*), Malabar Coast (*malaimaṇṭalam*) and Konkan Coast of peninsular India played a vital role in the transoceanic trade from the times of Iron Age. The sepulchral monuments, popularly called Iron Age megalithic monuments, ceramics, graffiti marks, iron objects, beads made of semiprecious stones such as carnelian, quartz, agate, lapis-lazuli, sapphire and black-cat-eye encountered in South India, Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka clearly point to the emergence of cultural homogeneity as well as towards close maritime contacts. Further, the archaeological sites and habitation mounds strategically located on trade routes and in the midst of resource zones suggest that human occupation is widespread, transcending different ecological zones. The continuous human occupation leads to resource mobilization and subsequently to resource transaction through trade and trade networks. The archaeological and epigraphical findings of the region under discussion point to a vibrant trade carried out with extensive and reliable trade networks. The long survival of trade centres and port towns located in potential economically viable resource zones are the

fine indicators of its natural growth and expansion. The exploitation of natural resources like iron ore, pearl, gemstone, cotton, spices, forest products, glass, etc. through the induction of new technology in the area of production and transportation led to vibrant industrial activities such as iron, steel, gemstone, glass and textile industries. The growth of these industries transformed cultural matrix of the region. The state protection and the formation of trade guilds had an indirect impact on the development of trade and trade networks. These multiple factors played a crucial role in maintaining these commercial activities over a period of time. Irrespective of these emerging scenarios, the earliest written record emerges only from the time early historic. The penetration of Brahmi script and Prakrit language supported with Buddhism in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka is considered as the result of maritime trade. The traders as cultural ambassadors played a dominant role in carrying cultural values to trading nations. The material evidences encountered in early historic times and the epigraphical records particularly the trade guild inscriptions observed in medieval times in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka suggest that the cultural contacts between India and Southeast Asia were vibrant. Keeping in view voluminous data, the present paper attempts to understand the nature of trade that existed between 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE and 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. The transoceanic trading activities have been discussed in the backdrop of recent archaeological evidences, which surfaced in India, Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia and the West.

Before going into the details of the maritime trade, it is necessary to understand the nature of goods produced for exports, the volume of trade, the role of traders and trade guilds, which were involved in carrying these goods to different parts of the Indian Ocean region and trade routes connecting different port towns, trade centres, mercantile cities and production centres for better trade exchanges. Although, it is not possible to list out all the trade goods involved in the transoceanic trade but some of the goods such as gemstone, pearl, iron and steel, forest products, textile and glass involved in extensive trade are highlighted here.

### ***Gemstone***

One of the important industries that fetched greater amount of external wealth to peninsular India is of gemstone industry. India's tradition in gemstone is elaborated in *Arthasāstra*, *Ratnasāstra*, *Vishnudharmottara*, *Brahma samhita*, *Yukiti-kalpataru* and in *Caṅkam* literature. The availability

of large number of semiprecious stones in varied cultural contexts since Harappan times suggests its significance. Greek introduced intaglios and cameos in India. Two intaglios (a garnet and a carnelian) representing a grazing horse from Vellalur and a woman and a cameo representing fish on carnelian from Karur are good examples. The Pattanam (ancient Muziris/Muciri) excavation also yielded considerable number of cameo blocks. The recent study carried out on traditional bead-making industry at Kangayam by the author in the backdrop of Kodumanal excavation has proved the continuity of this industry (Rajan 2004, 2015). Gemstone industry of the Kongu region (Chera country) played a crucial role in the trade contact with the Indian Ocean region. Beads of sapphire, beryl, agate, carnelian, amethyst, lapis-lazuli, jasper, garnet, soap stone, quartz, onyx, cat eye, etc. found in different manufacturing stages at Kodumanal stand as a testimony to their production (Rajan 1991, 2015). The absence of raw materials like carnelian, agate and lapis-lazuli in this region suggests that these might have been procured from Gujarat-Maharashtra and Afghanistan, respectively, either directly or through intermediate trade transactions (Chakrabarti 1978, Tosi and Marcello 1973).

Another significant discovery is the exposure of a complete gemstone industry at Kodumanal. The four trenches laid in the northern part of the habitation mound yielded the industry in different stages of manufacture. A huge quartz block with cut-marks, barrel-shaped quartz cut-pieces and quartz discs of various sizes were recovered demonstrating different stages of manufacturing. The rough-outs and chips stand as a testimony to this affair. The beads in different manufacturing stages, rough-outs, finished and semi-finished, drilled and undrilled, polished and unpolished, roughly shaped balls, cylindrical discs, rings, truncated cones, blades, etc. were unearthed along with the raw material. The discarded chips, grooved stone slab used for polishing the beads, a huge quartz block and several barrel and disc shaped quartz blocks found intact clearly demonstrate that the quartz beads or objects were manufactured locally at Kodumanal. The survival of this age-old tradition could be seen at Kangayam, the nearby town. An ethno-archaeological study carried out in Kangayam region by the author clearly shows that the present-day traditional bead making artisans are still following the same old method observed in Kodumanal. The references on gemstone industry found in *Caṅkam* literature also support our view. The *Caṅkam* literature *Patirruppattu* (67:1; 74:5) referred to this site as *Koḍumaṇam*, famous

for gems. During early historic times, beryl was highly valued than gold. These finished beads were sent down to *Muciri* (Pattanam) through Palaghat gap on the Kerala Coast for final shipment to Roman world. Such beads also made a way to Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka through ports of Korkai, Alagankulam, Kaveripattinam and Arikamedu.

The collection of gemstone recorded at several places in *Caṅkam* literature belongs to the early part of Christian era. But all of them refer to the natural way of collection. They collected gemstone while tilling the land, grazing the cattle and digging the land for roots. There is hardly any reference, except one, on an organized way of quarrying the gemstones. Generally, the hillocks (*kunram*) embedded with gems (*tiru-maṇi*) are often mentioned in the literature (*Narriṇai* 234:3). The precious stones (*tiru-maṇi*) with various shapes (*pala-urū*) emerged from the ground (*nilavaṇai*) (*Narriṇai* 399:4-5). Here, the various shapes denote the nature of the original shape of the precious stone. When the hillock people (*vēṭṭuvar*) go for hunting, the sparkling (*miḷira*) gems (*maṇi*) appear on the ground due to the thrust of toe (*kuḷampu*) of the galloping deer or animal (*Puranāṇūru* 202:1-3; *Maturaikāñci* 273). The cattle keepers (*kōvalar*) collected sparkling precious stones (*katir-maṇi*) while going for cattle grazing in the pastoral tracks (*mullai-nilam*) of Ceruppumalai belongs to Chera king (*Patirrupattu* 21:20-23). The hillock *Ceruppumalai* belonging to the Chera king Pūliyar Kō (Palyāṇai Celkelu Kuṭṭuvaṇ) could be contextually identified with the Sivanmalai and Perumalmalai located west of Kangayam in Erode district. The flawless gems (*tiru-maṇi*) were collected by the tillers (*ērālar*) from the plough marks while tilling the land (*nāñcil-āṭiya-kolu-vali*) (*Patirrupattu* 58:13-19; 76:11-15). The hillock people (*kāṇavar*) used to collect precious stones (*tūmaṇi*) when they dug for roots (*kiḷaṅku*) in the hillocks (*kunram*) (*Kuruntokai* 379:1-3). The *kāṇavar* also collected sparkling precious stones (*kaṇ porutu imaikkum tiru-maṇi*) by digging hard surface with the help of elephant tusk (*yāṇai-veṇ-kōṭu*) (*Akanāṇūru* 282:1-10). The precious stones also appeared in pits dug by the wild boars (*Narriṇai* 399:2-4). The gems were also collected in the midst of milk-white quartz (*vāṇ-paliṅku*) and red gravel/feldspar (*cem-paral*) (*Patirrupattu* 66:16-20). The gems were collected from hillock (*malai*), land (*nilam*) and water (*nīr*) (*Maturaikāñci* 504-506). In this context, one must realize that the pearl (*muttu*) is also considered as a gem by the Early Historic people, as it comes from water i.e. sea-water.

The quality is judged based on the level of light that is emitted from a semi-precious stone (*tiru-maṇi imaikkum*). The exposed gemstones emit light through reflection of the evening sunlight falling on the western slopes of the Kolli hills, located near Namakkal (*Akanāṇūru* 213:11-15). The hills, hill slopes and lands were spread with the stones (*Maturaikāñci* 273-285; *Narriṇai* 234:3) and they were found exposed during rainy season and these were sometimes brought down by streams (*Aiṅkurūṇūru* 233:2-4). These precious stones collected by the local people were sold out in the markets (*Maturaikāñci* 504-506). Quite interestingly, there is a reference to specialist artisan called *tiru-maṇi kuyiṇar* (gem borer) (*Maturaikāñci* 511; *Cilappatikāram* 5:46) and *maṇi-viṇaiṇar* (*Maṇimēkalai* 28:45) exclusively working on gemstones. The Tamil-Brahmi inscription of 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, found at Arachchalur in Erode district, mentions about a gemstone tester, called *maṇiya-vaṇṇakkaṇ* (Mahadevan 1968). There is a reference on the whetstone/lap stone (*cemaikal*) specialist called *ciṟukārōṭaṇ*, who prepares the wheel by mixing *payiṇ* (wax) and *kal* (probably corundum powder) (*Akanāṇūru* 1:5-6; 356:9). The gems to be faceted or polished are fixed on wax placed on the tip of the rod. Sometimes, the gemstones (*teṇ-maṇi*) are separated from the parent rock by placing them in the furnace (*ūtulai*) that makes clipping easier (*Kuṟuntokai* 155:3-4).

These references clearly indicate that semi-precious stones (*tiru-maṇi*) were generally collected by the hillock people (*kāṇavar*), cattle-raising people (*kōvalar*) and tillers (*uḷavar*). The collected gemstones were sold in the local market. Then, the artisans (like *ciṟukārōṭaṇ* and *tiru-maṇi-kuyiṇar/tiru-maṇi viṇaiṇar*) prepared the beads or other objects and sold them again in internal, external and international markets. There was a gemstone tester (*maṇiya-vaṇṇakkaṇ*) to judge the quality of the gemstone. The mode of collection, the process involved in the preparation of final products and the use of various technical terms clearly suggest the existence of a gemstone industry in Tamil Nadu during the early historic times and the finished products were exported to Indian Ocean countries.

### **Pearl**

The recent ethno-archaeological study made on the traditional diving practices in the Gulf of Mannar helps to understand economic viability of pearl fishing that existed in the pre-Christian era. Even today the people of the Gulf of Mannar go for diving without any breathing aids to the

depth of six fathoms; they used to stay on the sea floor for about 54 seconds (Athiyaman 1997; Athiyaman 2000). This ethnographic study proved beyond doubt that the references found in the literature and foreign accounts are not an exaggeration. The earliest account of pearl and chank fishery in Tamil Nadu is of Megasthenes (Arunachalam 1952). Though the method of diving is not adequately recorded, many of the *Cankam* literature like *Kalitokai* (131:22) and *Akanāṇṇūru* (350:10-11) had mentions of fishing community *paratavar* (*Barata* in Sri Lanka); who resided at Pandya capital Korkai were involved in the pearl fishing (*Cirupāṇārruppaṭai* 56-58). *Mahāvamsa* refers to eight kinds of pearls presented to king Ashoka by King Devanampiya Tissa (250-210 BC). Duttagamani (161-137 BC) decorated his hall with pearls establishing the existence of pearl fishing in Gulf of Mannar (Geiger 1950). The *Periplus Erythrean Sea* mentions that condemned criminals were used at the Pandya port Korkai in the Gulf of Mannar (McCrindle 1984). Strabo, Pliny and Ptolemy also referred to pearl fishing. The port Korkai on the east coast of Tamil Nadu and Mantai on the west coast of Sri Lanka are the two important international ports of calls in the Gulf of Mannar. The pearl oysters of *P.fucata* type grow on pearl beds or banks (*pār* in Tamil), but it is seasonal. Due to frequent migrations of pearl oysters to opposite beds in the Gulf of Mannar of India and Sri Lanka, the pearl divers were forced to move frequently between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lankan coast. The recent excavations conducted in 2015 and 2016 at Keeladi (Kiladi), near Madurai, yielded considerable number of pearls in the excavated trenches testifying existence of the pearl industry.

### ***Metallurgy***

Another important industry that fetches good amount of wealth to the treasury is iron and steel industry. The traditional crucible steel was produced out of high carbon alloys in India before 4<sup>th</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. This is well reflected in the Classical Mediterranean accounts (Bronson 1986). Pliny's *Natural History* identifies the Chera country as the source of iron to Roman world (Bronson 1986). This traditional method was in vogue till 17<sup>th</sup> century in Tamil Nadu (Buchanan 1807). The technical terms like *irumbu* (iron) (*Akanāṇṇūru* 4:3), *ekku* (steel) (*Purāṇāṇṇūru* 26:5-6) *kollan* (black smith), *karumai kollan* (skilled black smith) (*Purāṇāṇṇūru* 21:8), *ulai* (furnace) (*Perumpāṇārruppaṭai* 437), *ulai-kūṭam* (workshop) (*Purāṇāṇṇūru* 170-17) *ulai-kal* (anvil) (*Purāṇāṇṇūru* 170:11),



turutti (bellow) (*Perumpāṇārruppaṭai* 206; *Akanāṇāru* 224), *vicaī vāṅku* or *mīṭulai* (pedal bellow) (*Perumpāṇārruppaṭai* 207), *kuṭam* (crucible), *kuṟaṭu* (tong) and *kuṟukku* (nozzle or blow pipe) found in *Caṅkam* literature proved the level of technical know-how of this industry. The nineteenth century travellers identified three different types of crucible processes—Deccani or Hyderabad process, Mysore process and Tamil Nadu process. In Tamil Nadu process, the charge consisted of wrought iron produced separately, which was then sacked in the closed crucibles (Verhoeven 1987). The recent chemical analysis and metallurgical studies carried out on the iron object collected from iron producing sites at Guttur, Mallapadi and Kodumanal by Rao and Sasikaran (1997) showed the evidence of cast iron which was attained through the maintenance of high temperature of around 1300°C over a longer period. The study, further, reveals that they not only smelted wrought iron and carburised it to steel but also fabricated iron bars by forge welding low carbon steel strips with wrought iron strips to get strength to the artefact (Sasisekaran 2004). The *Caṅkam* literature *Kuṟuntokai* (155) refers to the manufacturer of cast iron bell by wax method. The study of steel-producing site at Mel-Siruvalur in Tiruvannamalai district (Srinivasan 1994) clearly proves that high quality iron and steel were produced in Tamil Nadu. While other parts of India followed the technique of carburization, the smelters of Tamil Nadu followed the technique of decarburization as the carbon content in the iron ores here is relatively high. The discovery of separate furnaces like conical furnace for iron and crucible furnace for steel at Kodumanal goes well with this process (Rajan 1991).

The recent investigations carried out in iron ore bearing zone of Salem region yielded interesting evidence on the production of ultra-high carbon steel. The metallographic analysis carried out on the sword collected from an Iron Age grave at Thelunganur in Mettur taluk, Salem district of Tamil Nadu revealed that it was made of ultra-high carbon steel whose carbon concentration was 1.2 per cent or above based on the weight fraction. The radiometric date obtained for the carbon sample collected from the sword place, dating back in the circa 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE (AMS date of 3089±40 yr BP and the calibrated calendar date falls between 1435 and 1233 BCE). It is quite clear that a new technique is conceived here to accommodate the locally available high carbon content iron ores. This high quality steel was at a greater demand in the West for a longer period. Such demand would have existed in Southeast Asia

too. However, there is hardly any evidence that comes forth from the Southeast Asia. The future discovery may help to understand the role of steel in Southeast Asia.

### **Glass**

The production of glass in India has a hoary past. It seems that the Indus people did not have glass, although they had contacts with the Mesopotamian region. They preferred *faience*, which may be seen as a type of proto-glass. The Painted Grey Ware (PGW) culture of the Ganga valley and possibly the Chalcolithic culture of southern Deccan (four glass beads found at Maski, date uncertain) (Engle 1976; Francis 1984; Kanungo 2004a; Kanungo 2004b; Dussubieux *et.al.*, 2008) did have elegant glass beads dating before the mid-first millennium BCE. However, the Indian glass industry, with production of beads, bangles and small ornaments, truly gained momentum in the last two or three centuries BCE. About 30 excavated sites in different parts of India have revealed glass objects of various colours, including green, blue, red, white, orange and some other shades. In South India, many archaeological sites yielded glass beads. Arikamedu (Casal 1956; Lal 1952), Manikollai (Cuddalore Dt.), Thiruchapuram (Cuddalore Dt.), Appur (Kanchipuram Dt.), Aliyanilai (Pudukottai Dt.) and Porunthal (Dindigul Dt.) stand out for the several thousands of beads. All except Arikamedu have possible evidence of furnace material. Kanungo summarized information from more than 200 sites with evidence of glass; starting from the Iron Age down to Late Medieval times. Nearly 29 sites belong to the Iron Age and about 119 sites come from Early Historic times; of these, about 150 sites reported glass beads, and 36 claimed to have been manufacturing sites too (Kanungo 2002a; 2004). Thus, India enjoyed an important, even dominant role in manufacturing of both stone and glass beads. Interestingly, India enjoys the same position today. While glass beads rapidly became popular as an item of adornment due to their attractiveness, affordability, transportability and durability; even more important may have been the role of beads in economic, social, aesthetic and ritual realms of mankind. The sustainable internal and external trade intertwined these systems together. Different kinds of beads were made and exchanged, but the small, monochrome, beads manufactured by the drawn-tube method in south India or furnace-wound techniques in North India are most common at the archaeological sites.

In ancient times, glass was produced by melting a mixture of sand, to provide silica, and a source of alkali, usually soda, to act as a flux to lower melting temperature. Important also for stabilizing the glass were lime and alumina, usually included along with the two main ingredients rather than added intentionally. In addition, metallic oxides were mixed in to colour the glass, with a resulting composition of about 70 per cent silica (SiO<sub>2</sub>), 15 per cent soda (Na<sub>2</sub>O), between 3 and 10 per cent lime (CaO) and alumina (Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>), and between 0.5 and 2 per cent colorants, usually copper, iron or cobalt. Dikshit (1969), Sen and Chaudhuri (1985) and Subbarayappa (1991) made limited study on glass technology. Recently, Laure Dussubieux brought new insights into South Asian glass compositions. The main objectives of her study were to identify provenance and diffusion area of Indian and Southeast Asian glass products (Dussubieux *et.al.* 2001, 2008, 2010, 2012). Further, she had made some scientific studies on the glass material collected from early historic sites of Arikamedu, Karaikadu, Kaveripattinam (Pūmpuhār), Kodumanal and Alagankulam, which provided a good picture on the nature of glass technology in Tamil Nadu (Dussubieux 2008). Subsequently, Bernard Gratuze and Guillaume Sarah analysed one hundred glass artefacts recovered from seven archaeological sites, namely Alagankulam, Appur, Arikamedu, Karaikadu, Karur, Kodumanal and Manikollai and the results confirmed findings of Dussubieux (Gratuze and Sarah 2011). Peter Francis and Alok Kumar Kanungo made an ethnographic study of glass bead-making respectively at Papanaidupet in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh (Francis 2002) and at Purdalpur in Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh (Kanungo 2004b). In addition, the possible discovery of a glass working furnace at Porunthal near Palani, Appur near Chingleput, Aliyanilai<sup>1</sup> near Aranthangi and Manikollai and Thiruchpuram near Cuddalore provided fresh evidence on this subject. The excavation of a bead mound (*pāci* > bead; *mēḍu* > mound) at Porunthal revealed more than 2000 glass beads from a 50 sq. m. excavated area (Rajan *et.al.* 2014). The recent discovery of sites like Manikollai (*maṇi* means bead; *kollai* means field) and Thiruchapuram, located south of Cuddalore on Chidamparam road, yielded thousands of glass beads on the surface spread out in an area of more than 25 acres of land. Literally, they were bead mounds. The works of the above scholars and others in the field of ancient glass have provided evidence for an emerging picture of glass production in the ancient India.

In the ancient world, glass beads were produced by a variety of methods; the most common being winding hot glass around an iron rod or *mandrel* (*furnace-winding*), folding a heated pad of glass around a mandrel (*folding*), shaping and drilling using stone-working techniques (*lapidary*), or cut from drawn tubes of glass (*drawn* or *drawn-tube* beads) (Francis 2002). The majority of South Indian glass beads were *drawn*. With this method, the beads are first cut from tubes that have been pulled or drawn out from a hollow gather of glass, then subsequently re-heated at a lesser temperature to round off sharp edges. These techniques were used till very recently (Stern 1987; Francis 1991; Kanungo 2004a) to produce millions of small beads; ranging in diameter from 1 to about 6 mm; the more time-consuming technique is producing furnace-wound beads (Francis 2002; Kanungo 2004b). W.G.N. Van der Sleen (1973) classified small, monochrome, *drawn* and *wound* glass beads as ‘trade-wind-beads’ due to their movement across the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf. However, Francis (1990) emphasized the importance of production technology and named only *drawn* beads as Indo-Pacific Monochrome Drawn Beads (IPMDB) or simply Indo-Pacific beads (Francis 2002).

These Indo-Pacific beads appear at South and Southeast Asian archaeological sites, dating from the middle of first millennium BCE. Based on typological observations and archaeological data, most scholars believe that the earliest Indo-Pacific beads were made in South India. It seems both the beads and the technology were moved over to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Although the details of both the primary and the secondary glass production centres are far from certain; recent evidence supports a picture of secondary production of beads and bangles at a number of sites in both South and Southeast Asia; with primary production more likely to be restricted geographically. Taking into account of recent compositional data, a complex picture has emerged (Brill 1999; Dussubieux 2001; Dussubieux and Gratuze 2003; Lankton *et.al.* 2008; Dussubieux *et.al.* 2008; Dussubieux *et.al.* 2010; Lankton 2011). The identification of chemically distinct glass at multiple contemporaneous and distant locations reveals existence of regional glass technologies with several independent glass bead-making centres at different points across South and Southeast Asia.

The most common type of glass used in India was manufactured out of mineral soda–alumina glass. Beginning in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium CE, this glass accounted for the majority of the glass material studied in the South

and Southeast Asian regions with a complete range of occurrence from the late centuries BCE to the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE (Lankton and Dussubieux 2008). Laure Dussubieux suggests that Indian glass soda-alumina glass had at least four different sub-groups—m-Na-Al types 1 through 4 (Dussubieux, *et. al.* 2001, 2010, 2012). Among the glass specimens analysed, nearly 54 per cent came from Tamil Nadu. These are mineral-soda-alumina glass (m-Na-Al 1) with high alumina, relatively high barium and relatively low uranium. There is an evidence for production of such beads at Appur, Manikollai, Thiruchapuram and Porunthal in Tamil Nadu (Gratuze and Sarah 2011, Rajan 2014). In addition, the Sri Lankan site of Giribawa, with a possible date from the late centuries BCE to the early centuries CE, yielded furnaces lined with vitrified alumina-rich materials and blocks of raw glass with similar composition. Alumina sand sources were identified in close proximity (Bopearachchi 1999; Gratuze *et. al.* 2000; Dussubieux 2001).

Glass beads with chemical composition m-Na-Al type-1 were very unusual in North India where m-Na-Al type-3 glass, slightly lower in alumina, higher in lime and with considerably higher uranium levels than m-Na-Al type-1, occurred in large quantity. In terms of primary production, the site of Kopia in Uttar Pradesh yielded convincing evidence of glass manufacturing in the form of crucibles and a 120 pound piece of glass, dated to the first century CE, although other parts of the site were in early as the fifth century BCE (Roy and Varshney 1953; Kanungo and Misra 2004; Kanungo and Shinde 2005; Kanungo and Brill 2009). Interestingly, m-Na-Al type-1 glass is the most common glass type found outside India stretching from West Africa in the west to Korea in the east; indicating a very wide pattern of exchange. Many Indo-Pacific beads have been found at Khuan-Luk-pat in Thailand, and it is possible that these beads may have been made from ingots of Indian-made m-Na-Al type-1 glass. The north Indian variety (m-Na-Al type-3) is found at the 4<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE site of Khao Sam Kaeo in Thailand at the narrowest part of the Thai/Malay Peninsula, and as far away as Korea. Thus, the monochrome Indo-Pacific beads made their presence from the time of 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

### ***Textile Industry***

In archaeological context, impression of woven fibre, generally found at the base of the pot, stands as mute evidence on the existence of

textile industry. Evidences found at Mohenjodaro, Nevasa, Chandoli, Lothal, Alamgirpur, Noh, Rang Mahal, Kaundinyapura and Kodumanal indicate the presence of this industry in different technological level. The terracotta spindle whorls and woven cotton pieces found at Kodumanal (Rajan 1996) and dying vat at Uraiur (Raman 1964) and Arikamedu (Begley 1993) further strengthen their survival in the early historic times. The occurrence of quite a number of intact terracotta spindle whorls pierced at the centre by means of an iron rod recovered from many of the excavated sites such as Arikamedu, Kodumanal, Uraiur, Kiladi, etc. is clearly suggestive of cotton processing. In addition, an iron rod having grooving at regular interval used in textile industry to run the thread was also found in the excavation. There are also several ivory and bone tools with little grooving at the middle of the tools, which might have been used in textile industry. To strengthen this fact, a remarkably well preserved piece of woven cotton was recovered from the site Kodumanal (Rajan 2015).

### ***Forest Products***

Forest products like spices, cardamom, sandal wood, etc. played a crucial role both in the internal and external trade. The recent excavations carried out in two seasons at Thandikudi in Palani hills at the 4400 feet MSL by the author clearly proved that people reached and settled in high altitude from time immemorial. The archaeological vestiges identified at Thandikudi site clearly suggest that this site lies in a perfect ecological background, which helped to occupy the site continuously for more than two thousand five hundred years. The trade guild inscription issued during 12<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Kulasekara Pandya (1280 CE) suggests its long existence and also its trade contact with plains. The mountains, perennial ponds, fertile soil formed in the valley helped ancient settlers in several ways to continue their occupation for such a longer period. The environment helped to cultivate pepper and cardamom at a large scale. The occurrence of large number of carnelian, quartz and agate beads at this altitude suggests the existence of extensive trade network. Most of the elite items recovered from the graves were of products of plains. These extravagant items might have been exchanged with equal value such as pepper and cardamom or other forest products like ivory and medicinal plants. The concentration of large number of archaeological sites noticed in the Vaigai basin particularly in the Kambam valley suggests that the whole Western Ghat might have been well-connected

with the trade centres/routes of the plains (Rajan 2005). These products might have found its way to the far of countries through well established trade networks.

## 2. Trade and Trade Routes

### *Early Historic Period*

The identification of raw material, procurement of raw material, transformation of raw material into an object of usage, the technology involved in the movement of the goods from production centres to marketing centres, the exchange of good in terms of money or matter, the control over the production and marketing by the traders or state, trade networks, trade routes and many other such aspects are involved in the establishment of a well-organized internal and international trade. State has played an important role in the territorial expansion, control over resource, facilitating trade activities through various provisions and protections to various marketing mechanisms and trade centres all along the trade routes as it generally fetches lot of revenue to the state. The references on trade, traders, trade guild, trade goods and trade routes are some of the finest indicators on the existence of the trade. In that way, major trade routes that criss-crossed South India are the finest indicators to understand the trade networks. The first one starting from port Kaveripattinam (Pūmpukār) through Uraiyur, the Chola capital, reached Madurai, the Pandya capital, after passing through the important sites like Kodumpalur and Vellarai niyamam. The famous Mangulam Tamil-Brahmi inscription of Pandya Neduncheliyan was found on this route near Melur. This trade route further continued towards south up to Korkai, the second capital city of Pandyas. Another trade route that branched off from the southern route, connected Kerala (*Malaimaṇḍalam*) through Kollam pass. The east-west route connecting Alagankulam located on the mouth of river Vaigai on the seacoast and Vanji and Muciri (Pattanam) on the west coast passed through Madurai, Chinnamanur, Uttamapuram, Gudalur, Kumuli and reaches Muciri along the river Periyar. The major products that exchanged along this route were conch shell and pearl of Gulf of Mannar, semiprecious stones, spices, pepper, medicinal plants, aromatics and other hill products of Kambam valley. Hence, they might have used this trade route to enter into Pandya region from the west coast of Chera country. The occurrence of Punch Marked coins at Bodiyayakkanur and Roman coins at Alagankulam, Madurai, Uttamapuram and Gudalur, the

ceramics like NBP, Amphorae, rouletted ware and Arritine ware clearly points to the existence of trade along this route. The occurrence of name of the traders in the Tamil-Brahmi cave inscriptions dealing on oil, gold, paddy and ploughshare indicates the vibrant trade and also of having enough wealth to make donations to Jain monks. The huge settlements noticed along the trade route at Uttamapuram, Uttukkadu, Putuppatti and Tamanampatti reveal the existence of a continuous occupation. These sites yielded large number of black-and-red ware, russet coated ware, burnt bricks of abnormal size and rouletted ware. A Jain monument dating back to c. 9<sup>th</sup> century CE was also found at Uttamapalayam. It is a well-known fact that most of the Jain monuments were established on the trade routes and patronized by merchants. The inscription found on the walls of the Siva temple at Chinnamanur pinpoints existence of the mercantile guild *Ticaiāyirattu ayinūrruvar*.

The merchant community specializing in sugar, salt, gem, gold, cloth and oil were mentioned in the Tamil-Brahmi inscription as donors, and they organized trade (Mahadevan 2003). The art of gold smith seems to have caught the fancy of foreign markets and these types of ornaments were exported to foreign countries during the early historic times. The availability of Brahmi inscription with influence of Prakrit of Sri Lanka origin found at Alagankulam clearly suggest that this port on the mouth of Vaigai river played a significant role on the maritime trade with Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka is known for pearl, forest products and gemstones.

There is another trade route which was branched off from this east-west route by taking diversion from Madurai and reaching again Muciri through Palaghat gap after crossing Dindugal, Palani and Pollachi (Rajan 2009). The archaeological site Porunthal and Kolumam and Roman coin hoard sites Kalayamuttur and Pollachi are located on this route. Another east-west major trade route connecting Kaveripattinam on the east coast and Pattanam on the west coast passed through major cities, trade centres and industrial towns such as Karur (the second capital of Cheras), Kodumanal, Sulus, Vellalur, Velanthavalam and Vanji. The famous Roman coin yielding sites Karur, Kodumanal, Kattanganni, Sulus, Vellalur, Velanthavalam and Eyyal are located on this trade route. The trade route emerged as the site Arikamedu moved westward along the river Pennaiyar and it reached Karnataka after passing through Tirukoyilur (the capital of chieftain Malaiyaman), Jambai (the location of famous *satiyaputō Atiyamān* inscription) Chengam, (the capital of



chieftain Nannan) and Tagadur (the capital of chieftain Athiyaman). Roman coins and Punch-marked coins were unearthed.

### *Navigational Techniques*

The established trade routes, production centres, mercantile cities, trade centres and port towns clearly point to the existence of maritime trade. Navigational technology might have played a crucial role in the development of trade. The navigational terms such as *ampi* (*Aiṅkurunūru* 98:1-2; *Narriṇai* 354:5-7), *Punai* or *Kaṭṭumaram* (*Akanānūru* 186:8; *Kalittokai* 134:24-25; *Perumpānāraṟruppaḍai* 2.11:30-35) and *Timil* (*Narriṇai* 111:5-9; *Akanānūru* 350:10-15) point to the existence of different type of boats/ships. The boat *koḍuntimil* and *tīntimil* (*Narriṇai* 175:1-3; *Akanānūru* 240:5-7) were named after their sturdiness employed with specialized sailors, called *timilar*. The ship used for international trade was invariably called as *kalam* and *nāvāy* (*Narriṇai* 295:5-6). It had many sails and masts hoisted with flag (*Puranānūru* 30:10-11; *Akanānūru* 152:6-8; *Maduraikāñchi* 74-83) and moved from one *paṭṭiṇam* (port) to another *paṭṭiṇam* (*Paripāḍal* 10:38-40). One of the remarkable recent evidences is a ship motif collected from the fifth season of the excavation at Alagankulam, a Pandya port, on the mouth of the river Vaigai. The ship was engraved as graffiti on the shoulder portion of a rouletted ware. L.Casson of New York University who examined this graffiti identified as one of the largest type of Graeco-Roman three masterd ships used in trans-oceanic voyage (Sridhar 2005). One must recall here, the Vienna Museum papyrus, a trade contract written in Greek executed between a Musiri and Alexandria trader, specifying the volume of goods carried to Alexandria in a single ship (Rajan 2000). The references like *Yavaṇar-iyarriya-viṇaimāṇ-pāvai* (the beautiful lamp made by *Yavanas*), *Yavaṇa-p-pāvai*, *Yavaṇar-ōtima-ṇilakku* (*Yavana* lamp), *vaṇkan-Yavaṇar* (war like *Yavanas*), *Yavaṇar-irukkai* (residence of *Yavanas*) and *Yavaṇa-t-tatchar* (*Yavana* carpenter) found in *Caṅkam* literature further support this phenomenon. This was strengthened with identification of extensive port infrastructures like wharf, lighthouse and warehouse at Kaveripattinam (Soundrarajan 1994; Kasinathan 1999). An identical wharf-like structure in association with a wooden boat, wooden pillars installed along the brick structure (wharf) to tie the boat were unearthed at Pattanam (Muciri) on the bank of river Periyar near the mouth in Thrissur district of Kerala in 2007. Near to this, a huge brick platform was also exposed. The rouletted ware and amphorae found in large quantities also suggest their

external contact. So far, the Kerala Coast has not yielded rouletted ware; the present evidence sheds a new light on this aspect. Further, the brick structure unearthed at Arikamedu, Kaveripattinam and Muciri suggests their technical know-how. As the excavation at Muciri is in progress, it may give much more evidence in future.

The structures noticed at Kaveripattinam (Pūmpuhār) and Pattanam (Muciri) could be compared with the structural descriptions mentioned in *Caṅkam* literature. The term *munturai* generally refers to the place where one enters into the river. If the same term refers to the place near the coast at port towns, one could presume that it also denotes the harbour. This term is used in relation to the early historic ports like Korkai, Kaveripattinam and Arikamedu (Vīrai-paṭṭinam) (*Akanāṇūru* 130:12; 201:4; 206:13; *Paṭṭinapālai* 173). The term *perunturai* (*Narriṇai* 295:6; *Akanāṇūru* 27:9) refers to the actual place where the cargo is handled. The ships were either anchored at a distance away from the port city or the goods welled into the river mouth without slackening the sail (*Puranāṇūru* 30:11-13), as one noticed at Kaveripattinam, which indirectly suggests that the ancient Kaveri river mouths were wide and deep enough to allow the boat move in freely. So the anchorage depends upon the nature of the river mouth. In a few cases, the small boats were pressed into the service to carry the goods from the big ships anchored in the open sea, near to the harbour (*Puranāṇūru* 343:5-6).

For effective seafaring, the knowledge of tide, current, wave action, wind movement and position of the star is essential. The term *ōtam* (*Narriṇai* 117:1-2; 335:1-3; *Akanāṇūru* 123:12-13; 220:12; 300:16-17) is used to note high tide and low tide. The movement of wind (*kaṛru*) and its effective utility in the trans-oceanic voyage was also recorded (*Narriṇai* 4:4; 31:8; 295:6). The knowledge of astronomy is also well reflected in the literature at several places. The astronomer known as *aṛivaṇ* (*Tolkāppiyam Poruḷatikaram* 17) forecasted the monsoon, draught period and even the change in the political rule based on the position of the stars (Gurunathan 1993). The knowledge of names of different stars and its position might have been effectively used by the mariners to navigate. Another interesting feature was the use of land-finding bird in a ship *vaṅkam* (*Nālāyirathivvyaprabandam* 692:3-4). Though the reference is late but the usage of land-finding birds had the antiquity since Harappan times (Rao 1987). The Sanskrit manuscript *Yuktikalpataru* refers these birds as *disakakas*. Pliny also states that Taprobane (Sri Lanka) mariners

handled this bird (Mc Crindle 1901). The Buddhist text *Digha Nikaya* (1.222) of *Sutta Pitaka* also confirms this (Davids 1890). The usage of stone anchor is also mentioned in the literature (*Maduraikāñchi* 375-379), and the recent discovery of stone anchors, though late in period, confirms the continuity of tradition (Jayakumar and Athiyaman 1996). This acquired and accumulated knowledge in the traditional navigation would have helped to multiply their mercantile activities in oceanic trade.

The existence of large number of archaeological sites and Jain centres with Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions all along the trade routes, the availability of Roman coin hoards, Punch-marked coins, NBP, Arritine ware, rouletted ware, amphorae, inscriptions of Sri Lankan origin and many other material remains suggest that sea ports of east and west coast of peninsular India have played avital role in the internal and the external trade during early historic times.

### Medieval Period

There are several references on ancient highways (*peruvali*) mentioned in medieval inscriptions. For instance, the inscriptions found in semiprecious bearing zone of Kongu country (present Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Erode and part of Salem region) refer several ancient trade routes. Among them, the *kōṅga-p-peruvali*, *viranārāyaṇaṇ-peruvali*, *nāṭṭu-p-peruvali*, *rājakēśari-peruvali*, *ayirai-peruvali*, *magadēsaṇ-peruvali*, *atiyaṇmāṇ-peruvali*, *pēraṛru-p-peruvali*, *chōlamādēvi-p-peruvali*, *pāla-p-peruvali* and *kārai-t-turai-p-peruvali* can be cited. The *kōṅga-p-peruvali* is one of the east-west major highways that connects Kaveri deltaic region with Kongu country (*ARE* 1911/281). It might have passed through Uraiyur, Kulithalai and Karur along the banks of river Kaveri and passed further west along the river Noyyal up to Perur near Coimbatore. The *viranārāyaṇaṇ-peruvali* mentioned in a record at Anaimalai is probably the one that connects Anaimalai with Kolumam. The *vaṭṭeluttu* inscription found at *Pachchai-pāli* near Sundakamuttur on the rocky surface on the side of the highway *Rājakēśari-p-peruvali* (named after Chola king Aditya I) is the one that connects Kongu-nadu with Malaimandalam (Kerala) (Vaidyanathan 1983). One could see still the old highway existed in front of the *Rājakēśari-p-peruvali* inscription. Another interesting feature of this inscription is that next to the eight-line *vaṭṭeluttu* inscription, three-line inscription in Tamil script reading *svasti sri rājakēśari peruvali* is engraved. This inscription belongs to

10<sup>th</sup> century CE, and this is the period when *vaṭṭeḷuttu* script was slowly replaced with the Tamil script by Chola regime in Tamil Nadu. The bi-script presentation suggests that the merchant not knowing a particular script could read the alternative script and understand the name of the highway. The term *nāṭṭu-p-peruvali* mentioned in the epigraph Rajendra I probably is the one that emanated from Karur connecting various *nāḍus* of Kongu country (*ARE* 1921/111). The highway that run between Karur and Karai-t-tolu, south of Dharapuram, was known as *kāraitturai-p-peruvali* (*SII* 3:26). The highway from Karai-t-tolu to Kolumam was known as *chōḷa-mādēvi-p-peruvali*. The *mēlai-p-peruvali* was another highway mentioned in Kiranur inscription that was from Dharapuram towards Pandya country through Palani/Vaikavur (*SII* 5:282). The Palani temple inscription mentions about a diversion road that goes to Pandimalai on Lower Palani hills, and this road may have also proceeded further to Pundurai, west of Kōḍaikanal (*SII* 5:286). This diversion would have taken from the major Highway connecting Pandya country and Chera country through Vaikavur (Palani) and Kolumam. The Palani temple inscription mentions this highway as *kōḷumattirṅku-p-pōra-peruvali*; a highway heading towards Kolumam (*SII* 5:286). It is also known as *Cēraṇaimēṇkōṇḍa-chōḷaṇ-peruvali* (*ARE* 1909). The east heading route from Dharapuram was known as *pāla-p-peruvali* (*SII* 5:257). Another major highway probably that connected to Chera capital Karur with Pallava capital Kanchi was the *magadēsaṇ-peruvali*. The Arakalur inscription refers to this highway running through *magataimaṇḍalam* in Attur taluk of Salem district (Rajannan 1992).

Besides, there were a few trade routes probably connecting with main highways like *veḷḷōṭṭu-vali* (*ARE* 1968), *peruntholuvu-vali* (*ARE* 1908), *Kongukulavalli-vadi*. The *Kongukulavalli-vadi* runs between Pollachi and Coimbatore and connected with *kōṅga-p-peruvali* or *rājakēsari peruvali*. *Rājamahēndra-vadi* was the one between Dindugal and Karur, connecting either *kōṅga-p-peruvali* or *nāṭṭu-p-peruvali* (*ARE* 1921).

The major trade guild inscriptions are found on these trade routes. The trade goods were transported on bullock-carts and also on the backs of donkeys and buffaloes (*ARE* 1920, 1978; Manickam 2001). The milestones might have been installed on these highways to indicate the distance as the two milestone inscriptions, respectively, were noticed at Muttanur and Atiyamankottai in Dharmapuri district (Govindarasu

1982). In these two mile-stones, the unit *kātham* indicating the distance is mentioned as 27 and 29 *kāthams*. The GPS position taken at the find-spots suggests that the crow-fly distance of one *kātham* is equivalent to 5 miles/8 km approximately. The laying of road, installing milestones and maintenance of these highways periodically probably were considered as the duty of the state. The toll-tax collected at several toll-gates would have been utilized for this purpose. These highways were connected with major mercantile towns.

### Trade Guilds of Medieval Period

Noboru Karashima and Y.Subbarayalu, who made an extensive study on the concept of supra-local organization of merchant guild, observed that the *aiñūrruvar* is a concept of the merchant organization, which overarches all the substantial merchant organizations found in some particular area, locality or town (Karashima 2002a). This organization took shape in the early tenth century CE. This umbrella organization attempted to bring together all possible specialist merchant groups, itinerant and sedentary, local and foreign under a common commercial network, spread over several regions. Some of the organizations coming under this supra-local/umbrella organization were otherwise known as *paḍiṇeṇ-vishayam/paḍiṇeṇ-bhūmi* or *nāṇādēsi*, *añjuvaṇṇam*, *nagaram*, *maṇigramam*, etc. The *paḍiṇeṇ-vishayam/paḍiṇeṇ-bhūmi* or *nāṇādēsi* were considered synonymous with *Aiñūrruvar*. The careful studies of the inscriptions relating to this corporate body by Dikshit (1959), Abhraham (1988), Champakalakshmi (1996), Karashima (2002a), Subbarayalu (2012) and others suggest that it was not a single and unified corporate body for the entire South India, though inscriptions bearing almost identical eulogistic preamble are found written in Kannada, Tamil and Telugu languages. These merchant guilds were non-commitment to any political power and maintained neutrality due to their trans-border commercial transactions. The occurrence of names of several groups of warriors (*vīrar/vīrakoḍiyār*) associated with these merchant guilds suggest that they had a tradition of protecting themselves.

A large number of trade guild inscriptions were encountered in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Out of 311 trade guild inscriptions, nearly 248 were from these two states; constituting nearly 80 per cent of the total inscriptions of which nearly 38 per cent come from Tamil Nadu and 42 per cent from Karnataka. If one considers the period - wise

distribution, only three inscriptions were from Karnataka, whereas Tamil Nadu met with 25 inscriptions during the period between 800-1000 CE. In case of period between 1001-1100 CE, out of 25 *aiññūrruvar* inscriptions encountered in Karnataka, only three belonged to early half of 11<sup>th</sup> century CE. Interestingly, of these three inscriptions noticed in Southern Karnataka, two were written in Tamil, issued during the reign of Rajendra I and Rajadhiraja I.

**Table 4.1: Trade Guild Inscriptions of South India**

S. No	Period	Andhra Pradesh	Kerala	Karnataka	Tamil Nadu	Maharashtra	Sri Lanka	SEA	Total
1	801-900	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	5
2	901-1000	0	2	1	24	0	0	0	27
3	1001-1100	5	3	25	18	0	1	1	53
4	1101-1200	6	0	56	12	2	11	0	87
5	1201-1300	9	2	33	46	0	1	1	92
6	1301-1400	6	0	8	11	0	2	0	27
7	1401-1600	9	0	6	5	0	0	0	20
	Total	35	8	131	117	2	15	3	311

\* SEA stands for South East Asia.

**Source:** Author's own.

The earliest *aiññūrruvar* inscription made its presence during 9<sup>th</sup> century CE at Mēlnaṅgāvaram in mid-Kaveri river valley near Kulithalai (Ganesan 1999). However, the dated inscription was from *kā-nāḍu* in mid-Vellar river valley of Pudukottai district. It was issued in the 20<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Chola king Parakesari (927 CE) at Munisandai in Tirumayam taluk of Pudukottai district (*IPS* 61). The *aiññūrruvar* trade guild inscriptions had the eulogy (*prasasti*) like king's eulogy. The earliest eulogy of this organization, though the term *aiññūrruvar* did not finds its place, appeared for the first time in Tamil Nadu around middle of 9<sup>th</sup> century CE at Kamudi in Ramanathapuram district (*ARE* 1974-75).

The full-fledged commercial settlements are called by a generic term *Nagaram*, a town (synonym with *paṭṭiṇam* and a place name with a suffix *puram*). It constituted only 5 per cent of the total settlements in Chola territory (Subbarayalu 2012). In spite of their small number, *nagarams* developed as a centre of transactions in which both local and itinerant

merchants were actively involved. It made appearance in ninth century and evolved in the later years as active commercial centres with the support of the state as well as with the trade organizations. Subsequently, a special kind of *nagarams* like *paṭṭiṇam*, *vēḷapuram*, *kaḍigai-tāvalam* and *erivīra-paṭṭiṇam* also emerged. The eulogies provided a kind of hierarchy among them as *paṭṭiṇam* (bigger town), *vēḷapuram* (harbour place and sometimes part of a bigger town) and *kaḍigai-tāvalam* (protected market place). The *erivīra-paṭṭiṇam* was just a new designation given to an old *nagaram* by the corporate body or by the guards themselves in the memory of the brave deeds of merchant guards who had given-up their life in protecting the merchants/merchant guilds. Thus, the *erivīra-paṭṭiṇam* was also a *nagaram* with special rights. Nearly 25 *erivīra-paṭṭiṇam* were identified out of 110 *nagarams* in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Sri Lanka, and quite importantly all the inscriptions were written in Tamil (Subbarayalu 2012).

Majority of inscriptions noticed in Southeast Asia are in Sanskrit. The major difference between the Sanskrit inscriptions and Tamil inscriptions is that the former inscriptions inform on political activities and the later inscriptions inform on trade activities. There are good numbers of Sanskrit inscriptions datable between 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Among them, Kutei inscriptions of Mulavaraman, Bogor inscription of Purnavarman, Nakon-sithamarat (Ligor) inscription of a Sri Vijaya King are important trade guild inscriptions. In contrast to this, trade guild inscriptions in Tamil are hardly reported in the period between 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. There are about seven inscriptions written in Tamil language.

- Wat Khlong Thom inscription from Krabi Province of Southern Thailand
  - Takua Pa inscription from north of Krabi of southern Thailand
  - Barus inscription from northern Sumatra of Indonesia
  - Wat Boroma That inscription from Nakhon Si Thammarat in Thailand
  - Jakarta National Museum
  - Pagan National Museum inscription in Myanmar
  - Quanzhou inscription from China
- i. The earliest and the first inscription was the one noticed in 1992 at Temple Museum of Wat Khlong Thom, Krabi Province, Southern Thailand, engraved on a green colour rectangular touch stone in Tamil-Brahmi script datable 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century CE; reading *Perumpataṅkal* meaning “touch stone of Purumpatan”.

- ii. The second earliest inscription (first trade guild inscription) was from Takua Pa, north of Krabi, in southern Thailand. It is believed that Takua Pa is ancient Takkola mentioned by Ptolemy. It seems to record the protection of a tank called Avaṇināranam, the title of Nandivaraman III (846-869 CE) under *maṇigrāmattār* and *sēṇamukattār* and similar body. *Maṇigrāmam* is a famous guild flourished in Tamil Nadu and Kerala from 9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century CE.
- iii. The third inscription dated back to 1088 CE was from Barus from northern Sumatra of Indonesia. This was discovered in 1890 in Lubo Tuo (Loboe Toewa) near Barus (Baros) and re-examined in 1994 at Jakarta National Museum.
- iv. The fourth inscription was from a Buddhist temple Wat Boroma That in Nakhon Si Thammarat in Thailand and the dates back either 1183 or 1283 CE.
- v. The fifth was again from Jakarta National Museum. It is bi-script inscription carrying Old Javanease and Tamil. But in both the cases, the language is Tamil. It is datable to 1258 or 1265 CE.
- vi. The sixth inscription comes from Pagan National Museum in Myanmar datable to 13<sup>th</sup> century CE. It records the construction of a front hall in Vishnu temple called Nāṇādēsi-viṇṇakar and the installation of a door and lamp into that hall by Iṛayiraṇ Sirīrāyaṇ alais Sri Kulasēkhara Nambi of *Makōthayar-paṭṭaṇam* in *Malaīmaṇḍalam*. It is dated to 13<sup>th</sup> century CE.
- vii. The last seventh inscription was from Quanzhou, a famous medieval port in China and dated back to 1281 AD. It refers to the installation of idol of Siva in a temple *Tirukkāñchichuram* for the health of the authority by a merchant *Champanta Perumāl* alias *Tavachchakkaravartikaḷ* by permission of Chekachai Kan (Chechchai Khan).

### Trade Guild Inscriptions in Sri Lanka

- Viharehinna inscription near Moragolla of Kandapalle Koralle in the Matale North District of Sri Lanka (early part of 12<sup>th</sup> century AD)
- Vahalkada inscription (early part of 12<sup>th</sup> century AD)
- Padaviya inscription (early part of 12<sup>th</sup> century AD)
- Lankatilaka temple inscription at Reddegamuva in Udunuvara in Kandy Dt. (14<sup>th</sup> century AD)
- Anuradhapura inscription
- Budumuttava inscription



The objects of export recovered from archaeological sites located in different ecological zones demonstrate the existence of a well-established trade network with inland towns, capital cities, trade centres and port towns. The movements of export items from inland trade centres to port towns by the *nigamattōrs* or *cāttu* (trade guild) or *vaṇikaṇ* (trader) were well attested in archaeological, epigraphical and numismatic records. These port towns played a vital role in accelerating maritime trade contacts both with the West and East. The maritime trade would not have taken place without the knowledge of sea voyage, boat building and port installation. A cursory look of the available evidence would help to have a panoramic view of the subject.

### 3. Trade with Southeast Asia

Among the foreign countries, next to Sri Lanka, the Indian cultural impact was seen much in Southeast Asian countries. The region protruding from the Asian mainland with a number of archipelagos in the south effectively came into the maritime contact due to the influences of monsoons, local currents and numerous inland water traffics. The lithic and literary records make references to this region as *Suwannaphum* (literally meaning Land of gold). As the region did not report plentiful gold deposit, the scholars felt that *Suwannaphum* could be referring to bronze, the colour which resembles gold or a land rich in resource (Sirsuchat 1996). Probably, in search of these metal objects and other resources like coral (*tukir/pavaḷam*), the Indian merchant communities might have moved in groups under the banner of guild (probably *niyamattōr*, *cāttu* and *maṇigrāmattār*?) into the Southeast Asia and made permanent settlements. Such a situation could not be witnessed with the West.

The impact of Indian culture in Southeast Asia was well established with the beginning of 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE but data showing its influence during the early historic period has been kept at minimal until recently. As pointed out by Bellina, the study of protohistoric or Iron Age has been neglected and is not considered to be a significant period of cultural exchange (Bellina 2007). However, the recent works brought to light certain tangible evidences to show their early maritime contacts between the peninsular India and Southeast Asia.

The rise of specialized mercantile community started venturing into the sea by the middle of the first millennium BCE itself as most of the ports were emerged on the Indian coast. The mercantile community

dealing with the salt, textiles, metal, gems, gold, pearl, spices etc. were integrated into a trading system. The frequent references on trade guilds in Peninsular India and in Ganga valley indirectly pointed to this scenario. Glover felt that the great expansion of Southeast Asian exchange was closely connected with the demand of the exotic and luxury items by the urban people of the Mediterranean basin, which induced the mercantile community to venture into the sea towards Southeast Asia (Glover 1996). Among the spices, the cloves from Moluccas received the attention of the traders. The unopened aromatic flower buds of the tree *Eugenia aromatica* would have been exported through South Indian ports particularly through the ports of Kaveripattinam and Muciri to the western world. The reference found in the *Caṅkam* literature *Paṭṭiṇapālai* (*Paṭṭiṇapālai* 191-194) mentions about the item of Kalakam (*kāḷakattu ākkam* meaning objects from the place/region of Kāḷakam) and red coral from East sea (*kunakkaṭal tukir*). Though the exact location of the place is not identified but scholars felt that it points to the place covering southern Thailand and northern Malaysia, where important archaeological sites with Indian goods were found.

The site of Khlong Thom (Khuan Lukpad or Bead mound) in Krabi Province and the Chana in Suratthani province of Thailand is known for its glass and semi-precious stone beads (Glover 1996). A number of etched agate and carnelian beads, carnelian lion pendent, glass collar beads similar to those from Arikamedu, Roman carnelian intaglios and other intaglios like elephant, lion and the god Perseus are some of the items found at this site (Veraprasert 1987; Bronson 1990). One of the interesting findings was of a tortoise or a turtle made of quartz found at Sriksheṭra in Thailand (Di Crocco 1996). Such an identical piece was recovered at Kodumanal. The objects of carnelian and agate recovered in Southeast Asia particularly in graves were considered of Indian origin. One of the largest deposits and the oldest to be quarried came from Deccan plateau of India. The recent evidences, particularly the ones from Kodumanal, suggest that carnelian beads were manufactured in other industrial centres by importing raw material from Deccan. Berenice Bellina recent studies on beads, particularly the ones collected from the earlier Southeast Asian sites like Khuan Lukpad, Kuala Selinsing, Khao Sam Kaeo in Thai-Malay Peninsula, Buni area of West Java and Oc Eo area of Mekong Delta of south Vietnam, point to the existence of high quality carnelian beads of Indian origin. Further, she identifies

Khao Sam Kaeo as the local Indian production centre. On technological ground, she suggests that the finishing techniques of Indian beads usually involve use of rotary grinding stone whereas the beads manufactured in Southeast Asia were more generally involved the use of drum. The technical analysis of beads along with other archaeological evidences of exchanges made it possible to infer the existence of firmly established trade relationship (Bellina 2007).

Another item of exchange was bronze with a high tin content. The abundant sources of tin both in Thailand and Malaysia and scarcity in India would have necessitated looking for Southeast Asia (Bennett and Glover 1992). India met with a few high tin bronze objects at Adichchanallur, Kodumanal and in Nilgiri hills. These bronzes would have been exported to India in exchange of gemstone and glass. Tamil Nadu did not have considerable deposit of copper or tin to be exploited at industrial scale. The high-tin bronze bowls that found at Adichchanallur and Kodumanal would have been imported from Southeast Asia as this high-tin cast bronze vessels were not fall into the Indian metallurgy (Glover 1996). The Indian made glass and stone beads datable to 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE were found in the burial at the bronze producing site Ban Don Ta Phet and in Thailand suggests that the Tamil Nadu bronze material would have been imported from Thailand (Srisuchat 1996). The lead and tin ingots found at Khuan Luk Pat had its way to Sri Lanka. The excavations carried out at Abhayagiri Vihara in Anuradhapura show the presence of tin ingots (Abeyratne 1990), which incidentally suggests that the lead and tin ingots would have reached Tamil Nadu coast either through Sri Lanka or directly from Thailand (Sirsuchat 1996).

In the course of exploration carried out by the team of archaeologists led by Noboru Karashima in 1992-93 in Thailand brought to light an inscribed small flat rectangular touch stone of 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century CE at the temple Museum of Wat Khlong Thom. The eight letters in Tamil-Brahmi reads *perumpataṅkal*; meaning “(this is) the (touch) stone of Perumpataṅ”. *Perum* means big and *pataṅ* (*pattan*) means goldsmith. Therefore, Perumpataṅ can be a title or the name of the goldsmith who possessed this touchstone. This is the first and the earliest Tamil inscription so far found in Southeast Asia (Karashima 1995). Another important finding is of a square copper coin with a tiger on the obverse and an elephant on the reverse (Shanmugam 1993). Though there is no legend on the coin but still one can safely presume that this coin belongs to *Caṅkam* period as

the square coins were found only in *Cankam* period and the tiger figurine stands for the *insignia* of the *Cankam* Age Cholas (Krishnamurthy 1997). Pallava coins with bull on the obverse and double masted ship motif on the reverse were also unearthed at this place. The next Tamil inscription originally discovered in Kho Khao island and presently preserved in the Nakhon-Si-Tammarat Museum is of the famous Takua Pa (ancient Takkola of Ptolemy) inscription of Pallava Avaninaranam (Nandivarman III AD 846-869). The above evidences show the continuous presence or contact of peninsular Indian traders with Thailand. The major ports like Khlong Thom and Muang Thong (Ko Kho Khao) on the Andaman sea coast on the west and Khao Sam Kaeo and Laem Pho on the south China sea coast on the east of Thailand played a pivotal role in linking the Vietnam and China on the east and Indian, Sri Lanka and Mediterranean countries on the west in the early historic period (Sirsuchat 1996).

Glass is considered as one of the export items. The chemical and spectrographic analysis shows that glass objects were made of three basic compositions-potassium-silica, lead-barium and soda-lime. The potassium-silica based glass was manufactured at Arikamedu in Tamil Nadu and then at Mantai in Sri Lanka. The monochrome beads produced out of hollow tubes were more common in South India. The lead-barium had its origin in China and soda-lime in the west. Based on these chemical composition one could easily locate its origin. For instance the single coloured small potassium bearing glass beads of Arikamedu and Mantai reached Southeast Asia. The tombs of the Han dynasties in the Yellow and Yangzi river valleys of south China yielded quite a number of glass beads and were very popular between 200 BC and 200 AD. Along with lead-barium glass beads of China, potassium-silica glass beads were also found at Guangong and Guangxi. Among the objects, glass bowls, cups and plates were quite interesting. Even the historical records of the Han dynasty say that Emperor Wu (140-187 BC) sent people to Southern Sea to buy glass. It seems that these glass beads would have reached China from Tamil Nadu but after crossing over the sites like Mantai in Sri Lanka, Khlong Thom in Thailand and Oc-Eo in Vietnam (Francis 1991). The Indian traders would have even carried Roman glass objects after making trans-shipment at Muziris in Kerala and Arikamedu or Kaveripattinam in Tamil Nadu. The Roman dark blue glass bowls appeared at Canton, Hanjian and Nanjing in the Han tombs of southern China belonging

1<sup>st</sup> century CE (Jiayao 1996). Francis Jr. felt that based on the current level of knowledge that the potassium-silica based glass beads were first manufactured at Arikamedu (3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE to 3<sup>rd</sup> c. CE) indicates the craftsman moved from Arikamedu to Mantai in Sri Lanka and then to Khuan Luk Pat in Thailand and to Oc-Eo in Vietnam. From Khuan Luk Pat, they must have reached to Kuala Selinsing in Malaysia. Further he felt that due to the complexity of the process and its relative difficulty in transferring the technology, this industry would have been in the hands of Tamils (Francis 1996). It is widely believed that Arikamedu could be the production centre of glass beads, particularly the ones exported to Southeast Asia. Arikamedu did not yield any such concrete evidence to be marked as glass bead manufacturing centre. As stated above, recently a bead mound, called Manikollai (*mani* > bead and *kollai* > field) has been identified 25 km south of Kadalur (Cuddalore) on the Chidambaram road. A large number of beads at various stages of manufacturing along with glass crucibles were collected. Interestingly, quite a number of hollow tubes were recovered from the site. Glass cullet, carnelian, agate, steel would have been exported from Tamil Nadu coast. Among them glass occupied an important position. Glass and semi-precious stone beads were also collected from the site at Gilimanuk in West Bali of Indonesia (Indiraningsih 1985). The carnelian particularly the etched carnelian was exported to Southeast Asia. The sites like Bon Don Ta Phet and Khlong Thom are the fine examples. The regular concentric grooves found in the drill holes of the semi-precious stone beads were found at Khlong Thom and Don Ta Phet; clearly indicative of an Indian origin.

On the ceramic side, Walker (1980) identified three vessels of Indo-Roman rouletted ware of 1<sup>st</sup> c. CE belonging to the Buni grave complex on the north coast of Java. Glover identified another rouletted ware at Tra Kieu in Vietnam. Besides, rouletted wares were also reported at Darussalam in Brunei, Kobak Kendal and Sembiran in Indonesia, Tra Kieu in Vietnam and at Mantai, Kandarodai, Tissamaharama and Ambalantota in Sri Lanka (Glover 1989, 1996; Gogte 1997). Ardika unearthed 79 sherds of rouletted ware in which 78 came from Sembiran and a solitary example from Pacung. The X-ray diffraction and neutron analysis carried on the rouletted ware from Sembiran, Anuradhapura and Arikamedu indicate that they all have one geological source in terms of their clay and temper compositions (Ardika *et.al.* 1993). By taking a thread from this one geological source, Gogte made further study and concluded that

this fine pottery was produced with locally available chlorite based clay at multiple centres in the Lower Ganga plain with the epicentre in the Chandraketurgarh-Tamluk region of Bengal and it moved to other parts (Gogte 1997). One needs to have a close look of this hypothesis in the light of Alangankulam findings. The six meter cultural deposit yielded rouletted ware in abundance. It had in continuous use for more than 400 hundred years. If we consider this ware came from lower Ganga valley without any break for over three centuries then certainly the *Canikam* literature would have noted this flourishing ceramic trade. But there is no such reference. Further, the site has not yielded any appreciable other artefacts of lower Ganga valley. Under these circumstances, Gogte's findings need further investigation.

#### 4. Trade with Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka played a significant role in the expansion of trade with Southeast Asia. It served as an intermediate zone in the transoceanic trade between South India and Southeast Asia. The emerging scenario of recent years suggests that the cultural contact between India and the neighbouring island country of Sri Lanka is more than any other overseas countries. The recent spurt in the archaeological activities of Sri Lanka and India particularly in South India reflect these indicators more explicitly. The similarity between the microlithic tools of *Teri* sites (Deraniyagala 1992); the structural and cultural similarities between Iron Age monuments (Seneviratne 1984); the story of conquest of Sri Lanka by prince Vijaya and his subsequent marriage with Pandya princess; the account of establishment of Buddhism found in *Mahavamsa* and *Dipavamsa*; the use of Brahmi script for writing Prakrit and Tamil; similarities in coins found in India and the neighbouring island country of Sri Lanka are the fine indicators of continuous cultural contact between these two regions (Pushparatnam 2001). These indicators are inter-related and it cannot be seen in isolation as it has wider implication in understanding the cultural matrix of both the counties.

The cultural material unearthed in the excavations at Anuradhapura (Deraniyagala 1972, 1986, 1990; Coningham 1990, 1991; Coningham and Allchin 1992), Pomparippu (Begley *et.al.* 1981), Ibbankatuva (Bandaranayake 1992) Mantai (Carswell and Prickett 1984), Kantarodai (Orton 1995), Mahagama (Parker 1909), Ridhyagama (Bopearachchi 1996), Godwaya (Muthucumarana 2014) and Tissamaharama (Schenk

2001) show the contact of the early historic times. The excavation at Kantarodai, situated in the centre of the Jaffna Peninsula, yielded a black and red ware phase, followed by a rouletted ware phase which is comparable with the one found in Tamil Nadu (Begley 1973). The inscribed rouletted ware with Prakrit language affinity of Sri Lankan origin found at Arikamedu, Kaveripattinam and Alagankulam is a further proof (Mahadevan 1994, 1995). The international call of port Mantai (the ancient port Mahatittha), located in the Mannar Gulf against the port of Alagankulam and Korkai in Tamil Nadu, helps to inter-link the Sri Lanka with India and also bridge the trading activities of the Southeast Asia and the West (Carswell and Prickett 1984). Likewise the port Mahagama also yielded rouletted ware, Brahmi, graffiti, Indo-Roman and punch marked coins (Parker 1909). Tissamaharama is another site located in the southern coast of Sri Lanka, providing considerable evidence of trade contact in the form of rouletted ware, black-and-red-ware, beads of semiprecious stones and glass and inscribed potsherds in Prakrit language. The limited artefacts such as glass ingots, black-red-ware pot and inscribed objects recovered from the shipwreck noticed off the Sri Lankan coast at Godwaya provided further impetus on the transoceanic trade.

The available epigraphical and archaeological sources suggest that the traders played an active role in accelerating these cultural activities time and again. Some of the cultural traits like the introduction of Brahmi script were viewed; this script was introduced by Asoka in view of its expansion of Buddhism. Based on the Anuradhapura stratigraphical evidence, Allchin conceived that the Brahmi script began to be used in Sri Lanka a century ago and before the start of Mauryan rule in Magadha; and these were introduced by mercantile community at least in 4-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. As per this assumption, the Sri Lankans, particularly the trading communities were aware of the Brahmi script even before the introduction of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. This script was later adopted for writing religious texts so the whole gamut of Prakrit inscriptions was later in date. He draws the attention of the series of non-scriptural marks. Even if one leaves the date aside, there is no denying of the fact that the trading community played a greater role in introducing the script and language (Allchin 1995). Considering their geographical proximity, the absence of Prakrit inscription of Sri Lankan origin in the Indian mainland is quite surprising. However, the recent study of Iravatham Mahadevan proved

that Prakrit inscriptions of Sri Lankan origin were surfaced at Arikamedu, Alagankulam, and Kodumanal in Tamil Nadu. The nine texts analysed by him show the diagnostic linguistic features like genitive suffixes *-sa/ha*, shortening of long vowels, de-aspiration of the aspirates and the unique change of *ja* to *jha*. These linguistic features were peculiar to Sri Lankan Brahmi (Mahadevan 1995). The occurrence of these characters in Tamil Nadu particularly at the ports and trade centres suggest their frequent interaction. The socio-linguistic study of these epigraphical evidences exposed the man and material involved in the maritime trade and it synchronizes well with the evidence of both the countries.

The Brahmi inscriptions of Sri Lanka gave names of various boat types like *nāvai*, *toṭa* and *paṭake* (Paranavithana 1970), which had its counterpart with identical name respectively like *nāvāi*, *tōṇi* and *paṭaku* in *Caṅkam* Literature. As found at Alagankulam, an inscription of 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE found at Tuvakala in Polanaruwa district had a figure of a ship engraved in front of the name Barata. Another ship motif engraved on a grey ware was brought to light from Anuradhapura (Coningham 1996).

The community *Barata* (*Paratavar* in Tamil Nadu) needs a special attention. The name Barata had its significance both in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka; as they were chiefly involved in sea-related activities like fishing, pearl and chank fishing and in trade particularly horse trading (Seneviratne 1985; Maloney 1969). Among them, pearl fishery business would have become a lucrative business. The available lithic and literary records of Sri Lanka and India suggest that pearl fishing was done alternatively in two areas of Gulf of Mannar due to the migration of pearl oysters to opposite beds (Arunachalam 1952), which would have necessitated the *barata* community to move freely into Sri Lankan waters.

Twenty one Brahmi inscriptions of Sri Lanka bear the name *barata* (Pushparatnam 2001). Of these twenty one, a name *tissa* is found in association with the word *barata* in 15 inscriptions. This shows that among the traders of *barata* community, the *tissa* holds a special place in the social status. Their closeness to sea is known from a coin collected from southern Sri Lanka inscribed with a name *barata tisaha* on the reverse and two fishes with swastika on the obverse (Bopearachchi and Wickremesinhe 1999). These *barata tissa* may have served as a royal emissary, handled the ship as a captain and moved as big traders. A Brahmi inscription of Gurunakal refers to a captain of ship hailed from



a Barata community served as a royal emissary (Paranavithana 1970). And another ship captain named Tisa referred to in Paramankanda served as an ambassador. An inscription of 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC from Gudivila of Ambarai district referred to a Tamil trader called *tissa*, who made a *daṇa* to a Buddha Sangha (Paranavithana 1970). Likewise, the Anuradharapura inscription speaks about a meeting of Tamil traders under the banner of a guild in which a trader named *tissa* was also involved (Paranavithana 1970). Another interesting evidence is of a trader called *īla barata* was mentioned in Anuradhapura inscription (Paranavithana 1970) who carried out the trade in association with Tamil traders. The special mention of *īla barata* (Barata of *īla* i.e., Sri Lanka) is to differentiate from a *barata* (trader) of Tamil Nadu coast, though both hailed from a same *barata* community. This barata community owned a ship and carried out their business by forming a guild. They also held an enviable position in the society as captain, ambassador and above all as big traders. A Brahmi inscription of 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE discovered at Anuradhapura informed about the traders of Tamil Nadu engaged in joint trade with *nāvika karava* and captain of the ship acted as a chief of the guild (Paranavithana 1970). Another inscription of 1<sup>st</sup> c. BCE from the same place referred to a trader of Indian origin namely *nāvika* of *bōjakata* (Paranavithana 1970). The term *nāvika* is synonym with the *nāvikaṇ* of Tamil Nadu mercantile community, who owns a ship. The father of Kannaki, the famous heroine of epic *Cilappatikāram* was none other than a *mā-nāvikaṇ*.

Two Brahmi inscriptions of Periyapuliyankulam in northern Sri Lanka mentioned a Tamil trader (*vaṇikaṇ*) called *Visākē*. The near identical name *visāki* (or *visākanan*) found on a russet coated ware was collected from a transepted cist burial with menhir at Kodumanal. The titles or the personal names like *sāmuda*, *sāmuta* and *cāmuta*, all meaning ocean, occurring in Sri Lankan Prakrit-Brahmi inscription (Paranavithana 1970) was comparable with the *kaḍalaṇ*, also meaning ocean, found in Tamil-Brahmi inscription at Mangulam near Madurai. Alagarmalai Tamil-Brahmi inscription records a name *kalapaṇ ṭlavarayaṇ* in which, the scholars felt, *kalapaṇ* (*kaḍalaṇ*) stands for an ocean. So *kalapaṇ ṭlavarayaṇ* was trader arrived from Sri Lanka (Mahadevan 1968).

In this context, the recently found inscribed coin, reading *mahācāttaṇ* (Bopearachchi 1999), read it as *mahacita apo*, is quite interesting. Here the word *cātaṇ* stands for a trader (*cāttu* for a trade guild) and the prefix *mahā* stands for big. The *mahācattaṇ* probably a big trader or a head of a

trade guild involved in maritime trade and he may have probably issued the coin. The Tirupparankundram Tamil-Brahmi inscription mentions about a *cāttan* in association with a man called *Īlakuṭumpikaṇ*. Unlike in Sri Lanka, the coin issued by their counterparts *cāttan* and *mācattuvāṇ* (*mā* > big, *cāttan* > trader) of Tamil Nadu could not be surfaced so far. All the inscribed coins so far unearthed belong to Tamil rulers. *Periplus* records that Roman traders procured the Sri Lankan goods without visiting that country and likewise Sri Lankan traders procured Roman goods from west coast ports of Tamil Nadu (Warmington 1928). The literature *Paṭṭinapālai* speaks on the imports from *Īlam* (Sri Lanka) at Kaveripattinam and the householder of Sri Lanka *Īlakuṭumpikaṇ* made a stone bed for a Jain at Tirupprankundram.

The above evidences point to a frequent voyage between the two neighbouring regions. The economically viable interaction played a causative role in the formation of ports, establishing a state, spread of literacy through the wide usage of Brahmi script and the exchange of technology in boat building, production of iron, glass beads, etc. According to *Mahavamsa*, Sena and Gottika, the children of a captain of a ship involved in the horse trade, were the first Tamil rulers of Ceylon (177-155 BC) who came from Tamil Nadu (*Mahavamsa* XXI:10) and subsequently Ellalan (Elara) established a longest rule (145-101 BC) (*Mahavamsa* XXI:15-34). The frequent political contact during the Duttagamini rule clearly established the fact that there was a continuous political and cultural contact between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka (*Mahavamsa* XXXIII: 37-61).

The above discussion clearly indicates that the multiple factors played a greater role in the transoceanic trade. The trade led to the cultural interactions between the Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka, and each factor has to be weighed in the given chronological and cultural frame to understand the real fathom of the socio-cultural-economic impact on both the side of the littoral states of Bay of Bengal.

## Endnote

- <sup>1</sup> The material like crucibles and slag collected at this site probably used for manufacturing iron/steel. Therefore, Aliyanilai findings required further investigations to confirm its association with glass

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## A Study on Ancient Cultural and Civilization Links between India and Myanmar

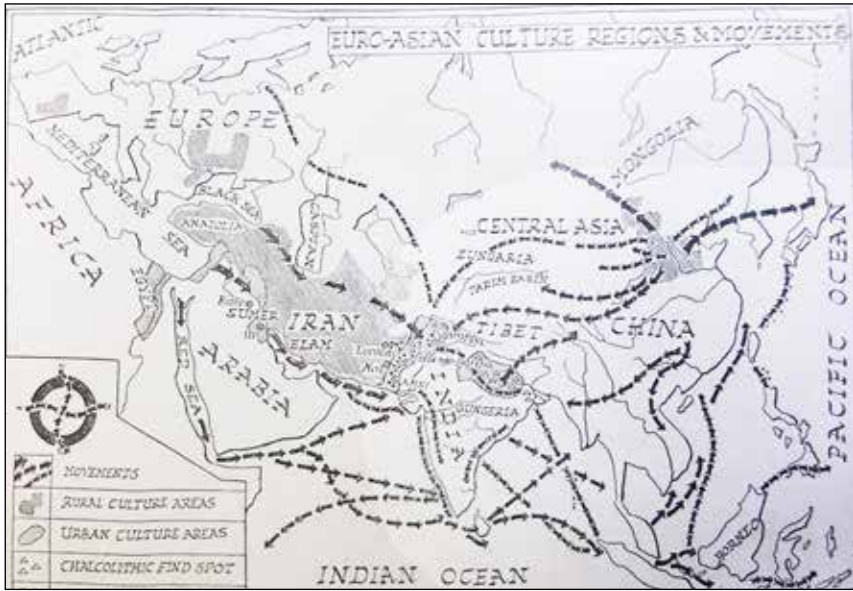
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Mya Mya Thaung

### 1. Introduction

Indian relations with Southeast Asia can be generally ascribed to the invasions of the Kushans into India in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD; seeking fortunes overseas by high-caste Indian adventurers and their colonization of the locals (Map 5.1). There are reliable evidences regarding the sea-routes followed by the Indians. Beginning from the north, there was first the famous port of Tamralipti (Tamluk) in Midnapur district of West Bengal. From this port, there was a regular sailing of vessels which proceeded along the coast of Bengal and Burma (Myanmar). At least as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, there was a regular trade-route by land Bengal and China through Upper Myanmar and Yunnan. Through this route, the Indians came and established their colonies not only in Myanmar but also in the mountainous regions of upper valleys of the Chindwin, the Ayeyawady, the Thanlwin, the Mekong and the Red River as far as Yunan.

In recent decades European and Asian scholars have unearthed great stores of information on the history of Southeast Asia before the reaching of the Europeans. It is found that since 1<sup>st</sup> century AD kingdoms emerged in Southeast Asia practicing Indian religions, arts and customs including the use of Sanskrit or Pali as the sacred language.

**Map 5.1: Map of India and Southeast Asia**

**Source:** Author's own.

The concept of Indianization had a major impact on the way Southeast Asia's changing social environment was described. The adoption of various Indian systems was selected by different parts of Southeast Asia. Brahmanic rituals were adopted by local rulers and they still play an important role in Southeast Asia today. Buddhism and Hinduism spread from Indian administrative systems were adopted.

Traders were the key to the dissemination of social and cultural practices. Brahmanic rituals at the Khmer courts could only have been introduced by Brahmins, just as Buddhist monks spread the British doctrine. Buddhist and Brahmin priests also established permanent bases. They built temples for worship, exposing indigenous population to these rites and rituals. The archaeological evidences show that Myanmar had the impact of "Indianization" in religious belief, the art of writing, culture and civilization.

The relations of Myanmar with India can only be safely said to date from the 5<sup>th</sup> century, on the strength of the 5<sup>th</sup> century Kun-Zeik Stone Inscription, the 6<sup>th</sup> century Botahtaung Votive Tablet, Amravati, Gupta Style Buddha images etc. found in Lower Myanmar, Myanmar.

Buddhist legends, however, claim that two merchant brothers Taphussa and Bhalika of Ukkalapa of Lower Myanmar visited Majjhimadesa of India during the life-time of the Buddha and that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, the famous Mauryan emperor Asoka sent the Buddhist missionaries Sona and Uttara to SuvannabhumiThaton (Golden Land). Apparently Lower Myanmar had relations with India before 100AD. Indian merchants and traders arrived in Myanmar by sea and overland before that time.

## 2. Archaeological Findings in Myanmar

A large number of Buddhist Archaeological findings have been discovered in Myanmar. They include stone inscriptions, Buddha images, votive tablets, terra-cotta plaques, pot-sherds, etc. They constitute solid documents confirming the dates of the arrival of Indian culture and religions at Lower Myanmar and Upper Myanmar.

### Stone Inscriptions

A considerable number of stone inscriptions were found scattering in Ramannadesa of Lower Myanmar. Most of them were written in Mon scripts. The Mon used Pallava scripts. Nai Pan Hla says that they derived the Pallava scripts from the Southeastern part of India in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>1</sup> Forchhammer thinks that Mon alphabets may have originated in one of the Telgu-Canarese alphabets.<sup>2</sup>

### Pyu Stone Inscriptions

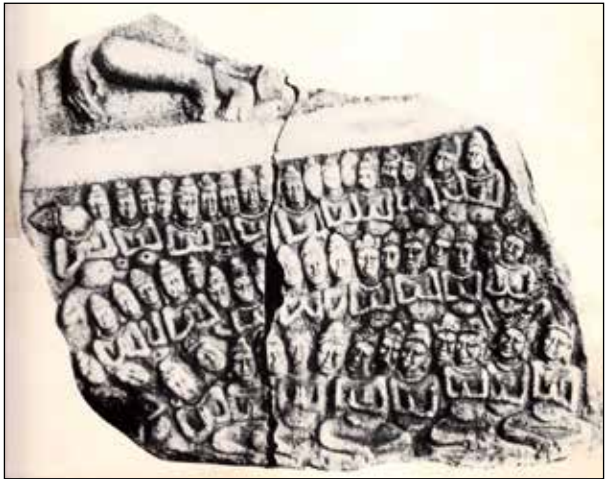
In 1897, two gold plates bearing Pyu inscriptions were found at MaungKan's field in Lebaw village, Pyay. The script is identical with the Kadamba script of South India of 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. Each plate contains three lines of Pali beginning with the popular Buddhist formula "Ye dhammhetuppabhawa".

At Halingyi, a stone slab bearing Pyu inscription was brought to light in 1964 (Figure 5.1). There were six and a half long lines of Pyu writings with the same script found in Sri Ksetra. Although all the words are not decipherable, the Royal Titles "Sri Trivikrama" and "varman" are quite clear. Regarding these titles, U Aung Thaw remarks in his recent book<sup>3</sup> "*Historical Sites in Myanmar*" on page 13: "It may be presumed that this inscription records a certain event associated with the Vikrama dynasty or the Varmans of Sri Ksetra".<sup>4</sup>

**Kaw Gun Cave Inscriptions**

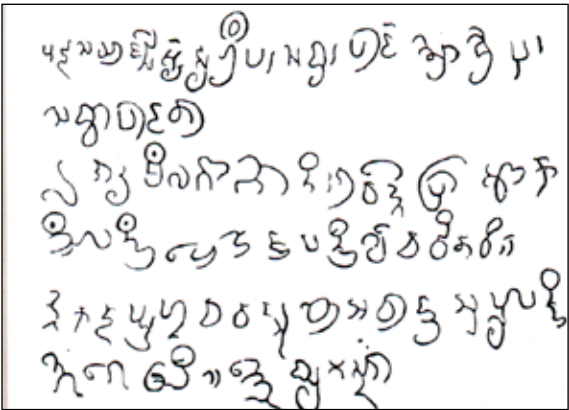
Kaw gun cave is located on the western bank of the Thanlwin River, 28 miles north of Mawlamying and 6 miles south of Pa-an in Lower Myanmar. This cave yields remarkable antiquities. A three-line old record inscribed on the stone wall of the audience hall of the cave in and Sanskrit mixed with Mon begins with the Hindu god Paramesvara (Figure 5.2).

**Figure 5.1: Stone Slab Bearing the Figures of the Pyus Discovered from Hanlin**



*Source:* Author’s own.

**Figure 5.2: Kaw Gun Cave Stone Scription**



*Source:* Author’s own.

Paleographically, this unedited inscription is ascribed to the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. Apparently, it might have been written by the Indians.<sup>5</sup> Another Kawgun Cave Stone Inscription is written on the left side of the inner hem of the hanging robes of a headless Buddha image found in this cave (Figure 5.3).

**Figure 5.3: The Inner Herm of the Hanging Robes Inscription**



*Source:* Author's own.

### **Kun Zeik Stone Inscription**

It is found at Kun Zeik Village sitting on the Sittaung River, ShweGyin Township, Bago Division on the Gulf of Muttama. It is now kept at the Kambojasadi Palace in Bago. It includes 19 lines written in Kadamba script on the front face. The portion from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> line is a mixture of Anuloma Patīccasamuppādapatiloma Patīccasamuppāda (Figure 5.4).

**Figure 5.4: Kun Seik Stone Inscriptoin**

**Source:** Author's own.

The first and second of the four lines on the back are about the last portion of *Anuloma Paticcasamuppāda* (the Law of Dependent Origination in foreword order). The third and fourth lines are about the Joy of Utterance (*Anekajātisamsāra*), stanza made by the Buddha, immediately after the Buddha had attained Buddhahood.<sup>6</sup>

### **Kalyānī Stone Inscription**

It was inscribed by king Dhammaceti in 1479 (843 M.E) in Hamsāvati. It includes 10 stone slabs, 3 of which were inscribed in Pāli while 7 in Mon. As both sides of the slabs were written, pages totalled 20, 6 in Pāli and 14 in Mon (Figure 5.5). Today, it is housed in the Kalyānī Sima in Bago. It records not only the brief history of Buddhism in Majjhimadesa after the demise of the Buddha but also those of Buddhism in Lankadipa and Myanmar. Famous Myanmar treatises on religion such as, *Sāsanalankāra*, *Sāsanavamsappdipika*, *Vamsamedappakasanī* and *Sāsanabahusutappakasanī* are found to have much religion of Myanmar.

**Figure 5.5: Pillars of Kalyani Inscription (Bago)**

**Source:** Author's own.



The brief account of this inscription is that about 218 years after the demise of the Buddha, king Dhammasoka asended the throne in Pataliputta. He was much devoted to the religion of the Buddha. So he offered monks a lot of grains.<sup>7</sup> This stone inscription is the earliest epigraphic evidence confirming Taikkala on the side of Mt. Kelāsa, near Thaton as Suvannaabhūmi indicated by Dipāvamsa and Mahāvamsa (Figure 5.6).

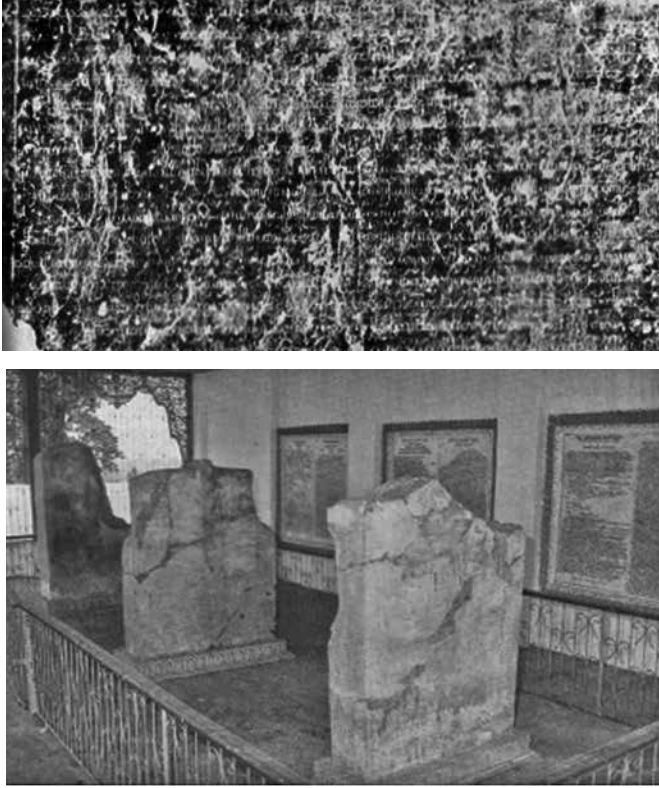
**Figure 5.6: Kalyani Inscription (KelarTha)**



*Source:* Author's own.

### **Shwedagon Pagoda Stone Inscription**

This stone inscription was found by Forchhammer on the eastern side of Singuttara Hill where the Shwedagon Pagoda stands. It contains 3 large stone slabs standing about 4 feet apart from each other. They were erected by king Dhammaceti in 1485. This stone inscription is the only epigraphic evidence which mentions oceanic journey of Taphussa and Bhallika of Lower Myanmar to Majjhimadesa (Figure 5.7).

**Figure 5.7: Shwedagon Pagoda Inscription**

*Source:* Author's own.

### 3. Votive Tablets

Votive tablets are small Buddha icons, usually made out of baked or unbaked clay by a press-mould technique, a process that has been used for many hundreds of years to produce religious objects.<sup>8</sup> The practice of stamping tablets originated in India around the beginning of the Christian Era but it became more popular during the Gupta (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD). These tablets display figures of Buddha, Bodhisattva or Tantric divinities and often include Buddha creed-the Yedhamma stanza.<sup>9</sup> They are made as a means of acquiring merit. Coedes is of opinion that the practice of making clay votive tablets was confined only to the Buddhists but Dr ThanTun argues against his opinion by asserting that the tablets are also being used by devotees of Hinduism. Myanmar votive tablets belong

from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.<sup>10</sup> Dvaravati tablets date from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.<sup>11</sup> It is said that art of making terra-cotta votive tablets by a mould had come to Myanmar around the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD (Figure 5.8 (a) (b)).

**Figure 5.8 (a): Votive Tablet Found at Sriksetra**



*Source:* Author's own.

**Figure 5.8 (b): Buddha-gaya Type Votive Tablet Found at Thatonregion**



*Note:* Photo by DHR.

*Source:* Author's own.

The oldest votive tablets in Lower Myanmar are the Botahtaung Pagoda tablet, exposed by bombing during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. It includes the Ye Dhamma Stanza in Mon (Pallava) script of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD (Figure 5.9).

**Figure 5.9: Botahtaung Votive Tablet**



*Source:* Author's own.

#### 4. Buddha Images

Buddhists have the tradition of making Buddha images for worshipping on the Buddha's behalf. The Buddha images are regarded as Uddissa Cetiya; one of the four types of Cetiya.<sup>12</sup> But it is hard to trace back to the time of inventing Buddha images. During the life time of the Buddha, created Buddha (nimitta Buddha) was made by the Buddha himself when he went down to the Uttarakuru for alms-meal while he was preaching the Abidhamma Pitaka in Tāvātimsa. It is said that although the art of making Buddha images started in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD,<sup>13</sup> the symbols representing the Buddha such as wheels of the Dhamma, deers, etc. may date as far back as Asoka Period (3<sup>rd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> century BC).<sup>14</sup> The earliest Buddha images are said to have been made in Mathura in India.<sup>14</sup> In general, there are five positions for seated Buddha images (1) Dhammacakkamudrā (2) Dhyānamudrā (3) Abhayamudrā (4) Bhumisparśamudrā and (5) Varadamudrā.<sup>16</sup> A considerable number of old Buddha images were found scattering over Ramaññadesa.

An Amaravati style image of the Buddha (30 cm) was found at Kyet-tu-ywe-Thaung village, 24 km east of Thaton. It is now kept at monastery named Nandawya KyaungTaik in Thaton. The sculpture depicts the Buddha in a standing position; with his right arm pendent by his side and his left raised in the Vitarka mudra or holding his robes. The eyes are open, the head covered with large hair curl. The right shoulder is uncovered, the robe falling smoothly in parallel curved folds, broken by the long, upward weep of the fabric on the left where the arm is raised<sup>17</sup> (Figure 5.10). Three Buddha images were found at Tagundaing village near Twantay (Kabin) in 2005. Apart from the votive tablets, terra-cotta plaques depicting some episodes from the Jātaka Atthakathās are found at the walls of the Thagya Pagoda inside the precinct of the Shwezaryan Pagoda.

**Figure 5.10: Bronze Standing Buddha, Amaravati Style**



*Note:* Found at Old Thaton, now kept in NandawyakyaungTaik; Photo by DHR

*Source:* Author's own.

## 5. Finger-marked Bricks

Finger-marked bricks are found at Thaton and nearby sites such as Kyaikkatha, Sanpannago and Dawei. The origin of finger marking in South Asia, however, remains unclear. Preliminary survey of Buddhist sites in India and Nepal recorded finger-marked bricks in Bihar (at Kosambi, Rajagriha and Vaishali), Uttar Pradesh (at Kusinara, aravasti and Varanasi [Sarnath], and Kapilavastu<sup>18</sup>. Finger-marking can be used as a rough guide only, but provides valuable evidence of first millennium AD habitation.<sup>19</sup> The use of finger-marked bricks in Myanmar indicates the relationship between Myanmar and India since first millennium AD (Figure 5.11).

**Figure 5.11: Figer-Marked Brick Found at Lower Myanmar**



*Source:* Author's own.

## 6. Coins

A lot of coins were discovered at Kyaikkatha in Lower Myanmar. Kyaikkatha was first identified on aerial photographs by U Aung Myintin 1976 and verified on the ground in 1981. The site occupies a unique position at the mouth of the Sittaung River, linking it to the Gulf of Muttama. During the 1981 survey, a horde of coins was found at Kyo Bin Kone Kyaung, a monastery to the southeast of Kyaikkatha. These were decorated with conch or Sankkha and Srivatsa motifs and stylistically dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. The design of the silver coins was adapted from South Asian pieces—notably of Andhra region—in the early centuries AD and employs a common repertoire of symbols.<sup>20</sup> In addition to Kyaikkatha coins, two silver coins with Srivatsa and conch shell and Srivatsa and a radiating sun were discovered at Winka<sup>21</sup> and Ayethema villages at the foot of Mt. Kelāsa (Figure 5.12(a) (b)). The



four symbols most often seen in Myanmar are Srivatsa, the Baddapitha, and the swastika rising sun, and the Sankha or conch. These are dated back to the 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, but others are of early centuries AD.<sup>22</sup> Coins were also discovered in Pyu City-States namely Beikthano, Halin and Sriksetra and Hmaingmaw (Pinle) (Figure 5.13(a) (b)).

**Figure 5.12(a): Silver Coins Found at Lower Myanmar**



*Source:* Author's own.

**Figure 5.12(b): Silver Coins Found at Lower Myanmar**



*Source:* Author's own.

**Figure 5.13 (a): Silver Coins Found at Pyu**



*Source:* Author's own.

**Figure 5.13 (b): Silver Coins Found at Pyu**



*Source:* Author's own.



## 7. Urbanized Pyu City-States in Myanmar

In Myanmar, transition to urban civilization was made in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The earliest settlers in Myanmar were the Pyus. They lived along the Ayeyawady. They built city-states namely Beikthano, Halin, Sreksetra and Pinle. Monumental evidence, literary evidence, and sculptural evidence show that Pyus were the good Buddhists.

The site of old Beikthano is located near Kukkogwa village, 12 miles west of Taungdwingyi, Magwe Division. Its city-wall is nearly in the rectangular shape. Old Beikthano is also called Panhtwarmyo. Later, King Duttabaung occupied Beikthano and married princess Panhtwar. As it was the city destroyed by King Duttabaung who ascended the throne in 442 BC, it can be assumed to be the city which emerged in about 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>23</sup>

Through the analysis of the building in the north-south alignment, the north-south city-wall deviates 13 H towards the west. So, Dr Than Tun ascribed the age of Beikthano to late 2<sup>nd</sup> with a peculiar structure, and, Buddhist artifacts such as bronze Buddha statue, bells, etc. were unearthed (a bronze Buddha Statue, a bronze bell, four bronze lamps of various sizes, etc. were recovered from the mound No.13 on 10.6.2004). The ears of the Buddha statue are long and a little broader in their upper parts and droop downwards almost enough to touch the shoulders. The hairs on the head are balled in spirals. The hem of the robe is folded in two or three layers.<sup>24</sup> It is learnt that the religious objects found in Beikthano were Theravada Buddhist artifacts. When the Buddha statue excavated from Beikthano were shown to the learned scholars of India, it is learnt that they are in close affinity with those housed in Ajantar Rocky Cave in the western part of India and they are the ancient Buddha images.<sup>25</sup>

It seems that Buddhism arrived at Beikthano earlier than at Srikhestra. Only buildings were discovered in the early phases. But no image or icon was discovered at all. Therefore, it can be assumed that practice of iconic (practice of worshipping no image) was introduced earlier into Beikthano. This testifies to the fact that the founding of Beikthano may be earlier than the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC or contemporary with King Asoka. However, it is believed that the practice of worshipping Buddha images at Myanmar may have been attributed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, or later. It is considered that Beikthano may have continued flourishing up to the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>26</sup>

At the mound No. (3), a central part of a structure with a circular-shaped foundation is found 10 feet projecting from the ground-level. A circular wall was found 31 feet from the central building and another circular wall 10 feet from that wall. The structure surrounded by these two circular walls is nearly identical with that at Nagarjunakonda in Andhra region in the South-eastern part of India. This excavated structure can be considered to be an UddisaCeti. Besides, a square-shaped structure, which can be assumed to be a monastery, was excavated and also a terracotta stamp, containing a phrase saying “SamghaSiri”.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, on the evidence of the word ‘Samgha’ which is included in the Saranagamana, it can be concluded that Buddhism had flourished in Beikthano at that time.

The Buddha statue discovered in Beikthano is the one with his two legs touching the ground in a relaxing manner (pralambasana), his left palm on the left knee and his right palm a little above the right thigh, thrusting it forwards with the thumb and the fore-finger touching in a curve (Vitarka mudra). This mudra is the most common among Buddha images, belonging to the Pyu Period. Sometimes, the Pyu Buddha images cost double to Vitarka mudra. The face of the bronze Buddha statue is plum and its cheeks are a little swollen, this assumes a square-shaped face. Therefore, it is no doubt that this Buddha statue is the Buddhist artifact created by the Pyus themselves. So, on the strength of this Buddha statue, the belief that school of ‘Aparaseliyamatisasaka’ (school of worshipping no images) thrived in Beikthano can be annulled, and it can be asserted that the practice of worshipping Buddha images prevailed in it.<sup>28</sup>

## 8. Halin City-State

Another old Pyu city, which yielded Buddhist archaeological evidences is old Halin city. It is situated in Wetlet Township, Shwebo District. Preliminary excavations were done by Taw Sein Ko, Director of the Burma Archaeological Department in 1905 and by Duroiselle, Director of the same department in 1929. Two Pyu stone inscriptions were unearthed from these excavations. These scripts go back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>29</sup>

As one of the stone inscriptions contains the name ‘Srivikrama’, which is found on the burial urns in Srikhestra, there might have been some connection between Halin and Srikhestra. No Buddha statue and votive tablet were discovered in Halin as in Srikhestra. Since there is a lid of a pot resembling a stupa in Halin, it is presumed that Buddhism reached Halin. It is found that the stupa engraved on the lid is the one

containing terrace, down-turned lotus, up-turned lotus, bell-shaped floral design, etc.

In view of the writing ‘dayadanam engraved on a stone stamp obtained from the mound No (1), it can be assumed that there may have been a large number of people in Halin, who could make donation and that some of them therefore, bore the name ‘dayadanam’. Moreover, as the tomb domes found in Halin are similar to the building in Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda in India and Beikthano, they may have been religious structures. Anyway, discovery of the stupa-shaped lid, Pyu stone inscriptions and potsherds containing scripts in Halin and generosity of its people suggest that Buddhism had reached Halin since then.<sup>30</sup>

## 9. Pinle City-State

Another ancient Pyu city in which Buddhist artifacts and buildings were discovered is old Pinle city. It is located 5 miles southeast of Kume by the side of Yangon-Mandalay High Way in Myit – Thar Township. As it lies closest to the Nathtaik pass out of the old cities scattering over the Kyaukse plain, it would have been a commercial hub in those days.<sup>30</sup> It can be assumed that as it was an important city on one of the two China-Pyu-India land trading routes, it was a militarily, economically and religiously significant centre at that time.

Regarding Pinle, the Jambukonchar Treatises states thus:

“...The four previous Buddhas had lived in that region in their previous births. The first king of the dynastic line ruling the region was king Wanatakalutuppa and the last king Cetissa...It was known as Uatyaung Pancalarit during the life time of the Gotama Buddha but as Pinle in Pyu Period...”<sup>32</sup>

During the excavation of No (8) mound in old Pinle City in the 1981-82 field season, a hollow silver Buddha statue and an Arahata statue under the debris of bricks in the No (2) layer were found. Therefore, it can be said definitely that Buddhist objects including a Buddha statue, an Arahata statue, religious edifices, etc. found in Pinle are Uddiyaceti of Buddhist. These excavated objects are very important religious artefacts for the Buddhist.<sup>33</sup>

In addition, seven gold Buddha statues, seven silver Buddha statues, an alloy Buddha statue and four silver stupas were exposed from a brick mound in Maing Maw Village near Pinle. These statues were

typologically akin to those of Srikhestra. So it can be concluded that Pinle was culturally connected with Beikthano and Srikhestra. At any rate, the above excavated archaeological documents suggest that Buddhism would have thrived in Pinle to a great extent.

The account of Buddha's Sasana would not be completed without the explanation of Tisaranagamana (Three Refuges for Buddhist). As the Pyus believed in Theravada Buddhism, their refuge in Tisaranagamana became stronger. Especially, it is an undeniable fact that Tisaranagamana was well established in the Pyus of Srikhestra. This is proved by the existence of gigantic pagodas and stupas in Srikhestra and Buddha images, votive tablets and Dhammakhandhas from the Tipitaka preached by the Buddha, excavated from it. Furthermore, as there were monks (Samghā) in Srikhestra in addition to the Buddha and the Dhamma, the Buddhism of it can be supposed to have flourished to its fullest extent. After the demise of the Buddha, the Teachings of the Buddha have been preserved successively by his disciples. The U Kala's Chronicle states that King Duttabaung supported the four Requisites to 3000 Arahats daily and that he compiled the Dhammathat Kyan, consulting with them.

## 10. Srikhestra City-State

It is located in the site of the present Hmawzar 5 miles south-east of Pyay. It is found that the evidences excavated from Srikhestra play an important role in the history of Myanmar. Buddhism and literature thrived there side by side. The standard of the arts of it was not low.

Twenty golden plates were found during the Khin Ba mound's excavation in the 1926-27 field seasons (Figure 5.14). The extracts from the Abhidhamma and the Vinaya Pitakas were inscribed on them. The scripts are similar to those of the Southern India.<sup>34</sup> The time of inscribing the scripts can be ascribed to between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. Another ancient object is a little later than twenty golden plates. It is a hollow silver casket resembling a Bodhi throne, unearthed from Khin Ba mound. The titles of the four Buddhas and some excerpts from the Pitakas are inscribed on the arms of the lid of the silver casket. In addition to golden plates and the silver casket, the golden leaves found at Kywan Su village in the Hmawza village tract include the eulogy on the Buddha and it is written in the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century AD scripts.

**Figure 5.14: Twenty Gold Plates Discovered from Sriksetra**

*Source:* Author's own.

The Pyus of Srikhetra were accustomed to inscribing the Pali extracts from the Pitakas not only on the stone slabs but also on the thrones of the Buddha images. On the throne of a headless Buddha image unearthed in 1928 is inscribed part of Yedhamma stanza in Sanskrit. The style of the Buddha belongs to the Gupta Age.<sup>35</sup> It should be noted that the script of the Pyus are the archaic scripts of Southern India, and that the Pyus received the art of writing by communicating with the Southern India.

Monumental evidences, sculptural evidences and epigraphic evidences clearly show that Theravada Buddhism developed into a great extent. The art of writing of the Pyus came from Southern India. The prototypes of stupas and temples came from India also. Vesali of Rakhine was contemporary with Sriksetra of Pyu. Archaeological report of Vesali points out the symbols of auspiciousness. Srivatsa found in the coin of Vesali is the same with those from Pyu capitals, Beikthano, Halin, Pinle and Sriksetra; conveying the fact that there were communications among contemporary capitals like Pyu capitals Rakhine's ancient capitals such as Dvaravati and Vesali had close relations with India (Figure 5.15). In the field of Buddhism in Rakhine, especially Buddhist art these are religious buildings and edifices for ritualistic purposes and for monastic life and the condition of impressive images to convey the idea of the

Buddha. Archaeological evidences of Brahminism are also found in ancient capitals of Rakhine.

**Figure 5.15: Silver Coins Found at Rakhine**



*Source:* Author's own.

## 11. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, Indianization was widespread throughout Southeast Asia. Myanmar also is one of the Indianized states of Southeast Asia. There were elements that were seen as useful and practical to local communities, especially in relation to ideas of kingship. Buddhist, Hindu and Brahmanic concepts of the universe endowed the king with particular powers in the physical and metaphysical worlds. Textual and archaeological evidences show that Indian civilization had great influence on the religious belief, art of writing, coins, votive tablets and inscription and India and Myanmar had very strong civilizational linkages.

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## **Part II**

Women in Monastic Buddhism in Southeast Asia: An Agenda  
for Archaeological Research

*Garima Kaushik*

Circulation of Buddhist maṇḍalas in Maritime Asia:  
A Study of the Art of the Buddhist Diamond Triangle of Odisha  
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# Women in Monastic Buddhism in the Southeast Asia: An Agenda for Archaeological Research

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Garima Kaushik

## 1. Introduction

The academic study of women in Buddhism began in late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the works of C.A.F Rhys Davids, Mable Bode, I. B. Horner laid the bedrock over which subsequent works on the subject were carried out. The Orientalist and the Protestant Buddhist approaches converged on to one point; an over dependence on Pali textual tradition which was seen to represent Buddhism in entirety with all its various forms. More recent works, focusing on the different Nikayas, have also largely based their interpretations on the texts of different schools to arrive at an understanding of the relationship that women had with Buddhism and also how / which sect was disposed more favourably towards women.

With the study of different genres of Buddhist texts, the main issues that have kept scholars preoccupied in more recent times are as follows.

- The religious aspirations and capabilities of women
- The issue of *Bhikkhuni* or nuns ordination
- Women's role within the Samgha and outside it
- Images of the feminine in Buddhism; their visual representation and reception

## 2. Women in the Early Buddhism

The two broad categories within which women were seen in the early Buddhism were as lay practitioners or *upasikas* and female monastics or *Bhikkhunis*. Most of the texts used for the study were known to be authored by male monastics, and are known to exhibit varying degrees of androcentric biases. These canonical texts sketched an idealized image of a Buddhist woman; as opposed to the texts which were about women and authored by women. The latter reflect true struggles and aspirations of the women, but unfortunately have been accorded somewhat of a peripheral status as compared to the Canonical texts; by those working on the subject.

A textual analysis reveals that as compared to the female renunciants, the lay women or *upasikas* were accorded greater space and more positive representation in the textual tradition by male editors. The male monastics along with the lineage of the past Buddhas also conjured up a corresponding lineage of ideal *upasikas* and *bhikkhunis*. These legendary Buddhist women were projected as the ultimate ideal which every Buddhist woman was expected to emulate. The literary tradition erected larger than life representation of the ideal female lay donor, *Vishakha*, to which the lay women were expected to live up to. The texts upheld the family and the role of the mother within it as the most sacrosanct. While most of the feminine representations within Buddhism portray the woman in the negative, there are positive representations as well. Among these, the representations of the lay woman as ‘mother’ are the most popular and score over any other kind of the positive representation of the feminine. Even within the biographical tradition, Gautama’s mother occupies a considerable space within the biographical narrative of the Buddha. It also needs to be stressed that this positive representation of the female was not limited to the textual tradition but was manifested within the domain of Buddhist art too.

While the texts provide various orthodox doctrinal views on women, they are inadequate in trying to understand how women themselves received such views, and if at all they acted or reacted to them. As Schopen states, real Buddhism comes to be equated with textual Buddhism. The literary material which consists of heavily edited texts are intended to inculcate an ideal recording of what a small atypical Buddhist Community wanted. That community should believe or practice whereas the archaeological material records or reflects at least a part of what Buddhists actually practiced and believed.

As compared to the study of textual sources on the subject of women and monastic Buddhism, the engagement with archaeological sources started very late and only in the beginning of the twenty-first century. It has only been in the past decade or so that archaeological data have been brought into study Buddhism from a gendered perspective. Recent studies in the field of epigraphy (Shah 2001) and visual representation (Kim 2012) have brought into focus the inadequacy of dealing with only the literary sources. These studies could address issues such as identity of Buddhist women and their visibility in historical records for the medieval period, which contradicts the view that women's presence, and more specifically patronage, had completely disappeared within the Samgha by the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Contrary to what has been generally believed based on a reading of the Buddhist textual, it has been brought out through the analysis of archaeological data that though motherhood was certainly an important criterion of self identification for women in the early Buddhism. It was definitely not the “most significant and dominant category” through which the female Buddhist practitioners sought to identify themselves with; as has been understood by a reading of the literary sources. This study reiterates that religious behaviour was not always in conformity with literary prescriptions.

**Table 6.1: Social Identification Categories Used by Bhikkunis and Upasikas in the Donor Records**

Category of identification	Bhikkunis	Upasikas
As Mother	2 – 0.89 per cent	54 – 21.7 per cent
As Wife	0	75 – 30.2 per cent
By the Native place	85 – 38.11 per cent	70 – 28.2 per cent
As Grand daughter	0	5 – 2 per cent
As Daughter-in-law	0	8 – 3.2 per cent
By Personal name	118 – 52.9 per cent	24 – 9.6 per cent
As Sister-in-law	0	2 – 0.8 per cent
As Daughter	5 – 2.24 per cent	39 – 15.7 per cent
As Sister	1 – 0.44 per cent	16 – 2.4 per cent
By Cast/ Gotra/ Kula	0	4 – 1.6 per cent
As Pupil/Antevasini	7 – 3.1 per cent	12 – 4.88 per cent
As Nun/Bhikkuni	2 – 0.89 per cent	0
As Upasika	0	2 – 0.8 per cent
As neice	3-1.34 per cent	1- 0.4 per cent
Others	0	6 – 2.4 per cent

*Source:* Author's own.

**Table 6.2: List of Probable Monastic Sites for *Bhikkhunīs* (*Bhikkhuni Viharas*)**

1.	<i>Vihāra</i> of Rani Karpurasri	Ratnagiri, Orissa	-	11 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> Century
2.	Itamundia	Kiching, Orissa	-	11 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> Century
3.	Monasteries 9-12.	Nalanda, Bihar	Eastern Side	
4.	Monastery E	Kasia, Uttar Pradesh	Eastern Side	1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup> Century A.D
5.	Monastery F	Sravasti, Uttar Pradesh	Eastern Side	1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup> Century A.D
6.	Purvārāma Monastery	Sravasti, Uttar Pradesh	South-East/ East	1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup> Century A.D
7.	Kumāradevī Monastery	Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh	Eastern Side	12 <sup>th</sup> Century A.D
8.	-	Kapilavastu, Uttar Pradesh	-	--
9.	<i>Vihāra</i> of Devi (Queen of Asoka)	Sāñci, Madhya Pradesh	-	8 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> Century
10.	Monastery 44	Sāñci	Eastern Area of the Complex.	
11.	Site No. 6	Nagarjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh	-	3 <sup>rd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> Century A.D
12.	SAN 3	Sannathi, Andhra Pradesh	Eastern Bank of River Bhima, in the western part of the site	2 <sup>nd</sup> Century A.D.
13.	Upper terrace	Bairat, Rajasthan		2 <sup>nd</sup> Century A.D
14.	SGL 5	Sanghol	East	Kushana
15.	SGL 5	Sanghol	North East	Kushana
16.		Udaygiri		7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> to 11 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> Century

**Source:** Author's own.



Having said this, there are also instances where archaeological data have supported and substantiated textual interpretations. The fact that *upasikas* were definitely favoured over their monastic counterparts is evident in the textual renderings. Various types of structures associated with lay-female Buddhist women have been identified and documented at various Buddhist sites; like circular structures, *ayaka* stupas and three-roomed cells all within and as an integral part of the sacred Buddhist landscape. The presence of these structures, which imply lay presence, are far more numerous as compared to sites with *Bhikkhuni* presence. Though historical texts have been of little help in the identification of monastic residences for nuns, quite a few have been identified archaeologically.

The presently available archaeological data on women within the religion allow us to investigate further the role of women, their degree of engagement with the religion, and their role of power and authority within it; the issues that have evaded Buddhologists, so far.

Studies on women and Buddhism in Southeast Asia are mostly focused on the contemporary issues like the issue of ordination and revival of nuns lineage. Works that focus on the early history of Buddhism and the role of women in it have been a fewer. They have basically followed the methodological approaches that have directed the course of similar studies in South Asia with primary focus on the survey of the textual material. Most researches by feminist authors have focused on the study of Mahayana Buddhism and its implications in the region. Works on Theravada Buddhism on the other hand have been much lesser and far between. These works have to try to assess among other reasons for the popularity of Theravada among the female Buddhists in South Asia (Andaya 2002). On the another trajectory, the innovative engagement and reworking of the received Pali textual tradition to reconfigure and repackage Theravada to make it more popular by bringing in elements that find ready acceptance by lay adherents, especially the women (Derris 2008), indicates that the religion in the region was not a static monolithic entity and was also not immune to change as was earlier believed.

Theravada penetrated into the interiors of the region, gaining a firm foothold by integrating local beliefs and enhancing its appeal, presumably by equating motherhood and merit making and creating thereby greater opportunities for greater lay engagement, especially for Theravada Buddhist women.

However, archaeological investigation, especially on their actual presence, has been lacking, especially in Myanmar and Thailand. It still needs to be tested whether it was actually the ‘motherhood ideal’ which was the most popularly accepted lay ideal for early Buddhist women or as in the case of South Asia. Contrary to this, generally accepted notions/issues of personal identity devoid of gender, took precedence over their social/communal identities reflective of stereotypical gender roles. Issues that further need to be investigated are—if the lay women were more favoured over their monastic counterparts? Were there any kind of material remains that would be supporting the argument? What were the various types of structures associated with lay women at Buddhist sites? How and where was monastic and lay Buddhist interaction played out? What were the monastic spaces demarcated for female renunciants? Were *stūpas* erected for women? Is this practice survived among the later day Buddhists? Which particular group of women (laywomen or almswomen) enjoyed this privilege? and Do the architectural planning and layout of these structures conform to similar structures identified in South Asia?

Numerous inscriptions from the second century BCE mention *Bhikkhunīs* along the Indian trade routes and near active seaports with Indonesian connections. Old Indonesian languages and texts are rich with words describing such religious women ascetics—*Wikuni* in *Bahasa*. Women ascetics of various traditions including Buddhist are also known as *munḍīs* (women who have taken tonsure), *sekhīs* (those who have undertaken training-*sikkha* in the precepts) and *dewī* or *devīs* (female divinities). *Rara-kili* and *Rara-kili* are other terms that inform about various categories of religious women during the historical period. Apart from the literary references there are visuals engraved on stone that are further testimony to the presence of these women mendicants or *Bhikshunis*. The circular structures discussed above have been seen in Indonesia. Ruins of Mortuary Monument of Gāyatrī Rājapatni as Prajñāpāramitā in Candi Gāyatrī at Boyolangu, Indonesia is one such monument whose contextual archaeological analysis along gendered lines would help in understanding better the presence of such structures both within the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, especially Indonesian Buddhism from a gendered perspective. Similarly, the study of cave sites like Dewi Kili Suci’s Selomangleng Goa Cave (Mount Klothok, five kilometres west of the city of Kediri, Indonesia) would parallel and also

at the same time add to the study of cave sites known to have associated with female Buddhist practitioners.

### 3. Concluding Remarks

Many temples in Thailand, more so in the North, do not allow women to circumambulate the stupas. As by going around it, they might desacralize relics enshrined within the stupa. Do such issues of purity and pollution prevalent in contemporary Buddhism have a historical precedent? In the light of this contemporary religious custom is there a possibility of existence of stupas dedicated to women as are known from South Asia? Issues such as these and many others still await answer, and only an in depth archaeological enquiry would help resolve many of these unanswered queries. Archaeological researches such as focused on studying the nuances of monastic architecture from a gendered perspective, its evolution and regional variations in the two geographical regions can give answers to the issues that have evaded satisfactory explanations thus far. Collaborative projects in archaeology and ethnography that seek to map, document and more importantly contextualize the presently available data can go a long way in providing a more coherent and connected account of historical ties between the two regions.

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# Circulation of Buddhist maṇḍalas in Maritime Asia: A Study of the Art of the Buddhist Diamond Triangle of Odisha (India) and Borobodur– Caṇḍī Mendut in Java

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Umakanta Mishra

## 1. Introduction

George Cœdès (1968) considers arrival of the Esoteric Buddhism in Southeast Asia from South Asia as the dominant fact of the 8th century CE. Tantric Buddhism had spread to Southeast Asia in different waves and through different channels and agents. Earlier scholars like Bernet Kempers (1933) and recent scholars like Peter Sharrock (2016), J. Sundberg (2003, 2010) and others, on the basis of the epigraphic, archaeological and the Chinese Buddhist records, argue that ‘India’s Buddhist strategists of the Pallava dynasty in the south and the later Pāla dynasty in the north, ‘forged alliances in Southeast Asia in the 8<sup>th</sup> century that became key to keeping alive their international proselytizing mission when the emperors of China and Tibet ordered the closure of thousands of monasteries on political-religious whims’ (Sharrock and Bunker 2016). The influence of *Pallavagrantha* script on the inscriptions of early Sailendras (Canagga Inscription of Sañjaya), the biography of the Buddhist monk, Vajrabodhi, who spent three years in Java between 717-

720 CE en route to China and the Nalanda Inscription of Devapāla (860 CE) attest to the influence of the Pallava and Nalanda on the Southeast Asian esoteric Buddhism. This paper explores the role of Odisha as an important region in the transmission of esoteric Buddhism in maritime Asia between 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. It covers architectural and iconographic programmes in the Buddhist diamond triangle sites of Ratnagiri, Udayagiri and Lalitagiri, situated in eastern littoral state of Odisha to argue that Odisha presents early epigraphic, sculptural and architectural evidence of *maṇḍala*<sup>1</sup> stūpa and *maṇḍala* sculptures which Buddhist monks carried to Southeast Asia and China. It also draws on the architectural similarities between the evidence from Odisha with those of Borobodur and Caṇḍī Mendut.

This article is divided into three sections— The first component briefly deals with two important texts – *Sarvatathāgatattvaśaṃgraha* (henceforth, *STTS*) and the *Mahāvairocanaśūtra* (henceforth, *MVS*) (both composed in 7<sup>th</sup> century CE), which formed the basis of early tantric Buddhism before the emergence of *Yoga* and *Anuttarayoga tantra*. This section also deals with biographies of three important Buddhist monks— Vajrabodhi (671-741 CE), his disciple Amoghavajra (who stayed in Java) (704-774 CE) and Śubhakarasiṃha (637-735 CE), who played important role in the transmission of these twin texts to Southeast Asia and China; The second component covers some epigraphic, iconographic and architectural evidences from Buddhists sites of Caṇḍī Borobodur, Caṇḍī Mendut and Ratu Boko in Central Java to discuss the ideological influences of the *STTS* and the *MVS* in the architectural and sculptural arrangements in these monuments. The final component brings up the epigraphic, iconographic and architectural evidence of the influence of the twin texts of the *STTS* and the *MVS* in Orissa in early 8<sup>th</sup> century-9<sup>th</sup> centuries CE to emphasize that Odisha presents an early evidence of the presence of tantric *maṇḍalas* form of Buddhism. It concludes while pleading for a more scholarly attention on the civilisational linkages between Odisha and Southeast Asia, especially in the sphere of Buddhism and Saivism.

## 2. Two Important Texts and Their Transmissions

Two important texts, which formed the basis of the Buddhist *maṇḍalas* as well as early esoteric Buddhism in India (7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century CE), China, and Japan, were the *STTS* and *MVS*. *Kukai* (774-835 CE), who founded

the Shingon Buddhism in Japan, acknowledges importance of these texts when he writes that the esoteric Shingon doctrine, the secret treasury given in two sutras, was unfolded by the Dharmakāyā Mahāvairocana Buddha for the sake of his own enjoyment (Hakeda 1972).

The *MVS* was a seminal work in the history of Tantric Buddhism, offering one of the first fully developed expositions on this form of Buddhism. In India and Tibet, it came to be classified as a *Caryā Tantra*, or “Practice Tantra”; corresponding to the second category of what was to become in Tibet the standard fourfold classification of Buddhist *tantras*, eventually to be superseded to a large degree by the *STTS* in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. There was also a *mūla-tantra* text, composed in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE and consolidated over time into a *Yogatantra* text. The *STTS* does not explain the concepts; rather it is concerned with the manuals of the *Maṇḍalas* rites: how to draw *maṇḍalas*, initiation into these *maṇḍalas* (*abhiṣeka*) and powers resulting from the performance of these ritual-actions.

The twin texts travelled to Java in the Sailendra period in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE, and from there to China in the T’ang period in early 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. An Indian monk, Amoghavajra, who took these texts to China, and played a key role in fighting Chinese opposition to Buddhism. Amoghavajra’s Japanese disciple, Kukai, took, among other things, *maṇḍala* form of tantric Buddhism, and that today is known as Shingon Buddhism in Japan.

No Sanskrit manuscript of the *MVS* is available today. But the Tibetan and the Chinese versions are available. Śubhakarasiṃha, who went to China, made a commentary on the *MVS* with his signature available in Japan. It deals with the Buddhist esoteric concept and also deals with *garbhadhātū maṇḍalas*.

The Chinese Tang period text *Sung kao-seng chuan*, written by Tsanning (919-1001 CE), gives the biography of many Indian Buddhist monks who took Buddhism to China (Chou 1945). Three prominent monks in the transmission of the *MVS* and the *STTS* were Vajrabodhi, his disciple Amoghavajra and Śubhakarasiṃha. Vajrabodhi’s Chinese disciple, Lu Xuan, has given the treasure of biography of his master and Amoghavajra, who was one of the celebrated Buddhist monks in the T’ang Court, and there are extensive Chinese records about him.

### ***Vajrabodhi (671-741 CE)***

Vajrabodhi was a prominent monk associated with the transmission of the tantricism to China. His Chinese disciple, Lü Xiang, left his biography (Sundberg and Giebel 2011). According to this biography, he belonged to Malaya in South India, near the Potalaka Mountain. His father was Brahmin and an *acārya* in Kāñci. He studied in the Nalanda monastery in Bihar where he studied the *sūtras*, *abhidharma* and so on. He then went to west India to learn the doctrine of yoga, three secrets (of speech, mind and *dhāraṇī*). He thereafter went to South India at the invitation of Pallava king Narasimhavarman to pray for rains. The southern part of this country borders upon the seashore, where there was a temple of Avalokiteśvara. Was it the temple of Negāpattinam where there was an Avalokiteśvara image? Avalokiteśvara appeared and instructed him to pay homage to Buddha's tooth in Ceylon and climb Mt Lankā to worship Buddha's footprint. Then he visited Ceylon and climbed the Lanka Mountain. He passed by Ruhuna, and converted the king to Mahāyāna and climbed Lanka mountain where he saw the footprint of Buddha's right foot. This is Adam's peak. There he entered into *samādhi* for a day. He stayed in Abhayarāja temple, where he paid obeisance to Buddha's tooth and was honoured in turn by the king Manavamma (Manavarman). He came back to South India and asked for the permission of the King to go to China where Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva lived. The King Manavarman said, 'if you insist on going, I will send an ambassador to accompany you and present some tribute to the Tang Emperor'. Vajrabodhi sailed for Ceylon first where Śrī Śaila (Manavarman) tried in vain to desist him from going to China. Vajrabodhi sailed eastward with the Persian merchants, who having come with 30 ships to trade with Ceylon for jewellery, desired to make a voyage to the East with Vajrabodhi. The Persian merchants were very active in the Indian Ocean during this period (The Persian and Sassanid glazed wares were found from many places of Indian Ocean). The *Cosmas Indicopleustes* wrote, "The island being, as it is, in a central position, was much frequented by ships from all parts of India and from Persia and Ethiopia and it likewise used to send out many of its own (McCrindle 1897). Vajrabodhi stopped at Sri Vijaya in 717 CE and stayed there for three years, where he met his follower, Amoghavajra. He finally reached China in 720 CE. In 723 AD, he translated the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha* and *Mahāvairocanasūtra* in Tzu-sheng temple. He translated *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtasāstra* as well as the *Mahāpratisarā Dhāraṇī*. He died in 732 CE. There are epigraphical



and iconographic evidences from the Indonesian Archipelago on *Mahāpratisarā dhāraṇī* and Mahāpratisarā image from Java (Cruijssen *et al.* 2013).

### ***Biography of Amoghavajra (Pu-k 'ung) (704-774 CE)***

Amoghavajra was one of the celebrated Buddhist monks in the Chinese records (Goble 2012; Chou 1945). He belonged to Brahmin family of North India. Chao Chien, a disciple of Amoghavajra wrote a biography of the master. At the age of fifteen he became the follower of Vajrabodhi, who introduced him to a Sanskrit text of *Siddham* and a treatise on the Science of Sounds. Having led the disciple to *Vajradhātumaṇḍala*, Vajrabodhi taught him Science of Sounds. He learned the *Bhadracāriprañidhāna* in two evenings. He taught him *Vairocanasūtra* and manuals of *siddhi*. Later he took Amoghavajra to China's Loyang, where Vajrabodhi died. Thereafter, Amoghavajra planned to make a long journey to India and Ceylon, as the late Master once ordered him to do. He first arrived at Nan-hai-chun where the Governor General Chu-lin made an earnest request for *abhiseka*. Then he boarded a Kun-lun ship. When they reached the boundary of Kling they met with a heavy storm. Then from Kling, he arrived in Sri Lanka. When Amoghavajra first met the *acārya* Sāmantabhadra, he requested the Master to teach him the method of erecting an altar in accordance with the *Mahākaruṇāgarbha-dhātumaṇḍala* of the *Vairocanasūtra*. In 749 AD, he returned to China again. There he translated *STTS* and *MVS* and a text on *alayavijñāna*. He died in 774 CE ; and was one of the most important celebrated Buddhist monks in the Tang Court. Amoghavajra designated six disciples as having been fully trained in Esoteric Buddhist practices— Han'guang 含光, Hyech'o 慧超, Huiguo 慧果/惠果, Huilang 慧朗, Yuanjiao 元皎 and Juechao 覺超. Implemented in official temples throughout the Imperium, the main monastic centers of Esoteric Buddhist practice were: Xingshan Monastery 興善寺, Huadu Monastery 化度寺, Baoshou Monastery 寶壽寺, and Ximing Monastery 西明寺 in Chang'an, Jin'ge Monastery 金閣寺 at Mount Wutai, and Qinglong Monastery 青龍寺 in Luoyang (Goble 2012)

### ***Śubhakarasiṃha (637-735 CE)***

Subhakarasiṃha (Shan wu-wei) of Taisho Tripitaka was a native of central India (most likely Chhatishgarh and Panduvarṃśīs), whose ancestors on account of internal problems, came to Oḍra and ruled over Odisha.

He, however became a monk at the age of 13, and travelled towards a monastery near the Sea (most likely Ratnagiri)<sup>2</sup>, where he obtained *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka sūtra*. He then accommodated on a merchant ship and by travelling on which he visited many countries. He came to Nalanda, became a disciple of Dharmagupta. Dharmagupta imparted him *dhāraṇī*, *yoga* and three secrets of words, speech and mind. Then he wandered in many parts of India and on the instruction of his preceptor, Dharmagupta, left for China *via* Kashmir, Swat, Tibet, and finally reached in China in 712 / 716 CE at the invitation of the Chinese Emperor. Included among the texts which he brought to China were the *Mahāvairocanaṅghisambodhi*, which he translated into Chinese in 725 AD. The text has survived later in early Japanese copies, and is known as the *Gobushinkan* (Yamamoto 1990). He also made an iconographic copybook in his own hand of *maṇḍala* deities of the *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha* (*Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha* 1981). Both the *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha* and the *Gobushinkan* emphasised on the importance of Mahāvairocana and the interrelated *Mahākaruṇāgarbhoḍbhava-and Vajradhātu-maṇḍalas*. These two *maṇḍalas* form the basis of the Japanese Shingon Buddhism, and according to the Japanese legends, were transmitted by Mahāvairocana to Vajrasattva who kept them for several hundred years within an iron *stūpa* in South India until they were recovered by Nāgārjuna (Snodgrass 1988 I). Śubhakarasiṃha also gave a copy of *Mahāpratisarā dhāraṇī* to the Chinese emperor Su-tsung in 758 AD. Another *Dhāraṇī*, *Usṇiṣavijayā Dhāraṇī* was also presented by Amoghavajra to the Chinese emperor Tai-tsung in 762 AD (Chou 1945; Snodgrass 1988).

### 3. Influence of *STTS* and *MVS* in Central Java

The biographies of all these great masters of tantric Buddhism have two things in common. One they took tantric Buddhism to China, and in their journey, they stopped at Sri Lanka and Java before reaching China. Second, they used merchant ships in their travel. Vajrabodhi travelled in a Persian merchant ship to Java while Śubhakarasiṃha travelled with merchants. As has been highlighted in the biography of Amoghavajra, he met Vajrabodhi first in Java. Amoghavajra as well as Vajrabodhi both were important Buddhist monks and attained a great degree of fame in Java. The Śailendra kings certainly knew Amoghavajra and were probably powerfully attracted by his prowess in protection of state beyond dispute. At least one Javanese monk, referred to as Bianhong

(辯弘), went to China intending to study the doctrines of esoteric Buddhism at Amoghavajra's feet. Modern Javanology owes a tremendous debt to the influential Japanese monk Kūkai (空海) for documenting essence of the story of Bianhong.

Bianhong, a monk of the country of Holing in Java, while practicing the yoga of Cakravartīcintāmaṇi in his native land had attained some degree of spiritual power. On suddenly hearing that the teachings of Mahāvairocana's Great *Maṇḍalas* of the Matrix of Great Compassion (*Mahākaraṇḍgarbhodbhavamāṇḍala of the Mahāvairocana Sūtra*) were to be found in South India, he fervently yearned to study them, and had set out for South India. On the way, he suddenly met someone who asked, "Where are you going?" He replied, "I have heard it said that the great teachings of the Matrix [of Great Compassion] are to be found in South India. I yearn in my heart to study them, and therefore I have equipped myself for a journey and taken to the road." That person informed him, "Those teachings have been taken by the Ācārya Amoghavajra, and transmitted to the land of the Great Tang, and his pupil, the Ācārya Huiguo, is presently at Qinglong Temple (青龍寺) in Chang'an (長安), where he is giving instructions. If you go there, you will certainly be able to receive them together with others, otherwise they will be difficult to obtain." When he had finished speaking, he vanished. It is thus evident that he was a divine being. [Bianhong] turned back and set out for the Great Tang. He eventually visited Qinglong Temple, where he met His Reverence [Huiguo] and explained in detail the purpose of his visit, offering him one seven-gemmed initiation flask, one bronze bowl, three conch-shells and various famed aromatics. His Reverence held an initiation [ceremony] for him and conferred on him the great teachings of the Matrix [of Great Compassion]. Bianhong lived in Bianzhou (汴州), where he propagated the esoteric teachings [lit. "esoteric wheel"] (Sundberg 2011).

Peter Skilling has identified Kedah (Kadara) as Srivijaya where the monk Atiśa, the great 11<sup>th</sup> century Indian monk of Tibet studied from 1012 to 1024 CE under Guru Dharmakīrti. A colophon of a Tibetan work of Atiśa says it was written 'in the city of Srivijātya in Suvarṇadvīpa (Skilling 1997). A year after Atiśa left, the Cola fleet from Tanjore attacked ports in Melaka strait and installed a Cola crown prince (Miksic 2013).

Another evidence of the presence of the esoteric Maṇḍala form of Buddhism in Java came from Ratuboko inscription (792 CE) of the time of Sailendra King, Samaratunga (Panarabang) of central Java, which states the construction of the Abhayagiri monastery in Java in line of the Abhayagiri monastery of Sri Lanka, which Vajrabodhi had visited in his journey and where relic of Buddha was located. Basing his efforts upon the transliteration offered by de Casparis, Lokesh Chandra (1995) renders the following translation of the opening strophe: “I pay homage to Sambuddha who is verily the Sumeru, of vigorous qualities, and endowed with the awe-inspiring power of knowledge, whose deep caves are [profound] wisdom, whose rocks are lofty tradition, whose Good Words are brilliant [like the sheen of] metal<sup>190</sup> (dhātu [of Sumeru]), whose cascades are Love, whose forests are meditation, whose glens are few desires, who is not shaken by the violent tempests of the eight ways of the world” Lokesh Chandra notes that the first three stanzas refer to Sumeru, fire (vahni), and waters (arṇava), corresponding to three of the mahābhūtas or elements: earth, water, fire. He suggests that the fourth element, wind, may be found in the succeeding stanza. In the Vajradhātu Mahā Maṇḍala only these four elements guard its corner directions. Chandra proceeds to tabulate the following correspondences between the Perfectly Enlightened One (Sambuddha) and Sumeru.

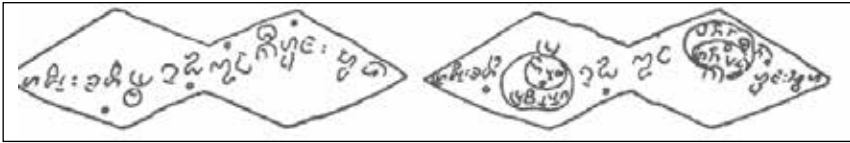
Sumeru	Sambuddha
deep caves (guhā)	profound wisdom (dhi)
rocks (śīla)	lofty traditions (smṛti)
shining metals (dhātu)	Good Words (sadvākya)
cascades (prasravaṇa)	Love (maitri)
forests (vana)	meditation (samādhi)
valleys, glen (kandarā)	few desires (alpecchatā)
violent tempests (ugra pavana)	eight ways of the world (aṣṭa loka-dharma)

### Ratuboko Gold Foil

This artefact, a gold foil recovered from Ratuboko is inscribed with a sanskrit mantra Om ṭakī jaḥ svāhā. Sundberg argues that the mantra refers to invocation to Vairocana by the Sailendra king, Panaraban (Samaratunge), for special powers, and the mantra was taken from the

STTS (Sundberg 2003). On the other, Arlo Griffiths found the occurring in the Buddhist tantric text of the *Gūhyasamājatantra* (Griffiths 2014). Recently, Andrea Acri found parallel of the mantra *Om ṭakī jaḥ* mantra in two other Balinese texts: *Pañcakaṇḍastava* and *Gaṇapatitattva* (Acri 2016).

**Figure 7.1: Ratubaka Manta on a Gold Foil, 7<sup>th</sup> Century CE, Central Java**



*Source:* Author's own.

One of the most scholarly interventions in contextualizing the art, architectural and epigraphic evidences of central Java is the works of Hudaya Kandahjaya (2009, 2016). His works on the footprints of the tantric Buddhism in Indonesia, the probable Sanskrit Buddhist texts which influenced the Javanese 10<sup>th</sup> century tantric Buddhist/Śaiva text *San Hyan Kamahāyānikan* (SHK) (at the time of ruler, Sondok 929-47 CE) and the reading of Borobudur have been the major contributions in our further understanding of Borobudur. Lokesh Chandra found 15 out of 42 verses of the *MVS* in the SHK (Chandra 1995).

#### **4. The *STTS* and *MVS* Influence in Java: Architecture and Art Evidence**

Borobudur is the most important monument of the short-lived Sailendra dynasty in Central Java (mid-8<sup>th</sup> barely to the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century), and has been subject to many interpretations (Krom 1927; Moens 1951; Chandra 1980; Gellner 1996). But, the present scholarship tends to assume that Borobudur is a *maṇḍala stūpa*. In Borobudur, as many as 504 Buddha figures are placed geometrically. From the foot and first to third galleries we can find four kinds of Buddhas in four cardinal directions with specific posture and *mudrā*. The Buddhas in the fourth gallery has the same *mudrā*, i.e. *vitarka mudrā* and are facing four directions. The total number of the Five Buddhas from foot to fourth gallery is 432. Then at the circular terrace in the summit, which can be approached from the east, depicts in the bas relief the culmination of Sudhanakumāra's journey with the ten vows of

**Figure 7.2: Model of the Borobudur from the Site Museum**



**Note:** The first three square terraces contain Buddhas in four direction in four different postures. The Buddha in the fourth gallery may be identified with Sarvārthasiddhi, Śākyamunī and the Buddhas in circular latticed stupa in the fifth and sixth can be identified with Vairocana Buddha

**Source:** Author's own.

**Figure 7.3 (a): Buddha in Bhumisparśamudra**



**Figure 7.3 (b): Buddha in Bhumisparśamudra**



**Note** (Figure 7.3(a) and Figure 7.3(b)): Buddha in Bhumisparśamudra (Aksobhya in the eastern niche, from foot to third gallery (eastern quarter) and Buddha in vitarka mudra in the fourth gallery identified with Śākyamunī)

**Source** (Figure 7.3(a) and Figure 7.3(b)): Author's own.

Sāmantabhadra, and have 72 Buddhas in circular latticed *stūpa* in the fifth and sixth gallery. Thus like the *Vajradhātu maṇḍalas*, Borobodur has Aksobhya in the east, Amitābha in the west, Amoghasiddhi in the north and Ranasambhava in the south. The *STTS* states that Buddha Sarvārthasiddhi attained Buddhahood after he was instructed by Vairocana and Vajradhātū. Most likely, the Buddha in *vitarka mudrā* in the fourth gallery is Śākyamunī, who is called Sarvārthasiddhi in the *STTS*. The *STTS* states that bodhisattva Sarvārthasiddhi was practicing yoga.

All the Buddhas aroused him and said him: you have been practicing austerities without knowing the truth of *sarvatathāgatas*. You cannot become a complete Buddha by this *Samādhi* alone. Then they taught methods of attaining complete Buddhahood. At the fourth stage, Bodhisattva was initiated with the *vajra* name of Vajradhātū. After that, all the Buddhas started for Vajramaṇiratnaśikhara kutāgra on the top of Mt Meru. After moving there, all of the Buddhas blessed Vajradhātu Tathāgata as Sarvatathāgata and let him take a seat of *śimhāsana* so as to face every direction (33a). At that moment, Tathāgata Akṣobhya, Amitabha, Lokeśvararaja and Ratnasambhava blessed themselves as Sarvatathāgatas. Tathāgata Śākyamunī understood the similarity of every existence and the four other Tathāgatas took their respective seats in four directions surrounding Śākyamunī. From the above description of *STTS*, it seems that Borobodur panel represents four Tathāgatas in three lower galleries and Śākyamunī (Sarvārthasiddhi) in the fourth gallery). According to the Indian cosmology, Mt Meru is the summit centre of the cosmos and vajramaṇiratnaśikhara-kutāgara of the Meru to which Vairocana and four Tathāgatas took Sarvārthasiddhi represents this summit. The summit of Borobodur with circular latticed stūpas having Vairocana in *Bodhyāṅgi mudrā* represents the *kutāgara*. Here Buddha Vairocana is represented in the *Bodhyāṅgi mudrā*. This *mudrā* represents six elements, a *mudrā* signifying the union of five knowledges of the Tathāgatas into single enlightenment, whereby the index finger of the left hand is clasped by the five fingers of the right hand, referred to as the ‘knowledge fist *mudrā*’.

He (Vairocana) pervades all space. Vajradhātū can be identified with Vairocana at the beginning of subsection 2 of *STTS*; Then Tathāgata Vairocana, obtained *hṛdaya* of Sarvatathāgata Sāmantabhadra, and was initiated in the *abhiśeka* of mahamaniratna emerging from the *akāśa* of Sarvatathāgatas (paragraph 34 of the *STTS*). The *kutāgara* is decorated

with *vajra*, *maṇi* and *ratna*, and Kazuko Ishii argues that the square and rhombic pattern of the bell shaped latticed pattern represent the jewelry (Ishii 1995).

**Figure 7.4: Tathāgata Vairocana in Bodhyāngi Mudrā**



**Note:** Borobudur representing the absolute void

**Source:** Author's own.

### Caṇḍī Mendut and *MVS*

Caṇḍī Mendut is another important temple built on the model of *garbhadhātūmaṇḍala* of the *MVS*. The temple is the part of the triad of Caṇḍī Pawon and Caṇḍī Borobudur. The Karangtengah inscription describes it as *veṇuvanā bhikṣyām ... jinamandiram* in line 21 (Casparis 1950). It is 3 k.m. east of Borobudur. Sudarshana Singhal (1991) has found close similarities in the representations of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in Mendut with the alignment of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in *MVS* in the Japanese *maṇḍalas*. In the *Garbhadhātū-maṇḍala*, Tathāgata Vairocana Buddha is in the centre, and he is surrounded by the following Bodhisattvas as has been given in Table 7.1.

**Table 7.1: Alignment of the Buddhas in Caṇḍī Mendut and *MVS***

	<i>MVS</i>	Caṇḍī Mendut
Centre	Vairocana	Vairocana
East	Ratnaketu	Empty
South	Samkusumiaraja	Empty
West	Amitābha	Empty
North	Duṇḍubhinirghoṣa	Empty

**Source:** Author's own.



### Alignment of Bodhisattvas

The Bodhisattvas in the eight petalled lotus in intermediate direction are SE: Sāmantabhadra, SW: Mañjuśrī, NW: Maitreya, NE: Lokeśvara where as the four other Bodhisattvas in the outer circle are E: Mañjuśrī, S: Sarvanivāraṇaviṣkāmbhin, W: Ākāśagarha, N: Kṣhitigarbha.


In Table 7.2, a comparison has been made between the representation of the alignments of various Bodhisattvas in various directions in the *MVS* and the iconographic arrangements in the outer wall of Caṇḍī Mendut.

**Figure 7.5: Alignment of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the Garbhadhātumaṇḍala**







*Source:* Author's own.

**Table 7.2: A Comparison of the Alignments of the Bodhisattvas in the MVS and Mendut**

<i>MVS</i>	Caṇḍī Mendut	Mudrā and symbols	Photos
Mañjughoṣa (E)	Vajrapāṇi SE	r.h: abhaya l.h: vajra	
Kṣhitigarbha (N)	Kṣhitigarbha (SE)	r.h: cintāmaṇi on lotus l.h: gem	
Ākāśagarbha (W)	Ākāśagarbha (SW)	r.h varada l.h upstanding sword on lotus	

*Table 2 continued...*

...Table 2 continued

Sarvanivāraṇaviṣkāmbhin (S)	Sarvanivāraṇaviṣkāmbhin (NE)	r.h: broken l.h flaming cintāmaṇi on lotus	
Avalokiteśvara (NE)	Avalokiteśvara (NW)	Broken image	
Sāmantabhadra (SE)	Sāmantabhadra (NE)	A stem divided into three studs	
Maitreya (NW)	Maitreya (NW)	Varada <i>stūpa</i> in crown	
Mañjuśrī(SW)	Mañjuśrī(SW)	Book	

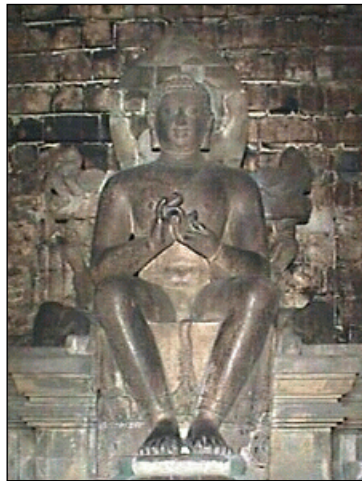
**Source:** Author's own.

## 5. MVS, STTS and Iconographic Programmes in Odisha

The close similarities between the Caṇḍī Mendut Buddhas and Pala bronze images, possible prototype of the terraced stūpa of Kesariaya and Borobdour (Chemburkar 2016), the biography of Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra and palaeographic similarities between Pallava inscriptions

and Inscriptions of Sailendras, all the evidences make Sharrock to argue that that Vajrabodhi introduced in Southeast Asia this *maṇḍalas* form of tantric Buddhism from South India and Nalanda. “The form of Pallava-style Kāñcī Buddhism that Vajrabodhi and his disciple Amoghavajra propagated across Asia was to profoundly influence the Buddhism of the Pāla dynasty in northern India which arose a few years after Vajrabodhi’s death in China in 741 CE” (Sharrock 2016). However, the archaeological evidence from Odisha reveals that Odisha was an important early centre of tantric Buddhism, and contains early epigraphic, architectural and iconographic evidences of *maṇḍalas* form of Buddhism. Tibetan sources, such as the Blue *Annals*, Tāranātha’s account, refer to Odisha as an important centre of tantric Buddhism (Sahu 1958; Mitra 1981; Donaldson 2001; Mishra 2009). The biography of Śubhakarasiṃha reveals that he was a ruler of Oḍra and most likely studied in Ratnagiri monastery. More than the literary references, the archaeological evidence suggests that Orissa was certainly an important centre of tantric Buddhism.

**Figure 7.6: Vairocana in Central Cella of Candi Mendut**



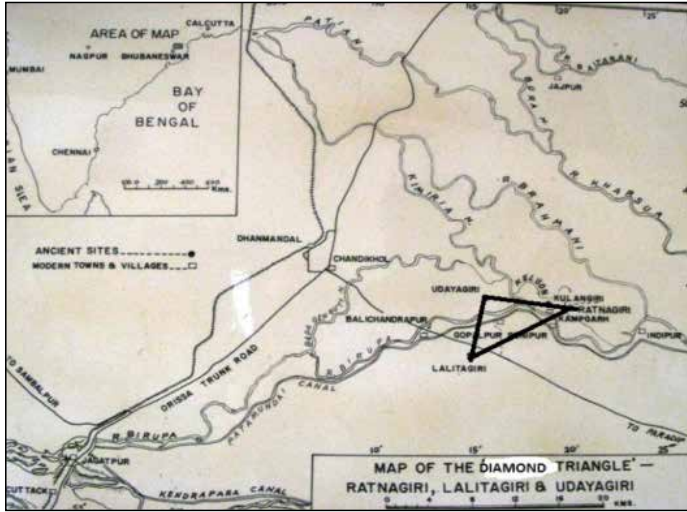
*Source:* Author’s own.

The Buddhist remains of Odisha are strewn throughout the state but the main concentration is in the Assia group of hills in the undivided Cuttack district. Archaeological excavations and explorations have revealed more than 100 sites but the sites of Ratnagiri, Lalitagiri and Udayagiri contain sustentative presence of tantric Buddhism (Mitra 1981; Patnaik 2017;

Trivedi 2011). As has been noted in the previous section, two important texts carried by Śubhakarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra to China are the *MVS* and the *STTS*. The Abhisambodhi Vairocana image of Lalitgiri is inscribed with a *mantra* on the back slab which reads “*namaḥ sāmāntabuddhānām a vira* (line 1), and is followed by *hum kham* in line 2.<sup>3</sup> This *mantra* appears in the chapter six of the *MVS*. The Khadipada Avalokiteśvara image inscription from Odisha (dated to 8<sup>th</sup> century CE) refers to installation of the image by Rahularuci who has been described as *Mahāmaṇḍalācāri* (who is adept in *maṇḍalas*) *paramaguru* (supreme preceptor) (Ghosh 1942). From the Buddhist sites of Odisha, five types of *maṇḍalas* are found – 1. the *stūpa maṇḍala* with four Dhyānī Buddhas flanked by two Bodhisattvas each as in the Udayagiri *stūpa*; 2. Sculptural *maṇḍalas* of eight *Bodhisattvas* around a Buddha on a single stone slab; 3. Four *Bodhisattvas* surrounding four Dhyānī Buddhas with fifth one at the centre; 4. free-standing *Bodhisattvas* forming a *maṇḍala* and the last type being the *maṇḍala* diagram on the back of the image. The last category – *maṇḍala* diagram – is incised on the back of Jambhala image at Ratnagiri which consists of two concentric circles along with the Buddhist creed, a *mantra* and letters and numerous inscriptions representing Jambhala, Vasudhārā, dance deities, deified paraphernalia and musical instruments (Mitra 1981). In Odisha, there are many examples of Vajradhātū and Garbhadhatū *maṇḍalas* datable to 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (Donaldson 2001; Mishra 2009).

The Udayagiri Mahāstūpa (dated to 10<sup>th</sup> century) CE has been identified as a garbhadhātū *maṇḍalas stūpa* by Donaldson (Donaldson 2001). In the outer niches of the Udayagiri *stūpa*, four Tathāgata Buddhas have been represented. They have been identified as Vairocana in the north flanked by Mañjuśrī on the right and Kṣhitigarbha on left (he holds a *kalaśa* with a *kalpavṛkṣa* on it), Akṣobhya facing east is flanked by Maitreya in the dexter and Sarvanivāraṇaviskhāmbin on the sinister, facing west is Amitābha flanked by Lokeśvara on the right and Vajrapāṇi on the left and Ratnasambhava in the south is flanked on two sides by Sāmāntabhadra on the right. This alignment of the Bodhisattvas closely corresponds to the *Garbhadhātū maṇḍala* of the *MVS*. Table 7.3 represents the iconographic alignments of the Tathāgatas and Bodhisattvas in the Udayagiri Stūpa near Monastery I.

### Map 7.1: Diamond Triangle Buddhist Sites of Odisha







*Source:* Author's own.

**Figure 7.7: Abhisambodhi Vairocana with Mantra from MVS in Back Slab, Lalitagiri, Odisha, Early 8<sup>th</sup> Century CE**



*Source:* Author's own.

**Table 7.3: Alignment of Buddhas and Bodhisattva in the stūpa of Udayagiri, Odisha 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Century Modelled on Garbhadhātū-Manḍalas**

Buddhas	Photos
Vairocana Tatagata is flanked by Mañjuśrī on the right and Kshitigarbha on the left	
Amitabha Tathāgata is flanked by Avalokiteśvra on the right and Vajrapāṇi on the left	
Ratnasambhava (south) flanked by Sāmantabhadra and Ākāśagarbha	
Tathāgata Akṣobhya is flanked by Maitreya on the right and Sarvanivāraṇaviṣkhāmbin on the left.	

**Source:** Author's own.

It is important to ascertain the dates of the emergence of *Maṇḍalas stūpa* and sculptures based on five Tathāgata Buddhas and aṣṭa-bodhisattvas in Odisha and elsewhere based on archaeological evidence. This is not to contest that Nalanda or Paharpur or Vikramsila were not important centres of tantric Buddhism. It is to bring into focus the substantive archaeological presence of the variety of Buddhism in archaeological Buddhist sites of Odisha that the Buddhist monks took to Java, China and Japan. G.H Malandra (1985) work shows that the *maṇḍalas* appeared in 8<sup>th</sup> century CE in Ellora. In Odisha, the *MVS* appeared in early 8<sup>th</sup> century CE in Lalitagiri's Abhisambodhi Vairocana image, and therefore, *maṇḍalas* most likely appeared in Lalitagiri in early 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. There are many free standing Bodhisattvas (aṣṭa-bodhisattvas) and Tathagta Buddhas of

**Figure 7.8: Mañjuśrī maṇḍala, 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Century CE**



*Source:* Author's own.

8<sup>th</sup> century CE in Lalitagiri, indicating the presence of the alignments of Tathāgatas and Bodhisattvas (Patnaik 2017). The *maṇḍalas stūpa* and sculptures expanded in 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century CE in Udayagiri and Ratnagiri. There are many examples of smaller *stūpa maṇḍalas* of Tathāgatas and sculptural *maṇḍalas* from Ratnagiri (*stūpa* 253 of Ratnagiri). One of the important sculptural remains is the Mañjuśrī *Maṇḍala* in which Mañjuśrī can be identified with Vairocana as in the Kelurak inscription of Java. In Java, the *maṇḍalas stūpa* and sculptures ended by 850 CE.

## 6. Conclusion

The paper briefly deals with the Indian Buddhist masters who carried the tantric Buddhism to central Java, China and Japan in 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. Further, it also examined some of the traces of the tantric Buddhism in central Java by analysing *mantras*, icons and architecture. The Buddhist monks of India went to Java and carried *mantras*, *maṇḍalas* and icons to Southeast Asia. South India and Nalanda played a key role in the cultural interaction with Java involving esoteric Buddhism. However, the eastern littoral state of Odisha also preserved early epigraphic, iconographic and architectural evidences of *maṇḍala* form of Buddhism based on the twin texts of the *MVS* and *STTS*, which also effloresced in the art, iconography and architecture of Borobodur, Mendut and Sewu. This mutual interaction between Odisha and Southeast Asia in the tantric Buddhism in early medieval period from 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries CE requires more in-depth study.

## Endnotes

1. Mandala involves meditative visualization of hosts of supernormal beings in particular geometrical arrangements (Skt. *maṇḍala*) for the purpose of mundane and soteriological goals (Skt. *siddhi*).
2. Ratnagiri has been described as located on the sea coast by Tibetan Buddhist monk Lama Tāranātha
3. This mantra on the back slab of Abhisambodhi Vairocana image of Lalitagiri appears in chapter six of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*. The section states, “Then the World-honoured One Vairocana further dwelled in the *samādhi* ‘Adamantine Play Which Vanquishes the Four Demons’ and uttered words of adamantine syllables for vanquishing the four demons, liberating the six destinies, and satisfying the knowledge of an omniscient one: *Namaḥ samantabuddhānām, āḥ vi ra hūm kham*” (Homage to all Buddhas! *Āḥ vira hūm kham*.’ (Giebel 2005: 80).

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# The *Mudra* in the Dances of ASEAN: A Hypothesis

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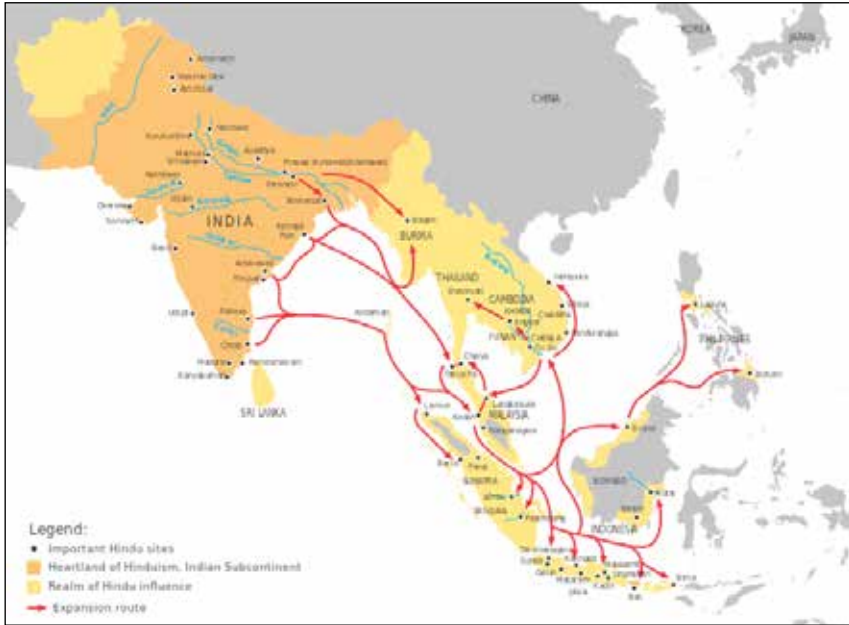
Haji Mohd Abdoh Bin Haji Awang Damit

## 1. Introduction

The *Mudra* is the highly stylized language in hand-gestures used in Indian dance forms. It is related to Hindu, Buddhist or Tantric iconography and Carnatic music of southern India, but distinct in forms. From 200 BC until the 15<sup>th</sup> century, India had established trade, cultural and political relations with Southeast Asian kingdoms in Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, Malay Peninsula, Cambodia and Vietnam. The Indian traders, adventurers, teachers and priests continued to be the dominating influence in Southeast Asia until about 1500 CE; and Indians often ruled the earliest states in these regions. Hinduism and Buddhism existed with mutual toleration. Cultural dissemination, hence, shaped cultures and performing arts of Southeast Asian Kingdoms.

## 2. Indian Diaspora

The roots of the Southeast Asian cultures can be seen from the influence of the movements of colonial powers, traders, adventurers, teachers and preachers to Southeast Asia. Early movements suggest that migrations and movements influenced the peoples of Southeast Asia. The influence of Indian civilization became predominant in the early centuries (Munoz 2006).

**Map 8.1: Expansion of Hinduism in Southeast Asia**

**Source:** Wikipedia

The influence of Indian civilization started in the end of the first millennium when India, Sri Lanka and mainland Southeast Asia became involved in the network of trade of luxury goods through the maritime Silk Road connecting eastern Roman Empire to the Han Dynasty in China (Kossak and Watts 2001). Along with the trade of goods, religion and culture influenced Southeast Asia. The Indian cultural spread according to Munoz (2006) occurred probably through technical and cultural transfers by Austronesian sailors and traders, who had been in regular trade contact with India since mid 1<sup>st</sup> century and Indian nobles, adventurers, monks, Brahmans and traders, who had migrated individually or in small groups until the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The Indian and Southeast Asian cross-fertilization of cultures is an example of non-military involvement in exchanges (indiandiaspora.nic.in).

Migration is a factor that developed diverse, multiethnic societies (Massey *et al.* 1993). The Indian Diaspora conceptualized the reproduction in an often-hostile environment and the relation to the homeland (Oonk 2007). The Hindus first settled in Suvarnabhumi and came into close association with the peoples and produced the inevitable result of cultural

immersion and assimilation (Mabbett, 1977). With these settlements, cultural exchanges occurred and evolved to become art forms set in Southeast Asia.

Levonson and Ember (1996) stated that the anthropological studies in dance gained popularity since 1950 in movements in cross-cultural perspective (Mauss 1950), dance ethnology (Kurath 1960) and choreometrics (Lomax 1968). Few critics found Lomax's study unacceptable (Kealiinohomoku 1974, 1991; Williams 1974; Youngerman, 1974). Some studies looked into historical evidences of cultural immersion through dance, for example in Boasian tradition (Royce 1977), Grau (1993) and Spencer (1985).

It was of my interest to look at the origins of Southeast Asian's classical and traditional dances' hand-gestures, and it seems to have originated from a single-source, hypothetically from India.

### 3. Hypothesis

The roots of ASEAN classical and traditional dance can be seen from the influence of the movement of Hinduism and Buddhism to Southeast Asia. Such cultural heritage can be traced to its roots in classical Indian dance. Protecting this heritage of classical and traditional dances is the main concern of ASEAN Member States. Such protection involves proper documentation and comparative study of the relationship between history and practiced cultural expressions. Hence, classical and traditional dances do have their significance on the importance of sustainable development, therefore identifying the roots of cultural expression is very important for identification of cultural heritage.

Being involved in numerous ASEAN-COCI performing arts programmes and activities, I witnessed similarities in the hand-gestures of ASEAN dances.

**Figure 8.1: Namaskara / Anjali / Hridayanjali Mudra  
Gesture of Greeting, Prayer, and Adoration**



*Source:* Author's own.

*Namaskara Mudra* is an example of the cultural immersion in the dances of ASEAN. Such variations of gestures can be found in the prologue of performances, and brings in the gesture of greeting and invitation. Dances and dance forms such as *Alai Asyik* (Brunei Darussalam), *Apsara* (Cambodia), *Oleg* (Indonesia), *Nattakam* (Laos), *Mak Yong* (Malaysia), *Yama Zatdaw* (Myanmar), *Hud-Hud* (The Philippines), *Zapin* (Singapore), *Khon* (Thailand), and *Tra Kieu* (Viet Nam) have some elements of the *Mudra* in the repertoire.

**Figure 8.2: Different Versions of *Namaskara Mudra* from the Dances of ASEAN Member States**



**Source:** Author's own.

Mahulikar (2003) wrote on the Ramayana as the fountain source of a great tradition of literature, culture, religion, and highlighted Southeast Asia as the chief point in the cultural influence of Ramayana. By using evidences from language and literature and epigraphic evidences she managed to show different versions of Ramayana in Southeast Asia from *Yogesvara* (9<sup>th</sup> century Java), *Hikayat Seri Rama* (Malaysia), *Ramakien* (Thailand), *Phra Lak Phra Lam* (Lao PDR), *Yama Zatdaw* (Myanmar) and *Maradia Lawana* (The Philippines). Performances of the versions of Ramayana that I experienced in different ASEAN Member States showed that the *Mudras* played a very important role in expressing different parts of the stories and plots of the Ramayana.

Documenting traditional and classical dances from its roots to the one of the earliest civilizations (Indian Classical Dance) will help to explore roots of ASEAN Classical and Traditional Dances. The movement of Indian ideologies through history can be tracked through the performing arts of ASEAN. The Ramayana, which has been a famous folklore, is depicted through dance and music. It will be very interesting to trace roots of Classical and Traditional Dances of ASEAN with the *Mudras* of Indian heritage.

#### 4. Suggested Projects

Brunei Darussalam suggested an ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information (ASEAN-COCI) Project under the ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund entitled Seminar and Workshop on the *Mudra* in Classical and Traditional Dances of ASEAN in 2012. In the seminar and workshop, the participants will explore the *hasta-mudra* (hand gestures) in classical Indian dance and examine such gestures to the performing arts of the ASEAN Member States. The experts from India will facilitate discussions on similarities and differences as well as interactions between professionals and practitioners.

Previous ASEAN-COCI projects involving the discipline of dance concentrated on festivals and exchanges. In music, a project entitled “Sonic Orders in ASEAN music” manage gathered similarities and differences in sonic orders of the music and musical instruments of ASEAN and the relationship with the standard and traditional tuning systems.

By identifying the roots and looking back into the history of the movement of cultures within ASEAN, ASEAN Member States can identify their similarities and differences; hence such identification would lead to understanding and tolerance with cultures of ASEAN. It would also have an impact on the grassroot level of practitioners of cultural expression (dance) hence with this unification through the *Mudras*, ASEAN can be seen as building its identity through exploring its roots hence promote ASEAN Awareness and the sense of community.

The objectives of this project are as follows.

- To preserve, ensure continuity and protect distinctiveness of ASEAN and Indian cultural heritage
- To explore differences and similarities between ASEAN dance hand gestures and tracing them back to the roots from Classical Indian Dance
- To find common ASEAN *Mudras* and their roots from classical Indian dances

Brunei Darussalam as the proponent will work closely with ASEAN Secretariat, and India would work on the implementation. The Ministry of Culture of India and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) were suggested to organize the management of the project in India with

strong support from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), India. Prior to the implementation, the country coordinator for ASEAN-India will establish mechanism for discussions between the ASEAN and India. It is suggested that the India Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) will be the counterpart in India.

**Table 8.1: The Outputs, Indicators and Activities Proposed**

Outputs	Indicators	Activities
To document one classical dance of AMS and country research papers based on the interactions, relations and roots to the history of the movement of greatest civilization in ASEAN;	A compilation of country papers consisting of detailed drawings and form of one classical or traditional dance, which has relations to classical Indian dance.	During the workshop, each country will present their country paper and to submit to the coordinator the word file and PowerPoint presentations (with videos and audios) for compilation and documentation.
To gather professional dancers, choreographers and dance researchers in an academic situation	All AMS represented and comprised professionals in dance and choreography.	A forum for discussion will be held.
To learn and gain experience with resource person(s) from India on Classical Indian Dance, through Workshop on the <i>Mudras</i>	Participants to discuss one of the common hand gestures of ASEAN, rooting back to classical Indian <i>Mudras</i> .	Workshop from ASEAN Member States and resource persons.

The progress can be analyzed through looking at the documentation and the end of workshop questionnaires and reports.

Cross-cutting issues can be identified through the disciplines of education, history and sustainable human development. This project needs to be extrapolated to discover other living tradition that has been impacted through the movement of Hinduism and Buddhism in the Southeast Asia.



## 5. Concluding Remarks

It is hoped that the project can be materialized owing to the importance of cultural links between ASEAN and India as well as tracing back at the importance of Indian civilization in this region.

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### **Part III**

Some Prospects of ASEAN-India Partnership in Culture

*Sophana Srichampa*

Building Synergies through Digitalization

*Nilima Chitgopekar*

South and Southeast Asian Interactions: Contexts for Renewal

*Niharika Gupta*

Through the Lens of Art: Setting the Context to Indian  
Heritage in Singapore and Southeast Asia

*Nalina Gopal*

Cultural Role in ASEAN-India Relations for the World Peace

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Strengthening Cultural Relations through the Role of  
Museum Institutions

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Enhancing India-Philippines Cooperation in Culture

*Joefer B. Santarita*

Cultural Relation between India and Vietnam: Toward a  
Profound Partnership for Future Development

*Nguyen Thi Thu Ha*



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# Some Prospects of ASEAN-India Partnership in Culture

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Sophana Srichampa

## 1. Introduction

In 1992, India joined as a sectoral dialogue partner of the ASEAN and became the full dialogue partner in 1996 and Summit-level Partner in 2002. In 2009, India signed an FTA in goods with ASEAN; and services agreement in 2014. The ASEAN is a strategic partner of India because it is located between two major players and along important sea routes. India aims to form the security architecture for the future of Asia, and it is acting as a counter-balance against China in disputes over South China Sea with some members of the ASEAN. India seeks to be a strong player in ASEAN, which would help it to become a global power in future (Mrunal, n.d.).

Over the last 25 years, India did gain benefits in following services—education, healthcare, IT-software, accountancy and consultancy services. Indian investors are interested in greater access to ASEAN especially for IT, automobiles, engineering and pharmaceuticals. ASEAN investors are keen to cooperate with India in construction, transportation and engineering services as well as shipping (Mrunal, n.d.).

However, relations between India and ASEAN focus mostly on the ASEAN Economic Community. But, there is an ASEAN Community pillar, which is the concern of this article, namely, the ASEAN Socio

-Cultural Community (ASCC). The ASCC promotes well-being of citizens and provides equitable access to human resources. It calls for access to primary healthcare for vulnerable groups or people at risk. This is in line with the Declaration of the Right to Development of the UN General Assembly of 4 December 1986. There are three main objectives set to be achieved by the ASCC blueprint, namely, advancing and prioritizing education, investing in human resource development and promotion of decent work (School of Liberal Arts, 2014).

This article presents ASEAN-India partnership opportunities in culture based on the concept of Cultural Diplomacy.

## 2. Cultural Diplomacy

The meaning of Cultural Diplomacy is *“Cultural Diplomacy may best be described as a course of actions, which are based on and utilize the exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity, whether to strengthen relationships, enhance socio-cultural cooperation, promote national interests and beyond; Cultural diplomacy can be practiced by either the public sector, private sector or civil society.”* (Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, n.d.)

The term ‘culture’ is defined variously by many scholars as follows.

*Culture is way of life, cumulative knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, spatial relations; accumulated experience which is socially transmitted to be a person’s learned and behaviour; it becomes a collective programming of the mind of one group differentiated from another.* (‘Culture’, n.d.)

## 3. India and ASEAN Partnership in Culture

According to the historical linkages between India and Southeast Asia over more than thousand years, the culture of India was syncretised into local cultures of the Southeast Asian people. Moreover, Indian Diaspora is acknowledged as assets for Southeast Asia. Here, we would like to highlight issues, which will be developed between India and Southeast Asia.

### **3.1 Religious, Cultural and Eco-Tourism Partnerships**

As India has tried to extend road connectivity from Northeast India to ASEAN since 2004, it is possible that India can link with ASEAN through the Trilateral Highway from Moreh in Manipur State to Myanmar, and access Thailand through Mae Sot in Tak Province (western Thailand) or through Chiang Rai Province in the north of Thailand to Lao PDR, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, and by ocean to Indonesia.

The Northeastern part of India is the gateway to ASEAN from the subcontinent. The region is very rich in terms of natural resources, biodiversity and ethnic diversity, which can be promoted and connected with Southeast Asia.

#### ***3.1.1 Religious Circuits***

India shared its Hinduism and Buddhism with the Southeast Asia since the ancient time. Moreover, Sikhism and Jainism, which originated in India, have also spread to some Southeast Asian countries through migration and transnational workers from India. Among ASEAN nations, five countries have a majority of Buddhists—Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Lao PDR and Cambodia; and adherents of Buddhism make pilgrimages to the four holy places of Buddhism in India and Nepal. There are many Buddhist places and temples in Southeast Asia, which can be linked to India, and future plans are in place to develop a Buddhist circuit linking India to ASEAN by air or by road or both. India is also trying to connect with other northern landlocked countries such as: Nepal and Bhutan. Many ASEAN people would desire to visit these two countries too. Therefore, in the future, the circular route, including India and these countries, should be considered as a potential religious (Hindu and Buddhist) circuit for tourism.

In Southeast Asia, there are many renowned Hindu places in countries, such as Cambodia and Indonesia. There are also less frequently visited Hindu sites, Thailand, in particular, should be considered as part of the Hindu circuit tourist programme linking ASEAN countries and India. Thematic tourism related to religion can be conducted between Southeast Asia and sites such as Ganesha temples, Ganesha Chaturathi, Shiva temples, Kumbh mela in India, etc. Also, health tours comprising Ayurvedic therapy and Yoga or spiritual tours of visiting some specific guru ashrams are examples of the potential lying in the popularity of Indian spiritual and well-being practices for Southeast Asians.

The Hindu circuit can be promoted for tourists flow from India to Southeast Asian countries (mainland down to Indonesia) and vice versa. Other religions, namely, Islam, Sikhism and Jainism, can be promoted for pilgrimages from Southeast Asia to India.

### ***3.1.2 Natural Resources and Biodiversity***

Northeast India is rich in natural resources and biodiversity. For example, a cherry-blossom festival is held each November in Meghalaya. The Kaziranga national park in the Golaghat and Nagaon districts of Assam (India) has 430 sq. km. of reserved areas under the UNESCO World Heritage since 1985, where varieties of animals such as one-horned great Indian rhinoceros and other endangered species find sanctuary ('Indian rhinoceros', n.d.). It is also home to wild Asiatic water buffalo, eastern swamp deer, elephants, gaurs, sambars, the Indian muntjacs (red muntjac and barking deer), wild boars, hog deers, Indian tigers and leopards, etc. This National Park helps protect and take care of all animals and natural environment. Elephant riding as part of safaris in the park is a particularly exciting and unique experience. Moreover, Kaziranga National Orchid Park has around 500 varieties of orchids, 132 species of sour fruits and leafy vegetables, 12 species of cane, 46 species of bamboo and a large variety of local fishes (Manjil 2015). It is one of the most outstanding sanctuaries in India. It can be promoted as a learning centre for ASEAN countries for sharing and learning for their respective national parks' development. Kaziranga should be promoted as a tourist place in context of eco-tourism in combination with the ethnic cultural festivals.

### ***3.1.3 Ethnic Group Diversity***

There are eight states in Northeastern India, namely, Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Manipur—with around 46 million people (in 2011, Northeast India, n.d.) rich in ethnolinguistic diversity. Most people belong to mongoloid ethnic groups, who share similarities with ethnic groups in Southeast Asia. According to Post (2015), three major following language families are found in the northeast of India.

(i) Tai-Kadai language family: Southwestern Tai has 3-4 varieties with around 10,000 knowers only in the northeast India; these are endangered (Abbi, n.d.). These varieties are similar to the Tai-Kadai in Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR and Vietnam.



(ii) Austroasiatic language family: This is Munda in Jharkhand as well as adjacent parts of Assam, Odisha, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Bihar (Munda people, n.d.). There are around 11 million knowers of Munda. Another group is Khasi in Meghalaya and along the border with Assam (Khasi people, n.d.). There are around 1.6 million knowers of Khasi. These two groups share similarities with the Mon-Khmer groups in Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Malaysia.

(iii) The Tibeto-Burman sub-language family: This family is found in Assam, Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur and Nagaland. The major groups of languages known in these areas are Kuki, Naga, Meitei, Bodo and Garo. The number of knowers could not be estimated. Some of the Tibeto-Burman speakers in the Northeast of India are connected to the same group in Myanmar and similar groups in the north of Thailand and Vietnam.

In the recent years, the Hindi, Nepali, English, and Dravidian languages are growing in the Northeast India (Post 2015).

The diversity of ethnic groups in this part of India is evident by their distinct culture and identity. This authentic display of identity is colourful and charming, and some states promote their ethnic cultural identity in annual festivals such as the Bihu festival in Assam, Hornbill festival in Nagaland and Sangai festival in Manipur, etc.

From this, India can be seen focusing on specific opportunities in sharing with Southeast Asia by air or by land. Projects like Trilateral Highway, eco-tourism and cultural tourism partnerships should be encouraged to promote rich nature and ethnic diversities of these regions.

For this, infrastructure needs to be developed further, road in particular, and the participation of the affected ethnic groups and other stakeholders should be part of the process. Reliable and sustainable resources and cultural sources shall be of prime concern. In the future, the two regions would develop applications to address these issues to be able to access and learn from the combined efforts. we propose further research collaborations on eco-tourism, religious and ethnic cultural tourism between India and ASEAN.

## 4. Two Basic Human Partnership

There are four basic human survival needs— food, shelter, clothes and medicine. Here, following two basic needs that India and ASEAN should collaborate on as partners are discussed.

### 4.1 Rice Culture Consortium Partnership

One of the common characteristics of the Southeast Asian region is rice production and consumption, which is featured in the ASEAN emblem. In fact, *rice culture* is an integral part of Asian beliefs, rites and rituals. Some rites and rituals with rice in Southeast Asian countries, such as Thailand, are influenced by Indian culture. According to Workman (2016), following ranks emerged.

- 1<sup>st</sup> was India (US\$ 6.4 billion) with 30.1 per cent of total rice exports
- 2<sup>nd</sup> was Thailand (US\$ 4.5 billion) with 21.4 per cent of total rice exports
- 5<sup>th</sup> was Vietnam (US\$ 1.6 billion) with 7.5 per cent of total rice exports
- 9<sup>th</sup> was Cambodia (US\$ 335.1 million) with 1.6 per cent of total rice exports

This suggests that if ASEAN was to cooperate as the united consortium, they could be able to negotiate for a position of considerable strength. Unfortunately, there is no formal strategy to maximize the united efforts. Our common *rice culture* does not reflect ‘solidarity’. Many farmers, especially in Thailand, remain very poor and suffer from unstable rice price and remain trapped in a high price commercial loop of production. From my own observations, travelling through some states of India, the country is a reflection of the legendary *Suwannabhumi* with its vast fields of golden rice. Therefore, I propose that we set up a “Rice Culture Consortium” with collaboration in the following.

- |                                |   |                        |
|--------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| i) Rice plantation processes   | } | “Production processes” |
| ii) Rice nourishment processes |   |                        |
| iii) Rice harvest processes    |   |                        |
| iv) Rice consumption           |   |                        |
| v) Rice distribution           |   |                        |
| vi) Rice exchange              |   |                        |

The processes from i) to iii) present the 'Production processes'. India and ASEAN can collaborate in such areas as training, manufacturing fertilizers for the consortium or ordering fertilizers on-behalf of the consortium, and their distribution to farmers fairly. An India-ASEAN Consortium can also supply equipment together for rice production to minimize imports and share expertise such as development of rice varieties. As for consumption, distribution and exchange, rice should be sold on-behalf of the consortium, not through individual country. No one country can produce enough rice, so the consortium should share or sell at a friendship price or exchange for other commodities. India and ASEAN can guarantee food security of the consortium and other regions. In the future, planning through IT and Apps need to be developed and used.

Apart from rice culture consortium, we would like to propose further research collaborations on rice culture between India and ASEAN.

#### **4.2 India-ASEAN Medicine Consortium Partnership**

Each country in the ASEAN has its own traditional medicine for alternative health care, which can be produced in the country. Several imported medicines from abroad are very expensive, which many people cannot afford. Fortunately, India has comparative advantage in pharmaceutical products, including Ayurveda. If India and ASEAN can collaborate in training, co-produce necessary or expensive medicines and share or sell at cooperative prices, it would surely benefit the poor and others who are unable to access quality health-care. Moreover, such a consortium would help other countries with their specific needs. In case of legal obstacles affecting this collaboration, the involved governments should do their best to facilitate and reduce bureaucratic obstacles.

Indian Ayurveda and yoga have spread worldwide. Therefore, these practices could be included in joint collaboration efforts with the ASEAN formally and widely. We would like to challenge India and ASEAN about these two consortia. We are dominated by capitalism and materialism at the personal and national level to the extent that selfcentreness has become the norm. We do not dare to share our expertise with others, and, as the result, competition prevails with winners and losers. In such an environment, collaboration may not be possible. So, we need to learn to love others more than ourselves and our own. We are all related just as our faiths and forefathers taught us. But, we forget often that and

feel that it is impossible to collaborate by sharing our secret products or findings. When we cannot collaborate, there is a gap for other countries or capitalists to take advantage of our weaknesses for their benefit.

## **5. Mapping of the Indian Diaspora and Transnational Indian Workers as the Human Capital of India and ASEAN Partnership**

In Southeast Asia, around four million people belong to Indian diaspora. Some are playing excellent role in many countries and are assets to those countries. In some countries, local Indians are citizens and are at home. This is particularly the case in Thailand. They may not be feeling nostalgic for their ancestral home, India. However, a lot depends on each country's policy as to whether they fully utilize their Indian community's potential to strengthen ties with India in any specific field.

Today, globalization encourages labour migration through transnational companies from India throughout the world including ASEAN. Many people work abroad until retirement and chose not to return to India. They then represent accumulated asset of that (host) country.

The legal movement of Indians in ASEAN due to transnational work opportunities is dynamic. We would like to propose that India and ASEAN do further research towards producing an encyclopedia as a digital map of Indian diaspora and transnational Indian workers, who represent asset for both India and ASEAN, which can be shared and used to build greater links between India and ASEAN. India has expertise on IT. Therefore, India would be able to manage such kind of collaboration projects between India and ASEAN. This India-ASEAN asset can be utilized for further relationship building in any specific field in future.

## **6. India and ASEAN Film Collaborative Partnership**

India is one of the biggest film producers in the world. There are many linkages through film which I would discuss here.

- If India considers collaborative film production with ASEAN countries, including developing suitable skills in other countries, that would help them to improve the quality of film production. Joint film production will promote positive relations between ASEAN and India.

- India should develop ways to promote selected Indian films as cultural diplomacy in ASEAN, especially in Thailand. I have voiced my suggestions on this matter for many years, but we have not seen any improvement. Indian films have faded from the mainstream Thai society since 1980, and the new generation Thais have little idea about India, only as the negative stereotypes of Indians as money-lenders; charging high interest rates, which is a myth that many Thais have held to up till today. This myth affects the perception of many people including decision-makers and a very few young people seem to be interested in India, and do not know that India is now undergoing tremendous changes towards modernisation. Therefore, using films or movies as a medium to update perceptions on India is worth pursuing. Later, when consumers are more familiar with India, they would be willingly accepting goods, culture and other exchanges. Likewise, India should open up to ASEAN films and the promotion of their culture in India. Therefore, mutual exchange would help both. Film festival, with related seminars, is one such activity towards a better mutual understanding between ASEAN and India.
- We believe that there are many films from India and ASEAN that reflect Asian values. Our people can learn a great deal through films, and it is time that Asia becomes proud of its distinct values and promotes itself more strongly and widely to the world. Therefore, the governments of ASEAN countries and India should distinguish between commercial films and culturally valuable films, and provide special financial incentives (tax breaks) for merit-worthy films, TV documentaries and internet features, etc.
- Collaborative courses on film production between India and ASEAN should be considered.

## **7. Selected Books Exchange between India and ASEAN**

Many people do not have the chance to visit all 10 ASEAN countries or India either for that matter. To help them and others who are interested in learning about each country, India and ASEAN should agree and collaborate on exchange of selected English books about each country on selected topics. That means one country would send ten copies to the other ten countries. Books can be up-to-date sources for people and students to learn and research by themselves. But, they are rarely used as a cultural medium to other countries. Moreover, books can serve as

‘wisdom ambassadors’ for others to learn more about that country. The book exchange should be arranged formally and initiated effectively by an assigned office. This way less investment is required, but the benefit would be surmountable.

In the future, e-books can be exchanged over networks between India and ASEAN. Moreover, there should be an “India and ASEAN Writer/Translator Association” for selected books translation into national languages. This would be a part of people to people understanding promotion through the translation of outstanding literatures and novels. If it can be promoted in the school curricula in each country, it would be a good way to learn about neighbours’ culture.

## 8. Conclusion

All Southeast Asian countries have been influenced by Indian culture and civilization in one way or other since more than thousand years. Resultant “ASEAN values” are the foundation of common characteristics of the ASEAN Community. When India first took part in ASEAN in 1992, most activities and policies were initiated at the government level of both ASEAN and India. The goal of collaboration was mainly focused on economics and security. However, India has implemented “Cultural Diplomacy under Soft Power” as its policy towards other countries including those of Southeast Asia. The socio-cultural programmes connecting ASEAN to India have been promoted and sponsored by the Government of India for more than 50 years through, for example, scholarships. Southeast Asia tends to look towards western countries and other eastern countries. In fact, many Indian people prefer to look towards west too. So, the policies of governments and the interests of the people may not correspond with each other.

According to the “3Cs Mantra” (Commerce, Culture and Connectivity) of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Act East Policy, these 3Cs are important for building people-to-people relationships. Connectivity by all means should be promoted, roads in particular. The governments of India and ASEAN should plan further collaborative programmes through road networks. Eco-tourism, religious tourism and ethnic (culture)-tourism between India and ASEAN have been proposed for prospective partnership project. When tourism starts, people would be able to travel and learn and get to know each other. Trade and investment will then follow naturally. Other potential cultural diplomacy collaborations include: films/movies,

books, and e-mapping of Indian diaspora in Southeast Asia as well as two challenging proposals that include a rice culture consortium and a medicine consortium between India and ASEAN based on shared Asian cultural values. In future, IT and Apps used for these prospects should be co-developed. ASEAN and India should collaborate to strengthen the region rather than depend on distant western countries. Of course, one facet of collaboration is competitiveness but this should be on-behalf of the India-ASEAN community, not individual countries. Another facet is helping each other by sharing. This way our India-ASEAN Community will become a harmonious society with well-being as its goal in accordance with the ASCC Blueprint, 2025. Sustainable relation between India and ASEAN is our goal. Therefore, we have to create a 'caring and sharing society' by using our common religious values to support our citizens.

### Acknowledgment

I am grateful to Dr Amarjiva Lochan, the Founder Adviser of the CBS, Mahidol University for giving several ideas to boost the Indo-ASEAN relations.

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# Building Synergies through Digitalization

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Nilima Chitgopekar

## 1. Introduction

India has myriad features of cultural heritage. One of the significant markers is its rich mythology. Hindu mythology is quantitatively huge with a fascinating plurality in its interpretations. Additionally, one myth may have several versions or retellings. Even the same frame story of a myth has often different twists and turns. This renders the mythology to appear to be contradictory and at times confusing also. The reasons for dissimilarities in the stories are many, but two reasons sum up the peculiar character of several Indian things. Variations have emerged in different historical periods and in different geographical areas/regions. It is this same kind of pluralities that one encounters in the case of languages, vernaculars and customs of the country. This has rendered the nature of the mythology as robust, almost garrulous as well as dynamic, ever-changing over centuries to suit new socio-economic situations. Inchoate as it may appear, it is paramount, for anyone who wants to understand India, to first understand the mythology, as it is the mythology that forms the backdrop to many of the dance forms, the classical and folk songs, the visual as well as martial arts, the tropes and archetypes found in the Indian cinema, among others. Therefore, I believe that one would be bereft of certain things without some knowledge and understanding of Hindu mythology, and many aspects of the culture would be lost without some comprehension of its symbolism and interpretations.

The institutions where one can understand this area of myths are practically non-existent in India. This is an appalling desideratum that there are hardly any university, where one could go to pursue a course on such studies. It is doubly pitiful that to study aspects of Hindu mythology, culture or religion, one is given the best advice to enrol in an overseas university, where there are full-fledged departments of religious studies. In addition, if one would embark for an individual attempt to study mythology, the scholars in majority are non-Indians which, in itself, I must clarify, is not a negative feature; but I felt there is a need to contribute in this area with one's own living experiences and one's own scholarship.

I was buoyed to contribute in this field because though I had done a Doctorate on aspects of history and religion and I have been teaching history for several years, mythology forms only a small part of the syllabi. I have written books, articles and also given talks on various aspects of Hinduism and culture in India and overseas. Even though I am grateful for all these opportunities, what I am aware that the lectures were only piecemeal and I could not do justice to the abundant tapestry of research that I had been involved in during all these past decades. And I was not able to reach a desirably larger audience. Hence, when I was approached by a young entrepreneur to start a platform for understanding Hindu mythology seven years ago, I was excited and ready to take on the challenge. The idea was to videotape my lectures and subsequently of other scholars lectures on several aspects of mythology and personal development and to create online courses. There is a universal appeal to mythology. Depending how it is presented and how it is interpreted, it can be of use to people across all denominations. I know the value of myths as I have been continuously fascinated as to why certain ideas continue across millennia and garner strength over time and while others die out. I focussed my energies on bringing out the fundamental principles behind evergreen and empowering ideas and how people can apply them to maximize their human potential. So what I started highlighting is what is so powerful about the myths and at the same time providing life solutions that lie in stories. After considerable online research, we realized the massive online demand for information, content and related subjects.

## 2. Transformative Learning Solutions

This led to the creation of a company called Transformative Learning Solutions. It provides lectures in a film format on religion, mythology, art, iconography and associated them with the personal development. The three films and courses I have made with this company are—The Shiva Experience, The Ganesha Experience and The Goddesses Experience. Subsequently, films and courses were made on the philosophy of Advaita and Vishnu. Presently, the company is involved in disseminating considerable aspects of Ayurveda.

The mythology highlighted is not just religious in nature. Keeping this in mind and seeing its potential, I have used it as a way to improve one's life. People from all denominations have benefitted from them and continue to do so in a digital online forum. Most of the online courses have to be purchased. However, at the same time, there is a lot of free material being shared with thousands of subscribers, who sign in.

Being an academic for several decades, I am aware of the need for the constant production and the dissemination of knowledge. In today's world, I personally felt, after writing and editing six books that it was not enough. The internet is an eminently suitable way to spread knowledge and bring people together. Now since years, many of my lectures have been digitalized in a film format, which are viewed by large numbers of subscribers in over 60 countries, including the ASEAN countries. This format has several inherent advantages. It increases people-to-people connectivity, and discussions take place without any hindrance. Hindu mythology has some universal truths, which are explained in such a manner that people from different backgrounds are benefitting from them. This is a valuable way of communication.

What is transformative of the digital publishing experience is the immediate accessibility it provides to all. In a manner of speaking, it is non-elitist. One may call this forum a 'massification' of higher education. Thus, the knowledge and books do not remain the privilege of a few. Today, everything is about quick accessibility and hyper link connectivity. This is the age of trans-global identities. The greatest advantage of online publishing is the volume of data availability. This data, in turn, can be customized according to what people want and presented to them. Instant and continuous feedback, both through data and actual interactions, can, and it does take place.

I am glad that I was able to make these films, where not only matters regarding deep issues are considered but also amusing anecdotal parts of different myths are shared, which people identify with or may just simply find entertaining. Moreover, the entry point in the series is psychological, and we deal with everyday problems. The resonance of these life and world affirming stories is clear from the large number of subscribers world-wide, and this in turn leads to constant avenues for cultural exchange.

The films incidentally are not to be compared with free YouTube, where a person just watches videos. In our films, there is text companion along with video screening. The content is non-religious and modern, as well as success oriented. The films have been kept neutral and wide for all sections of people.

It is an experience that would change and transform lives, thereby creating new vistas of communication. This is how a global platform for mythology was created and provided.

Total subscribers: 160,000

ASEAN countries: 27,000

where the free content is concerned, 400,000 people a year visit the site.

### **3. Concluding Remarks**

I sincerely believe that this kind of interaction is crucial between different ASEAN nations and should be done on both sides for increasing cultural understanding and interactions.

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# South and Southeast Asian Interactions: Contexts for Renewal

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Niharika Gupta

## 1. Introduction

This paper places some of the themes explored at different conferences over the last decade on historical interactions between South and Southeast Asia in the context of the educational programmes and institutional partnerships proposed at different fora like the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Nalanda University and ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) to suggest lines along which emerging collaborations could be developed. The focus is on creating spaces of engagement and academic resources on the artistic and intellectual traditions of these civilizations and to deepen awareness of both their historicity and their plurality. These concerns inform the mandate of Sahapedia, an online encyclopedic resource on the arts and cultures of South Asia. The inter-cultural flows between South and Southeast Asia form one of the most fascinating areas to observe how arts, ideas and practice relate to broader historical and social dynamics. Given the richly diverse cultures that distinguish the countries of South and Southeast Asia, it is Sahapedia's endeavour to encourage its users to relate local cultural forms with trans-local patterns and to document multi-ethnic histories through a tool for cultural mapping; both of which have clear resonance with the aims of the conference.

Developments in archaeology and more recently epigraphy, and advances in textual and art historical interpretation (Manguin 2011) have filled our understanding of how from ancient through medieval times, trade, pilgrimage and migration between the Indian subcontinent and the countries of Southeast Asia shaped course of economies and sometimes of dynasties, and led to the adaptation of systems of governance and the coin of social ceremonies. Port towns, courts, monastic centres and shrines provided the contexts for a continuous cultural cross-fertilization, traceable in localized devotional practices as well as grand temple complexes, in philosophical, literary and theatrical trans-creation, and in the interpenetration of languages and of textile traditions.

These linkages were recognizable if not fully comprehensible to ever-growing numbers of Indians travelling to Southeast Asia, but they perceived from the vantage point of the world that no longer is connected in the same way. For colonial rule severed these exchanges, though at the same time it created new contexts for entwined economic and political fortunes with people migrating to work on plantations and in mines, and as soldiers, money-lenders and civil servants. Colonialism was also responsible for certain commonalities of experience, from the quotidian environment of urban forms and institutions to extreme experiences of the World wars. And, while the course of anti-imperial struggles took different forms, these led to renewal of conversations between the peoples of South and Southeast Asia, as did other movements for change in politics and arts. Even when reviving local folk traditions, Tagore absorbed influences from Indonesian dance, while modern academies like the Bhatkhande Music Institute attracted innovators like W.D. Amaradeva of Sri Lanka, who were similarly pan-Asian in inspiration. Here again, however, histories subsequent to decolonization have led to breaks in these interactions and a measure of amnesia about them.

This is not to overlook numerous scholarly and popular studies, exhibitions and conferences convened in the ASEAN countries, Australia, USA and India on the histories of exchange in spices and dyes, diffusion of ideas and beliefs, technique and design, as well as on histories subsequent to colonization. Yet, as touched on at the AIC Conference 2015, there is a need for institutionalized study programmes, long-term collaborations between museums and sustained investment in projects of translation and research, if our ‘connected histories’ (to use the title of the works by Sanjay Subrahmanyam) are to become integral

to the popular understanding of Asia's past and its living traditions, and for us to explore avenues opened up by the current scholarship. These possibilities are elaborated below.

## 2. International Summer Schools

International summer schools for the study of South and Southeast Asian interactions have been proposed in the past (Sharma 2012). These may be designed for both high school and undergraduate students. School students would be encouraged to open up their imaginations to make sense of worlds, not defined by current political geographies, and where there was greater interplay between languages, and between oral, textual and visual in the transmission of narratives, ideas and ideology. Making the case for not limiting ourselves to the study of the past of the existing nation-states, Norman Davies described our mental maps as 'invariably deformed', in that 'our brains can only form a picture of the data that circulates at any given time ... created by present-day powers, prevailing fashions, and accepted wisdom' (Davies 2011). The study of histories beyond the confines of current state boundaries would offer school students a richer and more inclusive imagining of the past, as they would see how the cultural diversity within and between our countries has throughout made for creative interchanges between, e.g., Sanskrit and Old Javanese (Hunter 2011b), Old Javanese and Balinese (Ariati 2016), and Sanskrit and Tamil (Peterson 1986). They would learn while looking closely at the arts as sources essential to reconstruct past connections between civilizations, and as embodying the difficulties of transmission in their forms (Lee 2009). And, they would learn something of the dynamics of inter-linguistic accommodation that made possible exchange between traders and co-religionists of different ethnic origins in coastal settlements (Hunter 2011a).

For undergraduates, the exposure would foster a degree of sophistication in their understanding of the past as well as of reflexivity. Studies such as Hunter (2011a), cited above, historicizing the shift in writing practice from monumental display to epistolary exchange between the political centre and its allies can be related to the current studies of the emergence of literary idioms of imperial power within 'the ostensibly narrow confines of tiny chieftaincies' in 15<sup>th</sup> century North India (Jha 2017), and of bureaucratic literate practice in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; Maratha state and its relation to the spread of religious movements (Deshpande 2016).

Likewise, they would be able to situate developments in local politics within inter-regional dynamics, whether of Airlangga's rise to power at the time of Rajendra Chola (Susanti 2009) or how Iran and the Indian subcontinent mediated relations between the Arab world and Southeast Asia (Heesterman 1989). Comparative studies would also make them aware of the possibilities of cross-disciplinary work on archaeology and texts, ethnography and history, and the possibility of achieving 'a new perspective on an old set of facts' (Kolff 1987). And given the scrutiny to which area studies have been subject, they form a site for surveying how disciplines funnel our perspectives—reflecting on the shifting perceptions of inter-civilizational transmission between South and Southeast Asia. Pierre-Yves Manguin (2011) touched on tensions between Orientalists and the sociologist Paul Mus.

### 3. Museum Collaborations

Museum collaborations (proposed at the AIC Conference, 2015) could take the form of the loan of museum treasures as also the joint curation of exhibitions, designed to help viewers move from recognition of familiar icons to a sense of diversity of forms and practices associated with divinities with similar names, and the intellectual and artistic energy they embody. And for viewers from our countries, visual displays need to be complemented by colloquia, where they may discuss representations of divinities or epic characters in different literary and performing arts traditions. Museum audiences are liable to assimilate what they see to pre-existing frames of reference, just as scholars whose cross cultural frontiers may be tempted to cherry-pick to buttress arguments (as observed by Shereen Ratnagar at the 'Asian Encounters' Conference, IIC 2011). Yet these risks are being offset by the potentials opened up by the kind of sensitive curation and interpretation that uses the security of familiar reference points to stimulate curiosity about new interpretations, and receptivity to other languages, especially among younger audiences.

Mutual understanding is also deepened by exposure to practice, where rituals dissimilar at sight may be united by their underlying significance, or obversely forms are retained with a shift in meaning (an understanding of these strengthens mutual identification, or enlarges sensitivity to other ways of seeing). Travelling exhibitions also allow curators to explore different ways of interpreting similar collections in relation to different audiences—when the exhibition, 'The Everlasting Flame:



Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination', first opened in London in 2013, it was accompanied by a Conference on how tradition and identity are historically constituted (SOAS 2013), when it travelled to India in 2016, it was accompanied by two other exhibitions, of which 'Threads of Continuity' (Cama, Pudumjee and Lilaowala 2016), entailed a shift in emphasis from how Zoroastrians responded to and were represented by different regimes through history, to trace continuities in practice and underlying philosophy across regions and over millennia.

Inter-museum collaborations are also a means to learn from each other's curatorial practice. If the museums in India sought to go beyond displaying objects to recreating context and encouraging artisans, museums in Singapore have had a longer tradition of integrating oral histories, and of exploring contact between peoples, whether in terms of creative influence or lives of migrant workers. A Conference on 'Asian Encounters' in Delhi in 2011 included a paper on Singapore's Peranakan Museum (Kwok 2011), and how the case had to be made for presenting 'a unique regional culture'. The museum later curated an exhibition at Delhi's National Museum (2015), for which the exploration of social and domestic histories was also relatively new. Again, the periodization of art by dynasties is common in Indian museums; alternative possibilities are seen in the display of technologies and writing practices (among others) as contributed by different cultures of Indonesia through history at the National Museum, Jakarta.

#### **4. Conclusion**

There are also large-scale projects that could serve as models. There is the Clay Sanskrit Library and Murty Classical Library of India, a series of translations with scholarly introductions where the original is printed in parallel in roman script. For the literatures of South and Southeast Asia, the introductions would need to bring out how narratives, themes and rhetorical forms are elaborated and reinvented across literatures. A second project would be to develop a digital database of past and current studies on South and Southeast Asia along the lines of the International Medieval Bibliography of Europe, North Africa and the Near East (300–1500) that the University of Leeds is maintaining since 1967.

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# Through the Lens of Art: Setting the Context to Indian Heritage in Singapore and Southeast Asia

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Nalina Gopal

## 1. Introduction

The cultural identity of Southeast Asia is firmly rooted in the region. Years of contact with the neighbouring civilizations have left deeper impressions. Hinduism and Buddhism found their way into Southeast Asia *via* travellers, monks and merchants. Islam and Christianity too travelled *via* South Asia to Southeast Asia. The vast remains of stone sculptures and architecture from early Southeast Asian kingdoms stand testimony to the adaptation of Indian religions by local rulers. Early Hindu-Buddhist cultural centres in Southeast and East Asia included Pyu, Funan, Zhenla, Dvaravati, Champa, Central Java, Angkor, Majapahit, Srivijaya and Kedah. Extensive archaeological remains and inscriptions in Southeast Asia, dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE to the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century CE, bear testimony to the presence of Indian religions as well as their adaptation by local rulers. Literary traditions too were adapted and internalized; and the popularity of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata is immeasurable. The trading networks established by South Asian Islamic communities in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian region too have a long and uninterrupted history.

This context of early interactions between the two regions forms an important prologue to the modern dispersion of South Asian diasporas to the Southeast Asian region, and enables an understanding of how a shared past cements cultural ties of the present. Singapore's role in the trading networks of past, and the parallelism of the migrant narratives of Indians in Singapore with others in Southeast Asia, and the shared histories of these corresponding communities has been discussed in this paper. How art historical and social history approaches are combined in the permanent galleries of the Indian Heritage Centre (IHC) to tell the story of Singapore's Indian communities within the larger context of Southeast Asia are demonstrated in what follows. The collection of the Centre, its use of technology and its position as a model community museum has also been illustrated.

The Indian Heritage Centre (IHC) in Singapore is a community heritage museum dedicated to narrate the history of Singapore's Indian community within the larger context of Southeast Asia, alongside intangible experiences of Indian culture in Singapore through permanent gallery exhibits, changing exhibitions and programming. Launched on 7 May 2015, the IHC is the newest institution under the management of the National Heritage Board of Singapore.

**Figure 12.1: The Indian Heritage Centre, Singapore**



**Note:** The Indian Heritage Centre building at night. The Centre under the management of the National Heritage Board and with support from the Indian community, traces the history of the Indian and South Asian community in the Southeast Asian region.

**Source:** Author's own.

Housed in a modern, purpose-built space, the IHC is located in the Little India heritage district. It acts as a cultural hub for Singapore's Indian community as well as a space for introduction to the history and culture of Singapore's third-largest majority community (after the Chinese and Malay communities) for locals and tourists alike. It is unique in that it looks at the trajectory of migrant communities in Singapore and Southeast Asia, and less at the subcontinent and its history itself. Curated in five themes, the permanent galleries begin with an introduction to the presence of Indians in the Southeast Asia and their interactions with the region, underscoring vital role of Indians in the building of 19<sup>th</sup> century Singapore; the rich and diverse culture of the community; their experiences during the time of World War II; and finally, their contribution to the making of Singapore as a modern nation-state. The permanent galleries display around 450 artefacts from Singapore's national collection and the local Indian community.

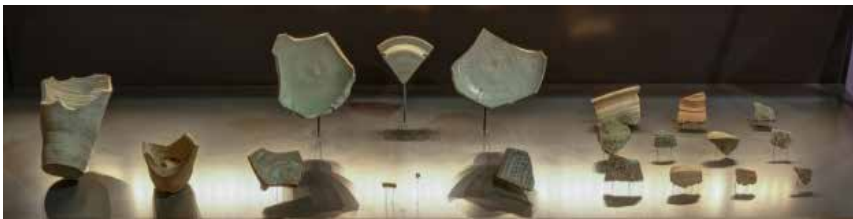
## 2. The Migrant Narrative

Indians have been present in modern Singapore since its founding. Indians reached in 1819 with Sir Stamford Raffles, the founder of colonial Singapore, as Sepoys and their accompanying bazaar contingent. The name of Narayana Pillai, a Tamil contractor from Penang, has gone down in the history as the first Indian migrant to Singapore. Between 1825 and 1873, Singapore was a British penal colony receiving convict migrants from the subcontinent. Concomitantly labour was also recruited and employed on plantations and infrastructure building projects. The wide-ranging plethora of occupations early Indians were engaged in range from merchants and traders to police to security personnel, private financiers, etc. have often been overshadowed by the majority narratives of convict and labour. Perceptions on antecedents, within the community and otherwise, were riddled with the seeming stigma of convicts' past. The long history of Indian presence in a glorious era of trade and cross-cultural contact between the South Asian and Southeast Asian regions forgotten in some cases, and seldom established as the pretext to the migrant narrative.<sup>1</sup>

Singapore or Singapura or Temasek was an important trading port integral in the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the trading network in the region. Archaeological finds at Bukit Larangan or Fort Canning as it is more popularly known within the boundaries of old Singapore include a gold

armlet together with other pieces of Javanese gold jewellery. The armlet is decorated with an embossed *kala* (known as *kirtimukha* in South Asia) head. The advanced technique and design of the armlet have led scholars to conclude that it has the appearance of an Indian ornament.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore archaeological surveys conducted since 1984 by Professor John Miksic and his team at sites such as the Fort Canning, the new Parliament Complex, the old Parliament House, Colombo Court, and Empress Place, yielded thousands of artefacts; predominantly dating between 1300 and 1600. These artefacts include equally Chinese and local (Malay-style) pottery, with small quantities of glass, gold, copper, lead, and *dammar* (tree -resin used as incense). Ergo various types of industries were operating in Singapore, which included gold, copper, and bronze, glass recycling, and pottery-making. Several Chinese jars called “mercury jars” dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century were excavated at the old Parliament House site, and are suggestive of early industrial activity. A carnelian bead and glass or perhaps lac-bangle fragment, possibly originated in India, dated back to the late 13<sup>th</sup> century were found at Fort Canning, and are indicative of early contact with the subcontinent. These archaeological finds are initial displays at the Indian Heritage Centre; establishing the presence of a cosmopolitan, multicultural community since the pre-colonial period.

**Figure 12.2: Archaeological Finds from Fort Canning Hill and Parliament House Complex**



**Note:** As displayed at the Indian Heritage Centre. Collection of the Professor John Miksic  
**Source:** Author's own.

### 3. Cross Cultural Exchange

#### Hindu – Buddhist Connections

Due to their situation along important trade routes connecting the subcontinent and China, parts of Southeast Asia were introduced to India's major religions— Hinduism and Buddhism. Synchronous was the



steady influx of Indian sculptural styles and artistic traditions. Some of the oldest material remains are suggestive of Indian contact in the form of epigraphic, sculptural and architectural installations across Southeast Asia. Using the illustrative example of Vishnu worship in Southeast Asia, the following paragraphs provide historical evidence of the adaptation and appeal of Hindu religions in Southeast Asia.

Vishnu and his incarnations frequently appear in the epigraphic and archaeological evidences of Southeast Asia. The earliest known Southeast Asian Sanskrit inscription, from Vo Canh in Vietnam, dating back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, relates to verses of the *Valmiki Ramayana*. A 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century CE Sanskrit inscription at Si Thep in Thailand uses the term “*vaishnava sura*” (Vaishnava hero) in conjunction with the names Rama and Lakshmana. Other 7<sup>th</sup> century CE inscriptions from Cambodia and Vietnam make further allusions to Indian texts and reveal knowledge of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The West Javan Ciareuteun rock inscription, dating back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, presents an early mention of Vishnu and his association with kingship. It speaks of Purnavarman, the king of Tarumanagara (in West Java) and compares his footprints to *vishnupada*. Written in the Pallava-Grantha script, the inscription is indicative of early interactions with South India. Another 5<sup>th</sup> century CE inscription, from Prasat Pram Loven (Go Thap) now in Vietnam, makes reference to a Kaundinya Prince Gunavarman who consecrated a sanctuary containing *vishnupada*. Archaeologists are of the view that the *vishnupada* in the Ciareuteun inscription marks a military conquest while the inscription by Prince Gunavarman denotes a peaceful territorial possession. References to the construction of *vishnugruhas* to accommodate *vaishnava(s)* and installation of Vishnu images are also found in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE Angkor Borei inscription from the Kingdom of Funan. At Kuala Selinsing in Perak, a 5<sup>th</sup> century CE carnelian seal is inscribed with the name of a Vaishnava king, Vishnuvarman.

Furthermore, throughout Southeast Asia, archaeological finds suggest that images of Vishnu and other Hindu deities were possibly produced around the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE. Early Southeast Asian visual representations display strong stylistic connections with India in their developmental phase. However, art historians reason that Southeast Asia gradually developed its own unique regional style. The earliest and most commonly found image of Vishnu is the four-armed Vishnu with cylindrical headgear from 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. The headgear takes after the *kiritamukuta*

or jewelled crown adorning Vishnu sculptures of the Gupta (3<sup>rd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE) and later Pallava (7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> centuries CE) periods in India. In this resplendent form, Vishnu has a royal persona. Other early forms of Vishnu and related images include Vishnu reclining on the serpent Ananta in his meditative state of creation as *Vishnu Anantashayin*; the goddess of prosperity and wealth, Shri; and the *Dashavatara*. Temple reliefs were also devoted to the popular episodes of *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Krishna Leela* (stories from the life of Krishna). Temples dedicated to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva as the *Trimurti* (Trinity) were established in Cambodia, Java and Bali. For instance, the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE temples in Prambanan, Java are characterised by the placement of *Ramayana* reliefs surrounding sanctums of Brahma and Shiva. Harihara appears in Southeast Asian imagery from the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE with Vishnu as the embodiment of powers of creation and protection, and Shiva as a quintessential ascetic, both qualities desired by the ruling class.

**Figure 12.3: (Left) Vishnu, 10<sup>th</sup> Century, Chola Period, Granite, Tamil Nadu, South India (Right) Harihara, Asram Maha Rosei, Pre-Angkor Period, Style of Phnom Da, 7<sup>th</sup> Century, Sandstone**



**Sources:** (Left) Collection of Indian Heritage Centre, Singapore  
(Right) Collection of Musee National des Arts Asiatiques, Guimet, Paris

In addition, evidence of Vishnu and Vaishnava literature in Southeast Asia can be found in many facets of region's heritage – with its impact on performing art traditions being most evident. The Indian epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* arrived in Southeast Asia as written and oral narratives. As early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the *Ramayana* was translated from Sanskrit to old Javanese. Tamil and eastern Indian versions of the epic were also known in the region due to close contact with these regions. Dramatised performances of local versions of the *Ramayana* such as the Javanese *Ramayana Kakawin*, the Thai *Ramakien* and the Cambodian *Reamker* sooner became the part of the regional dance and theatre repertoire. Javanese and Balinese performances of *wayang kulit* (shadow-play), *wayang topeng* (mask-play) and *wayang wong* (dance and theatre) continue to present stories from the *Ramayana*. Likewise, the *Mahabharata* inspired adaptations and its influence can be found in over one hundred plays. The format of these plays was similar to their Indian counterparts and focused on the ultimate victory of good over evil. This is most evident in the puppetry traditions. Punakawan or the clown in *wayang kulit* performances introduced the element of comedy as did Vidushaka (the jester) in Indian puppetry. Heroes and demons continued to capture the attention of the audience in India and Southeast Asia alike. However, the Southeast Asian adaptations introduced sub-plots featuring indigenous characters and gods. The *wayang* ensemble of Punakawan includes Semar, Togog and Sarita, who were local gods sent to serve Pandava and Kaurava.

**Figure 12.4: (Left) Bhima (Bima), Shadow Puppet (*Wayang Kulit*), 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Polychrome Leather, Java, Indonesia (Right) Display of Mahabharata Wayan Kulit Puppets at the Indian Heritage Centre**



**Sources:** (Left) Collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum  
(Right) Indian Heritage Centre

Buddhism was diverse in its influence in Southeast Asia. Discernible Buddhist traditions were established in the area. These included a profound Theravada tradition among strains of the Mahayana and Tantric traditions. The Buddha and Buddhist deities are well represented across peninsular and mainland Southeast Asia with idioms of the Gupta, Amaravati, Pala and Anuradhapura schools; having had deep impact on the Buddhist art of the region. Srivijaya, a powerful maritime kingdom, was influenced by the Mahayana school of Buddhist art emerging out of North India.<sup>3</sup> Srivijaya had favourable relations with the Chola Kingdom during the reign of Raja Raja I, which saw the building of the Buddhist Chudamani Vihara at Nagapattinam by the Srivijayan King Mara Vijayatungavarman. Buddhism had a lasting impact on the religio-social culture of Southeast Asia, making it a predominant religion in countries like Thailand and Myanmar. Their architecture and sculptural traditions also stand testimony to longstanding sway of Indian Buddhism. Sri Lankan Buddhist art, emerging from the seat of Theravada Buddhism first between the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE to the 11<sup>th</sup> century at Anuradhapura and later from the 11<sup>th</sup> century at Pollonaruwa, too gained a strong influence on Southeast Asian art, especially on that of Thailand. A particular stylistic trait that has travelled is the siraspata (as seen in the below seated Buddha image from Pollonaruwa), the flame like protuberance on head.

**Figure 12.5: (Left) Seated Buddha, 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Century, Pollonaruwa Period, Gilt Bronze, Sri Lanka (Right) Buddhist Interactions Display at the Indian Heritage Centre.**



*Source:* Collection of Indian Heritage Centre, Singapore.

### Islamic and Christian Networks

Trading networks initiated by the South Asian Islamic communities in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian region have a long and uninterrupted history. Trading settlements in Southeast Asia were occupied by Chinese, Arab, Gujarati, and South Indian traders. These settlements were associated with the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries onwards. Scholars have suggested that Arab trading groups also travelled to Southeast Asia from Sri Lanka, Gujarat, the Coromandel and Malabar coasts; bringing with them their brand of religion and cultural influence. Early Christian influences arrived in Southeast Asia *via* Central and South Asia in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE; although the arising settlement left no lasting impact. However, there was a revival in the influence of Christianity with the spread of European imperialist networks across Asia in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and important among these were the Portuguese settlements originating in Goa, reaching Malacca and Macau in the east. Later, missionaries were sent from India to Singapore during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to serve here educational and religious needs of the Christian communities.

Portuguese conquest in the area including the east and the west coast of Africa, Sri Lanka, Goa, Macao, Japan, and the east coast of Brazil saw the creation of Christian art in parts of Asia and Africa. Foremost among these were intricate ivory images of Christian icons popular in Portugal and in their Asian territories. Christian images produced in Goa were commonly of Christ and the Virgin Mary. In fact, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards such images were produced in Asia for export to Europe.

**Figure 12.6: Indo-Portuguese Figure of a Gilded Ivory Madonna with Gold earrings, 17<sup>th</sup> Century**



**Source:** Collection of the Indian Heritage Centre, Singapore.

## Trade Across the Ocean

Trade in Indian textiles through land and sea routes can be traced to as early as the first century CE.<sup>4</sup> India, renowned for its painted and dyed textiles, was engaged in production activities and trade along the Gujarat, Coromandel and Bengal coasts. Trading companies such as the British East India Company and the Dutch East India Company acquired Indian textiles in exchange for silver from Europe and Japan, and traded them for spices cultivated in Southeast Asia. These spices and textiles were then sold in Europe and the Americas.

Fortified settlements of Tamil merchants already existed in places like the port of Takuapa in the Isthmus of Kra in the late 9<sup>th</sup> century. Takuapa was an important point in the Malay peninsula, known in Tamil sources as Takkolam. The Takuapa inscription, in the collection of the National Museum of Thailand in Phuket, makes reference to this presence. The Barus inscription of 1088 with details of the Ayyavole guild also illustrates flourishing *manigramam* or merchant guilds of Tamil traders during the Srivijaya period. Sea-borne Gujarati traders played a role in connecting the trading ports of West and Southeast Asia, laying the foundation for cross-regional trade before the advent of colonial companies –the Dutch VOC and British EIC.

Some of the earliest textiles to be traded were the Gujarati *Patan ki patola*—double-ikat silk cloths. Patola cloths were stitched into costumes and worn as trousers, sash and head cloths by the royalty and courtiers. Cambay Cloths, also from Gujarat, were exported to Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia. These included – figurative (popular were geese and dancing girl patterns) and flower-patterned block-printed designs as well as inferior checkered cloths. Gujarati block printed trade cloths were also used by the Toraja royalty of Sulawesi as ceremonial hangings. Cotton cloths arrived from Bengal and Masulipatnam, immaculate bengali muslin, were used as turban cloths. The Coromandel cloths such as chintz, kalamkari were also coveted. The *dodot* were large cloths worn by members of the Javanese royalty as drapes on top of their Patola pants. Malabari Calicos were also traded in but they were the most inferior ones. Following colonial intervention, the trade in Indian textiles dried up by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and respectable local imitations were soon produced, which were traded out of Singapore too.

A display of trade cloths and parallel productions of luxury trade objects in wood, silver and ivory are displayed at the Centre to illustrate the long standing trade relations between the regions of South and Southeast Asia. The luxury goods were commissioned by Europeans; living both in the West and in the colonies and were a unique confluence of cross-cultural craftsmanship, aesthetics and taste.

**Figure 12.7: Indian Trade Textiles and Other Objects of Trade**



*Source:* Collection of the Indian Heritage Centre, Singapore.

**Figure 12.8: (Left) Head of Buddha, Late 8<sup>th</sup>–Early 9<sup>th</sup> Century CE, Shailendra Period, Andesite Stone, Central Java, Indonesia  
(Right) Head of Buddha, 5<sup>th</sup> Century CE, Gupta Period, Red Sandstone, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, India**



*Sources:* Collection of the Indian Heritage Centre, Singapore.

#### 4. Curating Displays

Through the curatorial device of juxtaposition, carefully installed displays suggest the exchange of ideas in the creation of art and sculpture. Bringing together South and Southeast Asian models of the Head of Buddha, the influence of Indian artistic traditions on the development of Javanese Buddhist art but with an emphasis on the development of a unique Southeast Asian model has been put forward. In the collection of the Centre is a remarkable Javanese Head of Buddha, made of andesite, dating back to the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, Shailendra dynasty period. The conspicuous base displayed as seen above is an attestation to its excellent provenance having been mounted by the European Collection Karl Ernst Haus, who had acquired the sculpture in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century for his house museum. This superbly carved head evinces all the prescribed physical attributes or *Mahapurusha lakshana* of the Buddha: a cranial bump or *ushnisha* emerging from atop the head signifying enlightenment; tightly arranged snail-shell curls suggestive of the closely shorn hair of a tonsured man; a circular dot or *urna* at the centre of the forehead, denoting his vision into the celestial world; and elongated earlobes, suggesting the past use of heavy ear ornaments that were abandoned when the Buddha gave up his regal life and went in search of enlightenment. This figure is reminiscent of the *dhyani* Buddha sculptures at Borobudur – a colossal Buddhist temple complex in Central Java. Borobudur was constructed between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries CE under the Shailendra dynasty. It was discovered in 1814 by Sir Stamford Raffles who was then the British lieutenant governor of Java. Certain features of this sculpture such as the elegantly arched brows, straight nose and full lips, are comparable to the Gupta model displayed alongside at the Centre. Dating to the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, Gupta period, of the Mathura school, the sculpture is made of red sandstone exhibiting the perfect symmetry and balance of the Gupta prototypes. The perfected art of the Gupta school had an influence on the sculptural traditions of several other kingdoms within and outside India.

In Figure 12.9 (*Left*) standing figure of a bronze Buddha was found at a site in the Bujang Valley in Kedah in the early 1940s. The serenely smiling Buddha stands in *tribhanga*, with his hips tilted to the left and his right hand in *varada mudra* (boon-bestowing) gesture. His left hand holds the gathered ends of his diaphanous robe or *samghati*, which is worn over the left shoulder. The style of this piece is typical of the Gupta school, particularly of the Sarnath style. This figure is considered as one



the earliest Buddhist images to have been produced by local craftsmen in reproduction of Indian idioms. It is an important, stellar piece in the collection of and on display in the permanent galleries of the Asian Civilizations Museum.

**Figure 12.9: (Left) Kedah Buddha, 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Centuries, Bujang Valley, Kedah, Malaysia (Right) Standing Buddha, Circa 500 CE, Gupta Period, Copper Alloy, East India.**



*Sources:* (Left) Collection of Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore.  
(Right) Collection of the Indian Heritage Centre, Singapore.

**Figure 12.10: (Left) Agastya, 11<sup>th</sup> Century, Volcanic Stone, Indonesia (Right) Mukhalinga, 7<sup>th</sup> Century CE, Pre Angkor Period, Sandstone, Cambodia**



*Sources:* Collection of the Indian Heritage Centre, Singapore.

The technique of juxtaposition was also used to create a Shaivite pantheon display, showing South and Southeast Asian sculpture of Saivite Hindu deities and even sages of popular appeal in both regions. Figure 12.10 presents a pair of Southeast Asian representations in the collection of the centre. The pot-bellied sculpture on the left is of Agastya, a Saivite saint, depicted with beard and *jatabhara* (matted hair) who is seen holding a *kundika* (water pot) and *akshamala* (prayer beads). In Hindu tradition, Agastya is one of the *sapta rishi* or seven Vedic seers and one of the eight disciples of the Hindu god, Shiva. Agastya is also venerated in south India as the author of *Agathiyam*, a seminal text on Tamil grammar. In Indonesia, Agastya is held as the harbinger of Indian culture and Hinduism from south India to Java. Early Khmer representations of the *mukhalinga* Shiva often adopt the abstract form of the *linga*, an aniconic sculptural representation. Some *linga* such as this sculpture on display, are carved with the *mukha* (the face). The *mukhalinga* on the right is carved in three parts as a representation of the *trimurti* (or Hindu Trinity) with the square base symbolising Brahma, the commander of the four cardinal directions; the octagonal shaft symbolizing Vishnu as the *chakravartin* (universal king), commander of the eight cardinal and sub-cardinal directions; and the cylindrical, bulbous head symbolising Shiva, the divine personification of cosmic infinity in phallic form.

## 5. Technology and Innovation

The permanent gallery displays were also curated using digital platforms. Most outstandingly, an integrated media guide application, providing audio tours for adults in English, Tamil and Hindi (with Chinese and Malay to come shortly), a tour for young adults in English and augmented reality experiences featuring virtual docents and 3D artefacts, was integrated into the experience. The media guide is available on devices provided at the IHC, free of charge with admission tickets, and can also be downloaded onto personal mobile devices from various platforms. While the virtual docents act as community voices introducing the visitor to the context of thematic galleries and artefact displays, the 3D interactive artefacts engage visitors by allowing them to “touch” artefacts. Select artefacts can be rotated, enlarged and examined through the application, bringing an element of play and discovery for visitors. These include an open view of a 17<sup>th</sup> century ivory writing chest from Vizag, displayed closed in the galleries and a 360 degree Garuda palanquin finial from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Angkor Wat period.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

From the earliest times, Indians have traded across the Indian Ocean and over the Asian landmass. This has provided the setting for movement and settlement in lands beyond India, well before the period of European colonial intervention. Pre-colonial sojourns have further been cemented by lasting migrations from the subcontinent to different parts of Southeast Asia. Indian maritime communities such as the Chulias of the Coromandel Coast and Bohras of Gujarat continue to be part of diasporas in Southeast Asia, having links with the long standing cross-cultural heritage of the regions. In this context post-colonial identities emerged, which have had common socio-religious backgrounds breeding mutual appreciation and understanding. The narration of modern South Asian migration to Southeast Asia is incomplete without establishing this vibrant past. The Indian Heritage Centre's collection and displays were constructed acknowledging this important prelude to the Singapore Indian experience.

## Endnotes and References

1. For an early account connecting the history of Indians in Singapore and Malaya to the events of the preceding centuries see RB Krishnan, *Indians in Malaya : a pageant of greater India : a rapid survey of over 2,000 years of maritime and colonising activities across the Bay of Bengal*, (Singapore : Malayan Publishers, 1936).
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3. Promsak Jermsawatdi, *Thai Art with Indian Influences*, (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1979), 64.
4. The Greek Periplus of the Erythraean Sea dating to the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE – 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE provides details of centres of production and trade routes. See Ed by Rosemary Crill, *Textiles from India: The Global Trade : Papers Presented at a Conference on the Indian Textile Trade, Kolkata, 12-14 October 2003* (New York: Seagull Books, 2006), 264.



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# Role of Culture in ASEAN-India Relations for the World Peace

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Andrik Purwasito

## 1. Introduction

The complexities of the international relations need the new global order to promote peace between states and all human relationships. It means the relations have not only to be state-centric but also relate to all citizens. We have long been asleep on this matter that the state is the actor, and we forget that the people and people contact, non-state actors, is also very important. This works in a soft power diplomacy from an economic issue to a social and cultural issue. We know that international relations are as the relationship between family and friends. This India-ASEAN link in culture is more based on the needs of the living beings. Art and cultural relations between India-ASEAN are very strategic to promote a centre of trade and the global market. ASEAN and India, both have huge natural resources, like mining, forestry, plantation, breeding and fisheries. Our cultural relations had supported economic and political relations and enhanced stronger bonding between the regions.

The India-ASEAN cultural link considers it important to unify the people in the spirit of togetherness. To create stable and prosperous people, this decision can build a regional community based on cultural relations. This relation is according to the objective of the ASEAN Community—is creating an economic integration, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), by establishing a single market,<sup>1</sup> and then a political security, the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC). The ASEAN

Community builds also on the socio-cultural cooperation, namely, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).<sup>2</sup> The ASCC programmes include (i) Human development, (ii) Social Welfare and Protection, (iii) Social Justice and Right, (iv) Ensuring Environment sustainability and (v). Building the ASEAN identity and narrowing the development gap.

Based on the above, we attempt to explain how we are building spirit of togetherness between ASEAN Community and India and how we are narrowing the gap with cultural action plan.

These issues can be answered through followings: First, Artist in Residence (AIR) programme; and second, building the India-ASEAN Television. These programmes can build communication, interaction and best integration in the spirit of togetherness. The programmes can be organized by the executive body of the India-ASEAN relations office.

## **2. Objective of the Programme**

We all know that ASEAN tried to realize the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), especially to support the AEC (ASEAN Economic Community), which started in December 2015. Also, ASEAN promoted the AFTA (began 1997), accelerated intra-ASEAN trade, expanded tourism, and showed solidarity to millions of migrants from ASEAN countries working in Asia-Pacific, and also in India.

The ASEAN community has been very encouraging to make cultural relations based on the last pillar of the ASCC (socio-cultural pillar), and also ASEAN tried cooperation more between India and ASEAN, especially on cultural activities. The main purpose of the cultural relations between India and ASEAN is for sharing experiences, ideas and strengthen cultural solidarity.

### **Netizen Civilization<sup>3</sup>**

Now, we are in the era of globalization. This period has abolished national borders.<sup>4</sup> We can meet each other through digital system. The world is in our hand. On one hand, we follow globalization, but, on the other hand, we face many challenges, threats and disruptions in international relations, such as cybercrime, moral disaster, dehumanization and modes of new crimes based digital system. Because of the development of the information and communication technology (ICT), we have now two worlds— the real space and a cyber space. The old traditions have

changed. Now, we live in a new system, which brings new traditions. There is change from the citizen to the netizen. The new identity of netizen shows us that an individual is at the centre and source of information. Today, lifestyle coupled with the ability of each individual becomes a source of information. This period has changed the concept of distance and time, where anything has become a real time.<sup>5</sup>

### **3. Anybody is Diplomat**

India and ASEAN people follow the globalization path. They can communicate freely. It is designed by “voice” to “click and share”. There are a positive opportunities in the international relations, especially in India-ASEAN cultural relations. Both are growing very fast and driving every netizen to the desire of independence. Consequently, the hegemony of the state to the people is becoming weaker. This is really the weakening state control over citizens. The hegemony and legitimacy of capitalism over citizens is also getting weaker. Now, we have been born what is called “capitalnet,” a form of a local capitalists or a nano capitalism, which is a new concept of local (small) community, but, it is globally powerful.

Such people and small communities have become active actors in international relations. They have built self-identities by themselves, and tried also to educate people to be independent. They are also the great part of the counter culture to the tendency of corrupt government, octopus capitalism and hegemony. The artist community in India and ASEAN countries, for example, can realize the goal of building the India-ASEAN socio-cultural community with the goal of strengthening the solidarity and unity of the people.

Finally, everyone can be a King. It is also changing the concept of diplomacy from the official channels of communication<sup>6</sup> to the non-official channels of communication. An initial change in this period is where we called, “anybody is a diplomat.” In cultural perspective, the globalization would build cultural homogenization over time.

### **4. Cultural Actions**

Hope that the cultural actions between India and ASEAN are realizable when people communicate with each other to minimize dehumanization. Some of the activities such as ASEAN cultural activity provide scholarships to nine of the ASEAN youths those who aim to study batik

in Indonesia.<sup>7</sup> This action programme has a positive impact, especially supporting solidarity and building of the cultural communities. It is a vehicle to know each other. People of India and ASEAN have a potential cultural link and a great cultural heritage. Thus, cultural action would improve understanding of its people.

The cultural actions can be designed by the India and ASEAN artists through building a peer group, a form of promotion of each country and also as agencies of socialization.<sup>8</sup> This cultural programme would be among younger generations to exchange experiences and information. Efforts to cultural activities have been carried out such as in ASEAN activity; they have build a blogger community. For realizing the cultural actions between India and ASEAN, we can endorse cultural actions by ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and Arts (AMCA), who can utilize culture as a means of enhancing human resources, improving welfare and prosperity of the people. An example of forms of ASEAN cultural actions are as follows: (i) preservation and promotion of cultural heritage through documentation, workshops, seminars, training, exchange of experts, youth camp, culture study tours, and (ii) establishment of networking systems and centres of excellence for capacity-building. It includes environmental sector, education, sports, natural disaster mitigation, biodiversity and humanitarian.

Feeling a sense of community and cultural identity becomes very important to create mutual trust, mutual understanding and mutual respect, which has the ability to unite for peaceful coexistence in diversity. To realize the idea and accelerate the realization of an India-ASEAN cultural relations, we need a regional communication among the people of the countries, organized by government, NGOs and universities.

## **5. Bonding Strap for Engineering of Cultural Programme**

Realizing the India-ASEAN cultural actions, we think that capital binder is very fundamental strategy and approach to build the Indian-ASEAN relations such as history binder, geographical binder and the socio-cultural binder.

### **(a) History as Capital Binder**

In the past, relation between India and ASEAN countries was much closer. We know that historically India and the most of ASEAN countries embraced the feudal system. King was central in power. Indian culture



has played a decisive role in participating and enriching the ASEAN culture, customs, intellectual and even mentality of the citizens. Indian historical monuments can be managed comprehensively to understand their historical relationship and as a capital for forming best relations among the people.

The influence of India to ASEAN culture like the religiosity, literature, culinary, medicine, magic<sup>9</sup> etc. can be developed into a builder India-ASEAN relations. The similarity of community customs and patterns of agrarian life, could potentially facilitate developing stronger relations.

India and some of the ASEAN countries except Thailand were also under former European colonization. The similarity of the historical background can potentially require strategic management to build a strong relation between India and ASEAN.

### **(b) Geographical Capital Binder**

The geographical character of India and Southeast Asia is a strong capital to build a cultural relation. ASEAN countries and India have great forests, rich vegetation and bio-diversity. The vast majority of India and ASEAN countries also have extensive shore-line and same fields of rice as a source of food base. Both India and ASEAN residents have common needs of everyday life such as land management and agricultural products. All efforts will improve spirit of togetherness.

The geographical capital can be used socio-culturally to establish relations by creating concept of strong and close cooperation such as the establishment of regional tourism network, exchange students, networks of small and medium business units. The beautiful and fascinating geographic locations are able to attract attention of the world as a potential tourist destination. The nature tourism should be managed to serve as a common spirit of togetherness. The spirit of the togetherness between India and ASEAN countries can also be built through a variety of bio-diversity to maintain a healthy environment for future generations.

### **(c) The Socio-Cultural Capital**

India and ASEAN countries are an agrarian society. Both of them have the maritime spirit and strong kinship system including customs, mythology, Islam and limited westernization. Such was the initiation system in the old relic. It relates the real life with super-natural life, almost occurred in India and across ASEAN countries.<sup>10</sup>

The socio-cultural capital contributes to the spirit of togetherness, ensuring peaceful co-existence for an ideal life, social life socially stable, secure and under control. This is reflected in the puppet philosophy, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, from India owned by the ASEAN countries also.

## 6. Conclusions

To realize the cultural India-ASEAN relations, we have conducted following activities.

- (i) International Puppet Festival
- (ii) Artist in Residence
- (iii) Cultural Media Relations:
  - Cultural Television
  - Bloggers Community

### (i) International Puppet Festival

An experience of Dhaatu International Puppet Festival in Bengaluru, Karnataka, India (7 January 2017), indicates that the cultural activity is a very useful activity for developing relations. Organized by a non-governmental organizations (NGO), it was the best example to realize the India-ASEAN cultural relations. The success story of Indonesian NGO, Senawangi, which held the first ASEAN International Puppet Festival, in TMII Ancol, Jakarta East, 29 November to 3 December 2010, indicates togetherness among different nations.

### (ii) Artist in Residence (AIR) Programme

This is a joint activity of all kind of art, like dance, visual art, music, performance art, etc. done by Indian and ASEAN artists. The artists from the countries built the community art-work. The programme focuses on cultural activities. AIR programme is an arena of open communication, where there is share of symbols, share of meanings and share of ideas. In the concept of communication, an intense interaction and participation is for togetherness.

It means that communication and interaction is a vehicle to accelerate awareness of the India-ASEAN link. The participants of the AIR programme do so voluntarily (i) uphold equality and spirit of togetherness; (ii) Respect differences, religion, class, gender, race, and ethnicity;

(iii) Guarantee freedom and creativity; (iv) Reject all forms of symbolic and physical violence and (v) Maintain good attitude and politeness.<sup>11</sup>

The AIR as a cultural programme is based on a joint activity in small community of 50-100 people or more. They work in same place and same time. The members of AIR live in *Ashrama* (a cultural dormitory). Every day they meet and eat together, do the art activities ensemble, such as workshops, seminars, focus group discussions, exhibitions and cultural research.

AIR programme requires involvement of various institutions, both by state and non-state organization, so as to maintain routine, quantity and frequency.<sup>12</sup>

AIR programme is an embodiment of diplomacy, people to people, who are naturally able to contribute to the ideals of spirit of togetherness. Therefore, official institutions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate General for ASEAN Cooperation, the Art Institutes, the Universities, etc. should assist and facilitate and coordinate cultural activities. The programme must be supported by financial and diplomatic facilities to speed up the process of formation of Indian and ASEAN cultural links.

### **(iii) Cultural Media Relations**

#### **(a) Cultural on Screen**

The India and ASEAN link needs media expression. Cultural link of India and ASEAN can be effectively achieved through the medium of television. Television is a very effective mass media to capture public. It is cheap, easy to use, and fast and simple.

Television presents the fact of real-time. Television is also capable forming new thinking beyond time and space. The presence of India-ASEAN television can be a vehicle for solidarity, spirit of togetherness among netizens. Television is also very strategic as a form of promotion, dissemination and exchange and cultural recognition among people of India and ASEAN.

The above description shows clearly that the cultural television would be able to connect people to people in the region. Television programmes must be managed together with a spirit of togetherness, proclaiming positive situation. The India-ASEAN cultural television would be able to connect and strengthen bonds of friendship and cooperation.

### (b) The Bloggers Community

Blogger community has been contributing to social media. Reaffirming the needs to reinvent spirit of togetherness, cultural activities through social media would play a significant role. The bloggers spread cultural information and contribute to the process of community building, where the governments of India and ASEAN, the bloggers and all relevant stakeholders share common responsibilities to ensure continuous process of building and strengthening India-ASEAN cultural link.

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# Strengthening Cultural Relations through Museums

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Mohamad Shawali bin Haji Badi

## 1. Introduction

Both India and Malaysia are connected through several cultural and historical ties in the following two phases:

- The Protohistoric Era, when the centre of the Indian civilisation was the Indus river valley. It was spread throughout the world, including Southeast Asia by merchants and Hindu-Buddhist missionaries as well as through colonialism.
- The British Colonial Era in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially after 1870s, when the British administration brought in many Indian immigrants to fulfil the need for manpower in plantations and government service.

After Independence, the Indians who had long lived in Malaysia obtained citizenship, and became part of Malaysia, living harmoniously with other Malaysian communities and contributing to nation's development. Presently, the Indian community comprises 2.2 million or 9 per cent of the overall Malaysian population, and is the third largest ethnic group in Malaysia.

Due to the spread of Hindu-Buddhism, elements of Indian culture and tradition have influenced the religious life and cultural practices of Malaysia, particularly in aspects of celebrations, textiles and accessories, language and literature, wedding practices, medicine, food and beverages, birth and death, as well as music and film; creating a cultural relationship that binds ties between Malaysia and India till date.

Today, cultures related to India are accepted as part of Malaysian culture, and recognized under law. Celebrations like Deepavali, Thaipusam, Pongal and others are recognised as national festivals and are celebrated together with other communities. Traditional games or martial arts such as kabbadi and silambam, foods like murtabak, capati, to sai, maruku and laddu, as well as dances like the Bharatanatyam are gazetted as national heritage under the National Heritage Act 2005 of Malaysia.

## **2. Development of Museums in Malaysia**

The history of museums in Malaysia developed a little later than in India. The Perak Museum, which was built in 1883 by the British administration, is the first museum in Malaya, and is one of the earliest museum institutions in Southeast Asia. The National Museum, on the other hand, was established in 1963 and is the parent museum in that exhibits Malaysia's early history and its growth as a nation after independence. Until 2015, as many as 200 museums have been established in Malaysia, and they are divided into four following categories.

### **a) Federal Museums**

Museums are established and managed by the Department of Museums Malaysia (an agency of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture). Presently, there are 22 Federal Museums in Malaysia.

### **b) State Museums**

Museums are established and managed by State Governments under the State Enactment or Ordinance. There are 106 State Museums (including galleries) in Malaysia.

### **c) Institutional/ Agency Museums**

Museums are established and managed by Departments, statutory bodies or Institutions, such as the Royal Malaysian Police Museum, Army Museum, the Asian Art Museum of University Malaya, Telekom Museum, Central Bank Numismatics Museum and Gallery, and many more.



#### **d) Private Museums**

Museums are established and managed by individuals or the private sector, such as the Islamic Arts Museum, Chocolate Museum, Toy Museum, Jade Museum and others.

Museums in both countries have a significant role in influencing India-Malaysia relations. The cultural artefacts displayed in museums are solid evidence on the existence of a long relationship between Malaysia and India. It binds both nations in close cultural ties.

Evidence of the Indian civilisation and its influence on the Malaysian culture can be seen through historical sites, monuments and artefacts exhibited in museums. Several museums under the management of the Department of Museums Malaysia have exhibited historical remains of the Indian civilisation obtained through archaeological excavations and private collections of the Indian community in Malaysia, who inherited them from their ancestors. Presently, there are three specialized museums under the administration of the Department of Museums Malaysia, which exhibit archaeological and cultural artefacts that serve as evidence of the existence of a trade and Hindu-Buddhism propagation centre in the Southeast Asia.

##### **(i) Bujang Valley (BV) Archaeological Museum (BVAM), Kedah**

This was opened in 1980 on the most important archaeological site in Malaysia – the Bujang Valley, which covers an area of 140 square kilometres. It displays protohistoric archaeological artefacts discovered in Bujang Valley, a place thought to be the earliest kingdom in Malaysia, and historically proven as significant Southeast Asia central port and the focal point of Hindu-Buddhism propagation in Southeast Asia during the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

The archaeological research at Bujang Valley began in 1840s, and is a continuous process since 1960s. To date more than 80 heritage sites were discovered together with more than 60 candis (temples) and other building structures, pottery, ceramic fragments, glass beads, statue and sculptures, inscriptions and inscribed stone, ornaments and jewellery, metal tools as well as materials used in the construction of these temples including chiselled granite blocks, river pebbles, laterite and clay bricks.

A large number of those artifacts are exhibited in the BVAM, while some historically significant artefacts are displayed in the National

Museum, Kuala Lumpur. The archaeological remains and cultural artefacts found at BV and surrounding areas have indicate existence of a Hindu-Buddhist civilization.

### **(ii) National Museum, Kuala Lumpur**

It was built in 1963, and is the parent museum in Malaysia that exhibits Malaysia's early history and its growth as a nation after independence. Many archaeological artifacts discovered in Bujang Valley and a few other archaeological sites as well - with significant national interest - are exhibited in the National Museum. Some of the most prominence artifacts are as follows.

- Makara, found at Sungai Mas Village, Kedah of 7<sup>th</sup> century, is the form of an elephant and a fish –used as decorations at the main entrance of a candi/temple.
- Foundation stone, found at the site of Bujang Valley, is thought to have been used as the foundation for a wooden pillar of the temple;
- Statue of Avalokitesvara, found at Bidor, Perak in 1936, made of bronze, was gazetted as National Heritage (National Heritage Act 2005)
- Buddha Brahmin Statue (The Jalong Statue), discovered in 1936 at Jalong, near Sungai Siput, Perak. The design appears to be very much influenced by statues from Srivijaya of the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- Inscribed stone of Buddha Gupta, was set up in Seberang Perai, Penang, around 400 AD by an Indian merchant, Buddha Gupta, as an expression of gratitude for his safe arrival after a voyage from India. It has a significant role in Malaysia-India relationship as the original stone was sent to Indian Museum in Calcutta in 1834, and it is still there. As a token of friendship, the Government of India made a replica of the stone, and presented to the National Museum in 1961.

### **(iii) National Textile Museum, Kuala Lumpur**

This Museum is a specialized one, established in 2012. It's role is to collect, research, preserve, document and display national textile collection of the multi-ethnic society of Malaysia such as Malays, Chinese, Indians and the indigenous people. A few pieces of fine cloths and Indian textiles such as brocade, phatola, bhandana, sarees, brocade cloth and pelikat (a checkered sarong), brought by merchants from the port of Gujarat, Malabar, Corromandel and Pullicat in the 15<sup>th</sup> century,

are displayed. These textiles had penetrated the local market and made into attires for the Malays.

It is undeniable that the Indian civilisation has influenced and shaped the socio-cultural ethics of the Malaysian community, and finally assimilated into the nation's culture and bonded both nations in a dynamic cultural relation. What is more important is how cultural relationship can be strengthened and value can be added through the role of cultural institutions in both countries. The role of museums and other cultural institutions must be seen as equally important to the role of economics, education, engineering, information technology or military in strengthening relations between India and Malaysia.

### **3. Cultural Exchange**

Diplomatic relations between Malaysia and India were forged in 1957, after Malaysia attained Independence. To further strengthen the relationship between the two nations, particularly in terms of cooperation and cultural exchange, the Malaysian and Indian governments signed a Cultural Agreement on 30 March 1978 in New Delhi. Subsequently, on 27 October 2010, another Cultural Exchange Agreement was signed for the period 2010-2013. On 23 November 2015, both countries signed a Cultural Exchange Programme Agreement for the period 2015-2020. This outlines steps that must be taken at the Ministry level and among officers to encourage, strengthen and promote cultural cooperation through activities such as the exchange of visits, performing arts groups, art exhibitions, training, co-publications, publishing materials, archives, joint exhibitions, as well as cooperation in the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage that involves museums, archaeology, art galleries, archives and libraries.

Out of 15 activities agreed upon, following four are directly related to museum institutions:

- encourage cooperation in exchanging visits between archaeological institutions, museums and archives establishments of two countries;
- endeavour to facilitate the exchange of Museums, Archaeologists, Conservators, Archives and Libraries personnel for training to exchange information and experience from each other;
- collaborate in joint publication projects and exchange publications relating to heritage, librarianship, archaeology, museology, archives and history of arts;

- collaborate in joint exhibitions projects relating to heritage, museology (collection management), archives and libraries;

Without doubt, the Cultural Exchange Agreement has brought many cultural benefits to both the countries such as the organisation of the Festival of India the establishment of the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Indian Cultural Centre, a cultural wing of High Commission of India, Kuala Lumpur training for students cultural performances, and other activities. Unfortunately, to date, there have not been any cultural exchange programmes organised between museums of the two nations either through the Ministry or related agencies under the Agreement.

Instead, the collaborations occurred with China. The two-way cultural relationship between Malaysia and the People's Republic of China was forged through a Cultural Agreement signed on 23 November 1999. It led to many cultural exchange programmes including museum activities. For example, in conjunction with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and China, from 15 December 2014 to 15 March 2015, the Government of China through Art Exhibition China organized an exhibition entitled *Treasure from the Summer Palace* involving 84 exclusive collections belonging to Emperor Qianlong, the ruler of the Ching Dynasty. Thereafter, from 22 November 2015 to 26 December 2015 the *Blue and White Porcelain* exhibition was organised, whereby 111 valuable ceramics were displayed. Both exhibitions were held at the National Museum. Malaysia reciprocated with an exhibition entitled "Malaysia-China Relations: From Ancient Time to The Future" from 20 December 2016 to 28 February 2017 at Ningbo Museum, China, which involved 147 collections. Both countries agreed that it would become a travelling exhibition, shown in several large cities in China, starting in Hainan in March 2017, to give more Chinese citizens an understanding of the relationship between the countries, which began in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to strengthen diplomatic relations.

India and Malaysia in the past organized several temporary exhibitions and programmes related to India's history and culture in the National Museum, Kuala Lumpur; most of which were through the cooperation with the High Commission of India to Malaysia.

**Table 14.1: Programmes in Malaysia**

Year	Exhibition/ Programme	Location
1964	Indian Textiles	National Museum
1965	Ajanta Caves Paintings, India	National Museum
1966	International Association of Tamil Research Conference	National Museum
1968	Indians Art and Architecture	National Museum
1968	100 Years Mahatma Gandhi	National Museum
1969	Mahatma Gandhi Centenary	National Museum
1970	Indian Art Through The Ages	National Museum
1972	Bujang Valley Excavations	National Museum
1987	Tamils in Malaysia (in conjunction with the 6th Tamil Conference and Studies)	National Museum
1988	Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru: His Life & Time	National Museum
1989	Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru: His Life & Time	National Museum
1992	The Entreport Civilisation in South Kedah, Malaysia 5-14 <sup>th</sup> Century A.D	National Museum
1999	Dolls from India	National Museum

*Source:* Author's own.

However, based on the records, the Department of Museums Malaysia has never held a large-scale exhibition or other museum programmes in India, except for sending officers to join courses in India.

#### 4. The Way Forward

Under the Cultural Exchange Programme Agreement 2015-2016, the time has come for both the nations, through respective ministries and agencies, to plan, execute and strengthen museum programmes, through exhibitions, collection exchanges, artefact conservation, training and research. Activities that can be organised are proposed as follows.

- The National Museums of both countries or significant museums can host temporary exchange exhibitions, be it in New Delhi or in Kuala Lumpur, which can be developed into a travelling exhibition in each country. Therefore, visits and reciprocated visits by officers and experts from both countries can be arranged.
- Implement collection exchange programmes or loan of artefacts to enable citizens of both countries to not only appreciate historical

and cultural artefacts, but also understand respective socio-politics, histories and cultures that bind them.

- Organize joint research and publication programmes or publication exchanges on museology.
- Organize exchange programmes on skills and knowledge through the exchange of officers or experts in the field of museology, especially in conservation management and artefact conservation.
- Place officers in both countries at selected museums through various attachment programmes. The Department of Museums Malaysia will continuously send its officers for training, especially in conservation in Hyderabad and Lucknow; and
- Consistently send officers to conferences or cultural fora on museology, organised by both nations.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

Many Indian artefacts and cultural objects are displayed in museums in Malaysia. Many monuments and historical sites of the Indian civilisation and cultural practices have been absorbed as part of its national culture. However, it is not enough to strengthen the relationship between the two countries in a long term. More large-scale, consistent and high-impact arts and culture exhibitions must be planned and implemented. Both countries must take opportunities presented by the Cultural Exchange Programme Agreement 2015-2020 to strengthen cultural relations through the role of social institutions like museums. The Cultural Exchange Agreement that was signed must be followed by the consistent establishment of cultural exchange programmes as well as dialogues between the ministries, agencies and cultural institutions. The remaining years must be used beneficially by both the nations to plan, implement and strengthen museum activities that are consistent, high impact and mutually beneficial.

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# Enhancing India-Philippines Cooperation in Culture

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Joeje B. Santarita

## 1. Introduction

Since time immemorial, culture and its related activities are considered important part of human condition and for everyday transactions. In the recent times, however, culture has evolved to become an indispensable medium of dialogue and understanding with others, within or between countries. Thus, modern nation-states began to employ various cultural forms in conducting their relations with neighbours. In such interactions, there were attempts that failed, but many were successful too. Hence, it is imperative to countries such as India and the Philippines to similarly revisit their ancient encounters and the traces of their practices/influences. Subsequently, this revisiting of the 'shared heritage' is hoped to assist stakeholders to craft and implement strategies that would fully enhance cultural partnerships.

In the case of the India-Philippines cooperation in culture, it is appropriate to start the discussion on the concept of heritage diplomacy. To better understand this concept, it is good to quote here at length the idea of Prof. Tim Winter. He opines that heritage diplomacy is more expansive than cultural diplomacy which typically pivots around the projection or export of a particular cultural form as a mechanism of soft power. Film, celebrity, sport or fashion are among the frequently cited examples of cultural exports that help countries secure influence beyond

their own national boundaries, with the United States, France, Italy and India associated with cultivating successful programmes in these areas. In contrast, heritage diplomacy goes beyond the export or projection of a particular cultural form, and instead brings into focus bi-and multi-directional cultural flows and exchanges. In many cases, heritage, as a non-human actor, becomes activated diplomatically because it speaks to notions of shared culture, even one culture. Moreover, heritage diplomacy extends beyond the use of culture as a tool for international public and political relations. It acts as an arena of governance, one that crosses borders, and becomes politicized as it straddles sectors as diverse as architectural conservation, social development and post-disaster reconstruction. In this regard, heritage diplomacy can broadly be defined as a set of processes whereby cultural and natural pasts shared between and across nations become subject to exchanges, collaborations and forms of cooperative governance (Winter 2015). Hence, states around the world are pursuing a language of 'shared heritage' to semantically shift material culture from one category to the other. Architecture, archaeological remains, traditional dance forms, food and textiles are among those cultural forms being discursively framed as shared heritage by former colonial powers and rising regional powers alike in the name of creating forms of historical and cultural conjoining; a process that gives significantly more diplomatic weight to their contemporary international relations (Winter 2016).

In the recent times, regional powers such as China and India have also expanded their heritage diplomacy in many fronts all over the world. India, as one of the early civilizations, is similarly expanding its cultural interests in Southeast Asia. For some time, India has provided assistance to Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, and Lao PDR in an array of heritage sectors, including archaeology, textiles, museums and modern urban architecture. More recently, however, such forms of cooperation have been explicitly mobilized as a mechanism for promoting economic and diplomatic relations with Myanmar, offering a case in point. Concerned by the growing influence of China in the country, the Indian government began folding archaeology into its official diplomatic visits from 2010 onwards, invoking ideas of mutual pasts to build trust and diplomatic ties (Winter 2016). India in particular has implemented its Act East Policy (AEP) as an important mechanism to forward its interest in the region not only in the politico-security and economic aspects but also in cultural aspects.



This facet of Indian diplomacy is slowly observable in the Philippines. India too is interested to work this out with the various agencies working in the archipelago on the preservation and enrichment of culture. Banking on the long historical and cultural encounter, India is also interested to cultivate the idea of ‘shared past’ with the Philippines. Contrary to the belief that the Philippines since early times was consistently out of the Indian radar, the presence of Indo-Pacific beads, iron implements, and Hindu-Buddhist images proved otherwise. All these imported goods are believed to form the part of the repertoire of the Philippine prestige and status objects. The presence of these goods was facilitated by networks of trade that were essentially of a maritime nature and were already in place before the advent of the Europeans. Such condition was clearly highlighted by former President Abdul Kalam, in one of his speeches in the Philippines during his state visit in 2006. He said that ‘the countries of Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, constitute an extended neighbourhood with whom India’s links go back many centuries. He further emphasized that there is a distinctive Indian impress in this part of Asia, a religious, cultural, and linguistic stamp which Indian seafarers brought via Indonesia and the Malaya peninsula before the era of European colonisation. He earlier called this link during his Singapore visit as ‘umbilical connectivity’ (Santarita 2011).

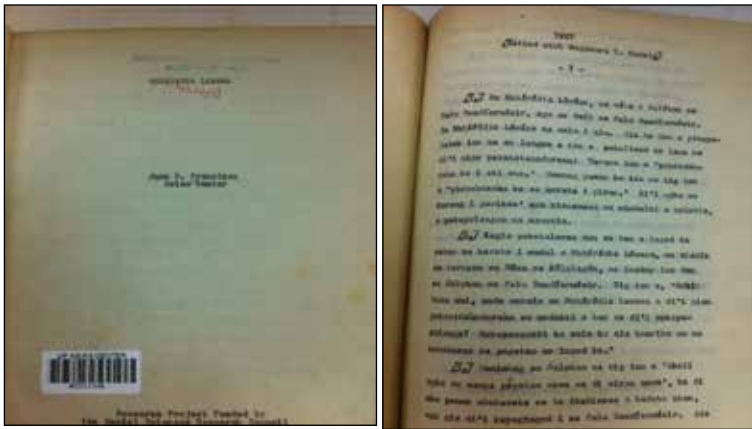
Through the years, these early encounters between India and the Philippines had produced several cultural manifestations to include the presence of Ramayana in several variances, the existence of Darangen, the development of Singkil, hundreds of Sanskrit words in Filipino languages, other Hindu-Buddhist artefacts, and to some extent even production and consumption of textiles. These ‘shared heritage’ are discussed briefly next.

## **2. Pre-Colonial India-Philippine Links**

Unlike with its counterparts, especially in mainland Southeast Asia, the Philippines has no temple or monument to showcase that resemblance of those great edifices that were established under the Hindu-Buddhist influences. However, there are tangible and intangible manifestations of Indian early contacts in Southeast Asian region, no matter how small, that managed to survive in the Philippines. One of these is the existence of Ramayana. In the Philippines, the Rama story is popularly known as Maharadia Lawana,<sup>1</sup> which Dr. Juan Francisco discovered in 1968 as a

Maranaw narrative. This version is in condensed form in comparison to the Indian Ramayana, but still contains the major episodes of the latter such as winning of Sita, her abduction, the search for Sita and her return. These four episodes as they are narrated in the Maharadia Lawana correspond to five kandas (songs or chapters of Ramayana) such as Balakanda, Aranyakanda, Kiskindhakanda, Sundarakanda and Yuddakanda (Francisco 1994).

**Figure 15.1: Maharadia Lawana**



*Source:* Photo Courtesy of Joeje Santarita

Other than Ramayana, to point out other vestiges of Indian influences in the Philippines are the presence of Singkil, hundreds of Sanskrit words in Filipino languages and the discoveries of various Hindu-Buddhist artifacts among others.

Singkil, for instance, is an elegant, stylized performance dance usually involving performers interpreting archetype characters inspired by and interpreted from the thread of storylines found similarly in the Indian epic Ramayana—including a princess, her faithful assistant, friends, as well as ardent suitors who would be stepping in and out, sitting or standing on two sets of bamboo poles crossed, and being thumped on the floor and hit together by men to make percussive music for the dance. Native music instruments like the agung (gong) and the kulintang (made of eight small gongs set on a rack) complete the ensemble of musical instruments in the dance. The Maranaw people in southern Philippines even before the arrival of the Spaniards in 16<sup>th</sup> century and the arrival of the Islam religion

in the Philippines by the 12<sup>th</sup> century observed these oral traditions by re-telling similar stories found in the Indian epic Ramayana into ‘Darangen’. This re-telling is the basis of the story being interpreted and performed, whenever the singkil is danced (Santarita 2013).

**Figure 15.2: Singkil**



*Source:* Photo courtesy of Joefer Santarita

The body, arms, and hand swaying and movements in this dance remind ancient dance forms from many countries of the Hindu-style of dancing, which in the singkil can be explained by the extensive influences made by the Sri-Vijaya and Majapahit empires that reached Indonesia as well as the many islands of the Philippines. In the performance, the main dancer—Princess Gandingan—interprets the movements after learning the rituals from her mother, the powerful healer in the village, in gathering medicinal plants and herbs from the forest. Movements that interpret Gandingan’s sojourn in the forest, either alone or with her friends and faithful assistant that usually bear a beautiful parasol for the princess wherever she goes during the dance (Santarita 2011).

Aside from performing arts, the most extensive evidences of Indian influences in the Philippines are Sanskrit elements in the languages of the country. These have persisted since their introduction in the Philippines between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and have been fully assimilated into their speech systems. There appear to be about 336 words in Philippine languages recognizably of Sanskrit in origin, and 50 per cent of these have definitive provenance in Sanskrit (Francisco 1994). William Henry Scott even gave actual statistical count of Sanskrit words in Philippine

languages. He found out that some 150 separate Sanskrit words are identified as the origin of Philippine terms majority are in Tagalog and the rest in Bisaya, Ilocano and Sulu (Tausug) (Scott 1968 as cited by Francisco, 1994). Examples are guro (teacher), saksi (witness), and dukha (grief/miserable) among others. Santarita even observed that some Hindi words found in the Philippine languages through the years have changed slightly its meaning. Words such as *kama* which means love in Hindi and has become *bed* in Filipino; *pitaka* which is basket (Hindi) to wallet (Filipino), and interestingly the term *bana* for arrow (Hindi) to husband (Filipino/Hiligaynon).

In terms of concrete manifestations of Indian presence in the Philippines, Francisco identified some artefacts that are housed either in the National Museum of the Philippines or abroad (Francisco 1994). These include the Buddhist Tara of Agusan, votive stamp of Calatagan, Golden Garuda of Palawan and other glass beads.

In Agusan, Vajralasya, an eight-inch tall image of a woman in pure gold at Maasin, Esperanza, was discovered in 1917 along the muddy bank near the Agusan River. The figure passed through many hands and almost melted down before the Field Museum purchased it in 1922. Scholars think that the statue may represent an offering goddess from a three-dimensional Vajradhatu (Diamond World) mandala. Possibly more than 1,000 years old, this pint-sized, 18-karat gold statue is considered one of the Philippine Islands' most important cultural artefacts. The icon is presently kept at the Grainger Hall of Gems of the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, United States of America (The Field Museum).

In Calatagan, Batangas, clay medallion or votive stamp on whose obverse face is an image of the Avolokitesvara Padmapani in bas-relief was discovered. The image stands in the classic Indian pose known as 'tribhanga'; three bends and appears to hold a padma, lotus in his right hand. This object was associated with 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> century, and is now stored in the National Museum of the Philippines.

Furthermore, the Golden Garuda pendant was found in Brookes point Palawan. Such image is now stored in the National Museum of the Philippines, and is believed to be the vehicle of the Hindu God, Vishnu at the height of power of the Hindi-inspired Majapahit Empire. This image along with other artefacts such as glass beads of various colours and the Filipino words of Sanskrit origin are testaments of Hindu influence in pre-colonial Philippine society ([www.philippine-trivia.com](http://www.philippine-trivia.com)).

**Figure 15.3: Agusan Gold Vajralasya**



*Source:* Image Courtesy of the Field Museum, Chicago

Moreover, an ivory stamp seal associated with a shell midden dated 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century was found in Libertad, Butuan City in Agusan del Norte (southern Philippines). Inscribed on the seal is the word Butban in stylized Kavi. The script has a similarity to the Tagalog script. Butban, was presumed to stand for Butwan or Butuan since the letters “b” and “w” were frequently interchanged. Dated 1002 A.D., the seal could have been used for documentation in trading (National Museum of the Philippines).

**Figure 15.4: Butuan Ivory Seal**



*Source:* Image courtesy of the National Museum of the Philippines.

Furthermore, a golden statuette of the Hindu-Buddhist mythical beings Kinnari was found in an archeological dig in Esperanza, Agusan del Sur. In Buddhist mythology and Hindu mythology, a kinnara is a paradigmatic lover, a celestial musician, half-human and half-horse (India) or half-bird (Southeast Asia). She is renowned for her dance, song and poetry, and is a traditional symbol of feminine beauty, grace and accomplishment. Thus, the discovery of kinnari only proves that a civilization of Indian influence had existed there before the Spanish conquest.

Lastly, it was believed that the encounters with Indian cloth in the country was largely mediated by trade, and may be convincingly dated to at least the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Indian textiles were appropriated in a number of ways in the local scene. Uses varied from the practical to the symbolic, and were mobilized as capital for economic, social and cultural gain. There is enough evidence to show that consumption of Indian goods was widespread throughout the islands. The breadth of textiles that were accessed in the Philippines were quite extensive, but the distinct features of each item were not always easily determined as descriptions could be rather generalized. Most of these goods, however, were of cotton and enjoyed during patronage for several centuries (Canta 2014). Examples of these are the patolas and cambayas.

### **3. Enhancing Cooperation in Culture**

Given the ‘shared heritage’ of India and the Philippines, how can the Philippines and Indian governments and other stakeholders enhance the cultural cooperation between the two countries. The following suggestions are hereby offered and reiterated (Santarita 2011):

First, sustainable cultural cooperation must be built through multi-annual programmes to promote mobility of cultural practitioners and exchange of people as well as ideas. This can be done by designing a cultural scholarship that will group together youths from ten countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other observers for two to three months as part of the cultural programme of the India-ASEAN Dialogue. This will include the study of Hindi, Sanskrit or Urdu languages, Indian arts, learning how to play Indian musical instruments and also familiarization with Indian version of Ramayana in the form of dance or theatrical performances. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) together with other culturally-focused institutions

should serve as the base of this programme. The proposed programme is more intensive in nature than the current cultural scholarship being offered to the youth which used to last only for two weeks. Furthermore, transnational mobility of people working in the cultural sector such as the provision of support to the transnational circulation of cultural and artistic works and products are to be encouraged. India and the Philippines must facilitate exchanges of academic staff, teachers, experts and students on programmes, mutually beneficial to both countries and shall develop programmes between educational, cultural and arts institutions. At the same time, agencies concerned both in India and the Philippines must facilitate contacts in the field of folk culture and folk-crafts, including exhibitions, festivals and performances of folk artists and festivities in the events organized in their states. Among these is by regularly inviting Indian artists to perform in the Philippines, particularly staging of Ramayana in various parts of the archipelago. The Philippine government through the NCCA should also send performing group in India to perform Singkil in the Indian Arts Festival or support the puppet show performance of Teatro Mulat that features Filipino version of Rama and Sita story among primary and secondary students residing in major cities of India. This experience will give the students an opportunity to appreciate their heritage as well as the efforts of their counterparts in Asia to value such shared heritage.

Second, promote creative/cultural industries by providing support ‘upstream’ on capacities and methods of production and ‘downstream’ on promotion and sales, assist creative/cultural industries through participation in trade fairs, showcasing artistic and creative talents and encouraging networking and collaboration. The Department of Trade and Industry in cooperation with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) should assist individuals or groups especially from indigenous communities who are doing still the weaving/textile production to actively participate in the international trade fairs. Furthermore, it is important to encourage collaboration between the creative industries and the business communities towards developing a relationship between cultural aims and economic interests. The governments of India and the Philippines should explore alternative investment models for public support of culture and develop public-private partnerships for financing of cultural sector. Moreover, both countries should support the development of frontliners (heritage, arts, media, and functional groups)

of creative industries, who are responsible in the advancement of culture's various facets, including, but not limited to cultural expression, arts and crafts, festivals and celebrations, and cultural sites; visual arts and the performing arts; publishing and printed media; as well as designs and new media such as software, video games, architecture, and advertising. To further assist this industry, the Philippine government, as well as India, can provide assistance through legislative action, tax incentives, or IP policy regulation as the industry expands. The government can also support the industry by marketing its creative products and services overseas, which can generate revenue for the economy and earn cultural and creative distinction for the country (Wong 2016).

Third, promote expertise in cultural heritage by developing or extending assistance programmes to provide expertise to local government units both in the Philippines and India having difficulties in sustaining their cultural heritage. The communities in southern Philippines will surely benefit from the assistance e provided by the experts of both countries. Moreover, arranging interactive educational workshops and culturally driven partnership events as well as developing initiatives with the cultural sector that exploits the potential of social networking to engage with the public will ensure successful collaboration in the field of culture. The local government of Butuan, for instance, will surely benefit from whatever technical assistance it can get from India.

Fourth, Bollywood films must be gradually introduced to the Filipinos by sponsoring various film showing activities in numerous universities such as University of the Philippines. On a higher level, it is better to encourage joint film production in India and the Philippines, and making each country's beautiful and historical sites as setting of the film. Hence, film agreements should be drawn to facilitate joint venture of film projects and exchanges of films. The 2010 Filipino movie entitled 'Tum: My Pledge of Love' and the 2014 Mumbai Love that were partially shot in India are cases in point. The production of films in the country should also be complemented with the offering of tax incentives and other related film production financial reliefs while filming in the country.

In addition, joint collaboration between India and the Philippines to work on computer-animated film on Ramayana in Filipino language in educating the children and youth should be realized soonest. The same is true with other partner countries. The Philippines in the past has successfully produced computer-animated movie 'Princess Urduja' in



2008, and it was accepted well by the Filipinos, primarily by children. The subtitling in Filipino or preferably dubbing in Filipino of the 'Ramayana: The Epic' produced in 2010 by Maya Digital Media and released by Warner Bros., India can be a good start. Alternately, the work of Nina Paley in 2008 entitled 'Sita Sings the Blues' can be another option. Conversely, the Indian government should also look at the available animated films that are produced in the Philippines and possibly subtitle it in Hindi. One of these is the locally produced 'Princess Urduja' in 2008.

Fifth, attract students to pursue graduate courses in Indian studies in the University of the Philippines and simultaneously strengthen the Hindi class offerings in the university. This can be done with the provision of scholarships/travel grants for students interested to pursue this degree/course. The Indian Embassy and/or any Indian philanthropic organizations based in the Philippines should sponsor extramural Hindi programmes where interested young Filipinos and offsprings of Indian migrants could both study and interact.

It is important to emphasize here that the promotion of Indian culture in various institutions of higher learning should not only concentrate on incoming/potential graduate students but could also tap those secondary school students and undergraduates who could be potential Indian studies' recruits in the near future. Such long-term investment can start with the possible collaboration of the respective Indian missions based in various countries of the Southeast Asia with several strategic academic institutions to hold annual cultural activities such as Indian Festival (utsav). In the case of the Philippines, the Asian Center serves as the primary partner of the Indian Embassy in organizing an annual utsav since the past two years, which features Indian music, dances, art works/tattooing, as well as showing of Bollywood films. These activities are complemented with the distribution of Indian delicacies during break time. In the said period, the activity successfully reached more than a thousand young students who strongly appreciated Indian culture. Moreover, the World Hindi Day should be encouraged and properly supported by the Embassy and even by the Indian migrant and business communities. Students who have undergone extramural classes and Indian students based in Manila are encouraged to participate in the activity by presenting popular literary works/poems of noted Indian scholars and artists to public forum. To complement the university based activities, exchange information on

cultural events such as seminars, contests, conferences, colloquia, round tables, and other forms of creative and scientific exchanges in both countries should be encouraged.

Sixth, partnerships between private or public institutions (such as cultural departments of national, regional or local authorities, cultural observatories or foundations, university departments specialised in cultural affairs, professional organisations and networks) that have direct and practical experience in the analysis, evaluation, or impact assessment of cultural policies at local, regional, national and international levels must be encouraged. The government should explore and exploit the public-private partnerships mechanisms to provide an effective and efficient service deliverables to end-users in culture. The government can tap chambers of commerce and industry to financially support the holding of exhibits, transportation costs of artefacts as well as taxes to promote further cultural understanding among peoples of India and the Philippines through museum exhibits and trade fair expositions. New regionalism and current global developments are inevitably encouraging non-state actors such as civil society, businessmen, academics and artists to actively participate in the regionalization through cultural and heritage diplomacy.

Lastly, presence of Indian diaspora as umbilical connections of India in the Philippines must be fully maximized to strengthen and/or promote Hindu-Buddhist influences, to proliferate and maintain Ramayana and other cultural elements. The Philippine government should capitalize on the presence of at least majority of those 50,000 People of Indian Origin (PIO), who are currently residing in the Philippines to enhance Indian influence in the archipelago. These people are good economic, cultural gatekeepers as well as effective promoter of heritage diplomacy, whom the late Indian President Abdul Kalam referred as India's 'umbilical connections' to the world.

#### **4. Conclusion**

To ensure dialogue and promote amity and cooperation among peoples of India and Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines, culture (heritage to be exact) as a resource should be maximized well through various forms. This can be done only if strategies and plans are carefully considered and implemented. It is important that the interventions being proposed should concentrate more on the development of people who are working and

involved in the cultural sector. It must be very clear to the governments of India and the Philippines that the people-to-people diplomacy is a long term investment that needs earnest dedication and sincere support from various key players such as governments, both in the local and national levels, NGOs, private sectors and other stakeholders to maximize potentials of culture. It is, therefore, highly recommended that the government should explore and exploit the public-private partnerships' mechanism to provide effective and efficient service deliverables to the end-users in culture. In particular, the government can work with various private sponsors to support the insurance and other logistics in the exhibition of several Indian artworks in the Philippines and *vice versa*. In this way, India and the Philippines will be able to maximize their heritage diplomacy and successfully contribute in the realization of a long-term vision of cooperation such as of former President Kalam's idea of pan-Asian community of peace and progress in the future. Hence, it is with fervent hope that these agents, state and/or non-state actors, are creative enough to transform these potentials into enhanced partnerships as vehicles of fostering friendship, and cooperation between now and in the near future.

### Endnotes

1. In Maharadia Lawana story, Rama is Radia Mangadiri, Laksmana is Radia Mangawarna, Sita is Tuwan Potre Malano Tihaiia, Kusa/Lava is Laksmana, who in the story assumes the character of Hanuman. Ravana is Maharadia Lawana. The story's setting is in the legendary island of Pulu Agama Niog. Pulu means island, Agama for village and Niog for coconut. Hence, Pulu Agama Niog simply means coconut grove village.

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# Cultural Relation between India and Vietnam: Toward Profound Partnership for Future Development

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Nguyen Thi Thu Ha

## 1. Introduction

In 2017, Vietnam and India celebrated their 45 years of establishment of diplomatic relations (7/1/1972-7/1/2017) and 10th anniversary of the Strategic Partnership between the two countries (6/7/2007-6/7/2017). The diplomatic relation and friendship between Vietnam and India were formally founded by President Ho Chi Minh and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and then have been continued by successive leaders and peoples of both the countries. The relationship between the two countries, has been upgraded to the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership level to meet aspirations of the two in their fundamental and long-term interests in all areas.

That is not how far the relationship between Vietnam and India had started. In fact, the relationship between the two had started long time ago. India has profoundly left great influence on almost every aspects of life in many countries in the world, particularly in the countries of ASEAN region. Significantly, this influence was placed with no means of force. It has been very unique and different from other dominant cultures and civilizations of the world history. For over two millenniums, we have not witnessed any violence from India on other nations. Cultural influence

and exchange between India and other regional countries have gradually taken place through her ancient-yet-continuing religious, philosophy, architecture, arts and trade. ASEAN members, particularly Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Vietnam, are countries that were deeply under the Indian cultural influence. By trade and religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, all aspects of Indian culture and philosophy spread widely and profoundly in many countries<sup>1</sup> in the region.

In case of Vietnam, the cultural connection between India and Vietnam was formed for many centuries through Buddhism and especially, the existence of Champa, an Indianized Kingdom that was located in the region of the south-central of today's Vietnam. After becoming part of current Vietnam (since the late decades of 15<sup>th</sup> century), many aspects of Champa's culture and arts survived and currently have been protected and preserved well in many Cham relics, located scattered in some provinces such as Hue, Quang Nam, Khanh Hoa, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Ninh Thuan, etc. by Vietnamese authorities and people. My Son Sanctuary (Quang Nam province), Po-Nagar (Nha Trang City) and many existing Cham temples in the south-central and north of Vietnam reflect a great influence of India's religions (Brahminism and Buddhism), architecture and sculptural arts<sup>2</sup> (Sharma 2013).

**Figure 16.1: My Son Sanctuary (Quang Nam Province)**



*Source:* Nguyen Thi Thu Ha, 2008

Other Indian influences on Vietnam culture can be easily recognized in Vietnamese cuisine (Indian curry foods, Indian herbal usage, etc.).

Based on those long-lasting cultural influences, the relationship between India and Vietnam has been strongly maintained and increasingly reinforced until now by the leaders and people of the two countries.

## **2. India–Vietnam Cooperation in Culture: Existing Efforts**

In modern times, the formal relation between India and Vietnam has gradually been strengthened by numerous efforts of leaders and people of both the countries. Since 2007, this bilateral relationship elevated to strategic partnership, and in 2017, it became Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in all aspects of life: national defence and security, politics, economy, science and technology, human resource development, cultural cooperation. The current government in India, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, viewed Vietnam as an essential partner for its Act East Policy<sup>3</sup>. In economic term, strengthening the economic engagement between the two countries was one of the strategic objectives of the bilateral cooperation. India now is one of the ten largest trading partners of Vietnam. Two-way trade between India and Vietnam surpassed US\$ 7.8 billion in 2015, and showed confidence that the bilateral trade target of US\$ 15 billion in 2020 is feasible<sup>4</sup>.

In 2015, Vietnam became the country coordinator for India in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for a three-year term (2015-2018)<sup>5</sup>. This has provided Vietnam an opportunity to proactively reinforce its strategic relation with India with additional supports and interventions from other ASEAN countries.

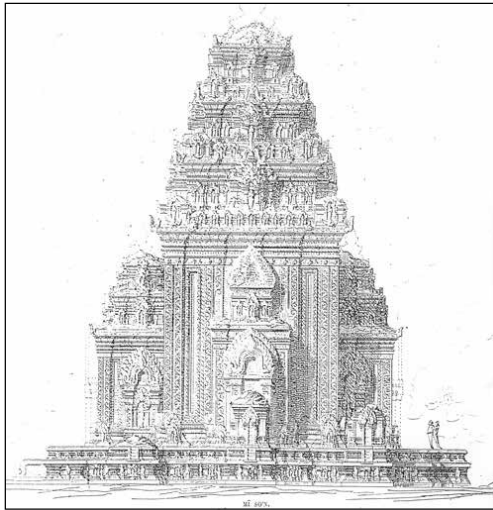
Significantly in this bilateral partnership, cultural cooperation has been always a main pillar for many years. In their upgraded Comprehensive Strategic Partnership started in 2017, culture has been perceived continuously as an area that would help set the foundation to support for the other areas for growth and sustainability. Since 2007, and even before that, in many formal meetings between the leaders of two countries (high-level visits, ministerial-level visits), numerous interventions for cultural cooperation between India and Vietnam have been agreed, signed and implemented.<sup>6</sup>

- Agreements on the implementation of India-Vietnam Cultural Exchange Programme 2012-2015 and its extension.
- Signed Agreements on the research cooperation in Indian studies and Vietnamese studies (2012)
- Celebrated 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of full diplomatic relation between India and Vietnam with activities such as commemorative seminars, business events, and performances by cultural troupes, film festivals, culinary week and art exhibitions (2012)
- Vietnam – India Friendship Festival in Da Nang from 22-25 October 2013
- Holding an Indian Festival in Vietnam from 5-15 March 2014 in Hanoi, Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City with programmes of classical dance recital by Sangeet Natak Academy; Buddhist Festival by Central Institute of Himalayan Cultural Studies; Food Festival; Folk dance by Kalbelia Group; Mehendi; and Yoga<sup>7</sup>.
- Established Indian Culture Centre in Hanoi (2014) in order to strengthen the presence of Indian culture in Vietnam, to support for exchanges between artists of two countries in their creativity and distribution in different fields: yoga, traditional music, traditional craft workshops, Hindi and English language training, films, heritages, etc.
- Establishment of the Centre for Indian Studies in Ho Chi Minh National Academy for Politics and Public Administration (Hanoi) in September 2014.
- First Indian Film Festival was organized during 12-23 December 2015 in Da Nang, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City: 8 Hindi films screening, Seminar ‘Collaboration in Film making and its role in promotion of tourism with the participation of 11 Indian film producers and directors as well as many Vietnamese film makers.
- International project of Conservation and restoration of Cham monuments in My Son Sanctuary to highlight and reaffirm the ancient linkages between Vietnam and India through the prominent existence of Hindu Cham civilization in Vietnam. The initiative was brought up by the Indian side in 2007 in a formal meeting between the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam H.E. Mr. Nguyen Tan Dung and the Prime Minister of the Republic of India, H.E. Dr. Manmohan Singh in India, to have a team of Indian experts



to examine the current situation of Cham monuments in My Son. In following high-level meetings between leaders of two countries, the project has continued to receive great attention. An MoU on the financial and technical support of India for the conservation and restoration of Cham monuments in My Son was signed in October 2014. According to the agreement, India will allocate a fund of around US\$ 2.5 million for Vietnam to implement the project within five years. The Archaeological Survey of India was the organization that carried on the assessment on the current state of My Son A1 tower in 2015 and agreed to start the project on February 2016. However, the restoration activities have not been actually implemented until now.

**Figure 16.2: My Son A1 Tower (H.Parmenter)<sup>8</sup>**



**Source:** Author's own.

**Academic Conference and Workshops:** International conference on *Cham civilizational Linkages between India and Vietnam* was organized by the Embassy with Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts Studies in Da Nang in June 2012; Seminar “Vietnam – India Cultural Exchanges” at Cham Sculpture Museum; International Scientific Conference “Viet Nam, ASEAN -India Development Cooperation: Reality and Prospect” organized by Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Indian Embassy in Vietnam in 29-30 June 2015; 20/2/2016, International conference “Indo-Vietnam

Cultural Relations: Retrospect and Prospect” by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) organized from 20 to 21 February 2016 in New Delhi, India.

Vietnam-India Cultural Week 2017 in Ho Chi Minh City was organized during 7-14 January 2017 to celebrate 45 years of the establishment of diplomatic relation between India and Vietnam with diversified programmes such as photo exhibition, Yoga day, fashion show, Indian film festival, food exhibition, logo creating contest, etc.

There have been many efforts to reinforce the cultural cooperation between the two countries by means of agreements, MoUs and cooperative projects since the last decade to fulfil the expectation of leaders and peoples. It is necessary to revise the actual impacts of those cultural cooperation programmes in order to have a profound, actual and mutually-beneficial relationship between two countries in coming years.

### **3. Vietnam National Policy Revision on the Role of Culture and International Cultural Cooperation**

For long time, Vietnamese cultural policies are aimed toward the heritage conservation/traditional culture and national identity protection, which have gradually resulted in a very inactive and subsidy-dependent model of culture of Vietnam in many areas including performing arts, fine arts, films, etc. In the past decade, Vietnam have had many social changes, which eventually affecting her culture. There have been numerous constraints Vietnam had to face, while doing the protection, preservation and promotion of culture such as over-complex and bureaucratic government structure; state-enforced decisions on censorship on grounds of aesthetics or perceived narrowly-confined cultural value; widespread of copyright infringement; weak evidence base that sets an agenda for growth, sustainability and value-adding role of cultural sector; etc. These constraints created a context that urged Vietnam government to revise and transform their perspective on the role of culture within the comprehensive development of the country.

In 2014, the Communist Party of Viet Nam issued Resolution 33-NQ/TW of the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Party Central Committee of the 11<sup>th</sup> tenure on building and developing Vietnamese culture and people meeting the demand for national sustainable development. This is a comprehensive renovation policy of the Party in the field of culture in which, culture was not recognized as a passive and subsidized sector. It now has to be more

proactive, independent and bring about economic benefits to national economy. Profits gained from cultural industries and its contribution to the development of the economy should also reaffirm the fundamental role of culture as the spiritual foundation of the society. Cultural development does not mean the total trade-off between the core values of culture and economic values. It requires harmonious development and would sustain the balance between culture-based economic development and preservation of cultural identities of the peoples.

In view of importance of culture, Vietnam government has introduced an agenda for changes in other related areas, particularly in cultural cooperation between Vietnam and other countries in the world. There have been new approaches in implementing policies on international cooperation since past five years in accordance to the new ideological direction affirmed in above mentioned Resolution 33-NQ/TW of the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Party Central Committee of the 11<sup>th</sup> tenure. In 2015, Viet Nam National Strategy on international relations and cultural until 2020, with a vision to 2030, was approved by the Vietnam government to promote international relations culture, turning culture into an internal power, strengthening the international profile and prestige of the country. To implement these orientations, the strategy provides uniform solutions, with specific measures related to creativity, production and the dissemination of cultural and artistic products, getting access to worldwide audience and markets, improving the enjoyment of domestic audience through foreign cultural and artistic activities and international arts festivals organized in Vietnam. The strategy sets its objectives as promoting national cultural values to the world, to deepen the understanding of the world regarding the country, people and culture of Vietnam and at the same time to build trust and love to Vietnam, contributing to strengthen cooperation in other sectors.

Under the umbrella of those newly revised policies in the field of culture and international cultural cooperation, Vietnam has been quite proactive in negotiating, signing and implementing international treaties, agreements to enhance cultural exchange and cooperation, to improve mutual understanding and friendship between Vietnamese and foreign peoples through the participation and enjoyment of artistic and cultural activities and, at the same time, increasing professional capacity of artists and experts working in the fields of culture and of cultural agencies participating in cultural cooperative programmes.

## 4. Conclusion

We would like to make following suggestions for further discussion with scholars and policy-makers of India, Vietnam as well as all other countries in ASEAN on the international cultural cooperation and exchanges.

*Extension:* Extending the cooperation in culture from popular areas such as traditional performing arts, cuisine, heritage management, religions, yoga, etc. to more contemporary and creative industry-oriented areas such as films, visual arts, design, software, game, applied craft, pop music, religious tourism, etc.

*Time-bound Implementation:* Both nations must strictly respect the times set in their bilateral agreements or MoUs. Result of the agreement between India and Vietnam on the international project of conservation and restoration of Cham monuments in My Son indicates for a better time-bound implementation of any other cultural cooperation projects.

*Sustainability:* Countries should take turns to organize more regularly cultural programmes or activities to make those cultural aspects become closed and familiar with peoples of two countries.

*Diversification:* The cultural cooperation between the two countries may aim to fund grants, technical assistance, technology provision/low-price trade, governance strengthening (management, skills and professionalism, entrepreneurship, etc); preferential mechanism for cultural goods and service businesses, among others.

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## **Appendix**





**2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference**  
**ASEAN-India Cultural and Civilisational Links**

19 January 2017, Jakarta

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**Summary**  
**of the Conference**

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1. Indian Mission to ASEAN in Jakarta in association with ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), ASEAN Secretariat, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India, Indonesian Foreign Ministry (KEMLU) organized the 2nd International Conference on Cultural and Civilizational Links between India and ASEAN at Jakarta on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017. Annexure 1 presents the Agenda of the Conference. H.E. General (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Rtd.), Minister of State for External Affairs (MEA), Government of India extended the Keynote Address. Amb. Suresh K. Reddy, Ambassador of India to ASEAN gave the Opening Remarks. Special Address was given by H.E. Mr. A. M. Fachir, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia. H.E. Mr. Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee, Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN and H.E. Nguyen Quoc Dzong, Dy. Foreign Minister, Vietnam made the Remarks at the Inaugural Session of the Conference. Amb. Preeti Saran, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India gave the Valedictory Address. Dr. Prabir De, Coordinator, AIC extended the Vote of Thanks.
2. All the ASEAN countries nominated their officials and experts to this Conference, and about 150 participants including senior officials attended this one-day event. Annexure 2 presents the list of delegates. This Conference was the follow up of the 1st International

Conference on “ASEAN-India Cultural Links: Historical and Contemporary Dimensions”, held at New Delhi on 23-24 July 2015. This Conference was also the first event to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of dialogue partnership between ASEAN and India. The Conference was divided into four sessions to discuss the historical and civilizational links between ASEAN countries and India, to identify emerging challenges to cultural relations between ASEAN and India at present, and to identify the feasible policy options in order to overcome the challenges from the perspective of ASEAN community blueprints. The Conference discussed, analysed and had put together the various components that would help understanding cultural links between ASEAN and India.

3. Shared historical ties, culture and knowledge have continued to underpin India’s sustained interactions with Southeast Asia. Cultural links between India and Southeast Asia reflect the multi-cultural and multi-heritage tolerance society. Both physical and emotional links have to be explored such as Buddhism and Hinduism that had emerged from India and spread across the Southeast Asian countries. This would also embrace the tourism by connecting physical and emotional links. Therefore, ASEAN and India have multiple commonalities that need to be explored forward for the next generations. The session-wise major discussions are as follows:

### **Session I: Trade, Maritime and Cultural Heritage between India and Southeast Asia**

4. The participants of this session presented an overview of the commercial interaction between Southeast Asian countries and India. There is huge evidence of commercial links that used to exist between the countries in Sanskrit and Tamil scripts in Southeast Asia. The evidence of the long survival of trade centres and port towns located on the Indian coasts of the littoral states of India and the material evidences presented in the form of archaeological, epigraphical, numismatics, art and architecture extending from early historic times down to the colonial times stand as testimony to the existence of cultural relations between India and Southeast Asia. India and Sri Lanka served as a bridge connecting Arab and Mediterranean countries on the West and Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and China in the East. The mercantile community dealing with the

salt, textiles, metal, gems, gold, pearl, steel, glass, spices, etc. were integrated into a well-organized trading system.

5. The participants of the Conference observed that the exact points of trans-oceanic trade interactions could not be identified but it points to the place covering Southern Thailand and Northern Malaysia, where important archaeological sites with Indian goods were found. The sites like Khlong Thom, Ban Don Ta Phet, Muang Thong (Ko Kho Khao), Khao Sam Kaeo and Laem Pho in Thailand, Kuala Selinsing in Malaysia, Brunei, Kobak Kendal and Sembiran in Indonesia, Gilimanuk in West Bali of Indonesia, Buni grave complex on the North Coast of Java, Oc-Eo and Tra Kieu in Vietnam and Darussalam in Brunei were reported with Indian objects like gem stones, glass beads and ceramics like rouletted ware indicating that trade centres and port towns played a pivotal role in linking the Vietnam and China on the east and Indian and Mediterranean countries on the west in the early historic period. Thus, the available material evidences clearly point to the existence of considerable trade networks between India and Southeast Asia.
6. The participants of the Conference highlighted that the primary concerns of Indian merchants were trade, traveled or migrated and eventually settled in different countries in Southeast Asia. Indian culture had a profound influence on the mind set of many Southeast Asian civilizations. It was also observed that only very few literature contributions from the Southeast Asian scholars and researchers. Therefore, it is important to understand from Southeast Asian countries perspective to know how the Southeast Asian countries have adopted the Indian culture and carried in their part of life.

## **Session II: Shared Cultural Relations between ASEAN and India**

7. Participants of this session underlined the importance of cultural links to create a convergence that would lead to strengthening and cooperation between the nations and bring people to people contacts. It is imperative to share the knowledge through education and institutional exchange of ideas between the countries. The participants highlighted the role of local genius in Southeast Asian countries contributed in the construction monumental temple such as Borobudur and Angkor Wat temples was the evidence

of the civilisational strength. Therefore, greater cooperation in exchange of knowledge between the nations would bring synergies and cooperation in the areas that lead to the development and communities. The participants emphasized the importance of cooperation to understand countries perspectives and collaboration in the field of art performance, cultural creativity like dance and fine arts between ASEAN and India.

### **Session III: Strengthening Cultural Links between ASEAN and India**

8. The participants of the Conference underlined the role of Indian Diaspora on immersing the Indian cultural values in the civilization of Southeast Asia (e.g. Mudra in the dances of ASEAN). However, it is not well explored in the ASEAN countries on the usage of Mudra in different dance postures. Therefore, there is a need to study to look at the Mudra in the dances of ASEAN and explore the cultural linkages between the nations. Some of the participants claimed that Indian civilization has influenced various aspects of Malaysia's socio-cultural landscape and emphasized on the role of National Museum as a knowledge base for the cultural bond between ASEAN and India.
9. The participants of the Conference exhibited the role of women in monastic Buddhism in Southeast Asia. However, archaeological investigation is lacking on exposing 'motherhood ideal', which was the most popularly accepted lay ideal in early Buddhist women in Myanmar and Thailand. There is a need of collaborative projects in archaeology and ethnography that seek to map, document and conceptualise the data to provide a coherent and connected historical ties between the regions. Some of the participants emphasized the need of digitalization of the content such as Indian mythology across the states that can be documented and distributed digitally via internet and other medium to strengthen people to people contacts between ASEAN and India. Some participants were of the view that the nature of national museums is focusing on embracing the national culture and not projecting much about the ASEAN and India cultural values. Therefore, a Network of Museums of ASEAN and India would help strengthen the cultural links through exchange artifacts and ideas between the nations.

## **Session IV: Looking Forward: ASEAN-India Partnership in Culture**

10. The participants of the Conference highlighted that the historical and cultural links between India and Southeast Asian countries had 2000 years of history. Commonalities across the regions are cultural diversity, shared faith such as Buddhism and Hinduism; interconnectedness through trade and exchange of ideas. Preserving plurality and diversity across India and Southeast Asia in terms of language, ethnicity, culture and religious shrines; oral traditions and maritime narrative of the region are utmost important for both the countries.
11. The culture of India was synchronized into the local culture of the Southeast Asian countries, and Indian Diaspora is the value asset for Southeast Asian countries. To take it forward, participants stressed the need of collaborative research, establishing institutional linkages, training and capacity building, promoting ecological, religious and cultural tourism, mapping of the Indian Diaspora across Southeast Asian countries, outreach and display in public museums, maritime cultural heritage and knowledge traditions of the ASEAN-India region, film collaboration, book exchange programme, mapping up of ASEAN India heritage places into a tourism places and generate awareness on ASEAN-India cultural links.
12. The participants of the Conference have also highlighted the remarks made by Indian Prime Minister at the ASEAN-India Summit on 8 September 2016 in Vientiane in which he has proposed to commission a project for mapping of Indian inscriptions along the Mekong river as well as a project to capture the cultural symbols of Indian diversity.
13. Participants of the Conference stressed the need of joint ASEAN-India project for documenting knowledge base of ASEAN-India contacts as evident from specimens of writing on pottery, inscriptions on stone as also on copper plates/gold plaques, votive tablets, etc. in Brahmi script and Sanskrit/Pali/Prakrit/Tamils. In addition, the documentation should include contexts in which they have been found largely on temples, Buddhist monastic complexes, sema stones, dharanis and so on. Though some works on these are available, as evident from several presentations at this conference,

there is need for comprehensive documentation and recording. This would then provide a foundation to a shared cultural heritage for future ASEAN-India deliberations.

14. The participants of the Conference have made several recommendations, and some are identified as follows:

- Promote continuous dialogue, debate and discussion on issues that highlight cultural diversity, multi-religious and plural nature of contacts in the ASEAN-India region through museum exhibitions, gallery talks, etc.
- Promote mobility of cultural practitioners and exchange of people as well as ideas.
- Strengthen tourism and religious travel by producing popular literature/films on religious circuits and mythology across ASEAN-India region. Cultural tourism packages that help us to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses and appreciate and relate to each other better.
- Focus cultural exchange programmes on joint research on themes that cut across political boundaries such as the role of gender in Buddhism.
- The cultural aspects of rice cultivation; production of knowledge of traditional medicines; production of films for outreach; and exchange of selected books.
- Create an ASEAN-India Academic and Culture Forum that would incorporate scholars, cultural specialist and researchers from India and ASEAN countries to encourage in academic research, discussions, debate and capacity building programmes.
- Promote academic cooperation between researchers through joint historical and archaeological research initiatives to undertake joint research projects in the area of history and archaeology. The collaborative projects help to carry out archaeological research; explorations and excavations that would strengthen the cultural connections and linkages through long-term academic partnerships. Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) can also offer few seats to ASEAN countries for the training course in Archaeology (P.G. Diploma) under this initiative.
- Encourage student and faculty exchange programmes by offering fellowships for undertaking doctoral, post-doctoral and short-

term research activities on the issues of culture and cultural interactions between ASEAN and India.

- Encourage study tour for school and college students from India and ASEAN countries.
- Networking of Museums can be established between India and ASEAN countries to exchange of artefacts and ideas and can also collaborate to promote exhibition across India and Southeast Asian countries.
- Creation of a trust of agency that can receive donations from NRIs, Businessmen to support research and cultural activities. India and ASEAN governments can contribute to such funds.
- India must expand the base for educational cooperation with ASEAN not just by offering scholarships to students through ICCR or ITEC but also by keeping certain slots in our leading institutions like IITs/IIMs/JNU/DU/Delhi School of Economics and attract students who might find in Indian education both quality, competitive and cheaper than in the West. More academic exchanges between scholars and introduction of an India-ASEAN scholars programme, where alternately an Indian and an ASEAN scholar can be sent to each other's institute or university, would help strengthen the cultural links.
- India may consider opening up campuses of IITs and IIMs in Southeast Asia. Some Indonesians have shown interest in this and have even assured investment by local business houses.
- India should present itself as a net capacity-builder by helping the countries that need support in areas they are deficient. Apart from ITEC programme other capacity-building support, India is already providing, the support should extend to building institutions in countries that are undergoing democratic transition like Myanmar or even Indonesia. India's experience in building institutions like the Election Commission, local self-government like Panchayati democracy, institutions to manage centre-state relations can be shared with countries that need support. Such capacity-building support could be offered even in Science and Technology, agriculture and other areas where India has the expertise.
- We need to promote joint research in social sciences and in science and technology to address issues of common concern relating to economic development, eradication of poverty, health

issues and general problems of nation-building. Through such joint research we can find solutions to problems that are typical to us and are relevant to us.

- In the wake of religious extremism and exclusivist identity formation, there is need for civilizational dialogues amongst religious and cultural leaders who can help shape a more syncretic culture that can build harmonious relations between different communities based on mutual respect for each other's beliefs, customs and traditions.
  - The civilizational dialogue should continue with focus on sectoral outreach.
15. Participants thanked the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Indian Mission to ASEAN at Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, AIC, RIS, KEMLU for hosting the Conference and the hospitality. The Conference ended with a cultural event (Java Jatrir Patra). The musical presentation was based on Rabindranath Tagore's cultural mission to the Southeast Asia in 1927.



**2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference**  
**ASEAN-India Cultural and Civilisational Links**

19 January 2017, Jakarta

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# Agenda

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**09.00 – 09.30 hrs : Registration**

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**09.30 – 10.30 hrs : Inaugural Session**

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- Opening Remarks by Amb. Suresh K. Reddy, Ambassador of India to ASEAN, India
- Remarks by H.E. Mr. Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee, Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN
- Remarks by H.E. Nguyen Quoc Dzong, Vice Foreign Minister, Vietnam
- Remarks by H.E. Mr. A. M. Fachir, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia
- Keynote Address by H.E. General (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Rtd.), Minister of State for External Affairs, Government of India

**10.30 – 10.45 hrs : Group Photo**

**10.45 – 11.00 hrs : Refreshments**

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**11.00 – 12.30 hrs : Session I: Trade, Maritime and Cultural Heritage between India and Southeast Asia**

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In Chair: Prof. Himanshu Prabha Ray, Former Chairperson, National Monuments Authority, Ministry of Culture, New Delhi

*Speakers*

- Dr. V. Selvakumar, Assistant Professor, Department of Epigraphy and Archaeology, Tamil University, Thanjavur
- Dr. K. Rajan, Professor, Department of History, Pondicherry University, Puducherry
- Dr. Umakanta Mishra, Assistant Professor, Ravenshaw University, Cuttack
- Ms. Nalina Gopal, Curator, Indian Heritage Centre, Singapore
- Dr. Mya Mya Thaung, Assistant Director, Department of Historical Research and National Library, Ministry of Religion and Culture, Yangon
- Mr. Siyonn Sophearith, Director, Cambodian Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, Phnom Penh

**12.30 – 13.15 hrs : Lunch Break**

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**13.15 – 14.30 hrs : Session II: Shared Cultural Relations between ASEAN and India**

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In Chair: Prof. Baladash Ghosal, Secretary General, Society for Indian Ocean Studies (SIOS), New Delhi, and Former Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi

*Speakers*

- Dr. H. Andrik Purwasito, Professor and Head of International Relations Programme, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Java
- Ms. Nguyen Thi Thu Ha, Head of Ecological Culture and Tourism Vietnam National Institute of Cultural and Arts Studies, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Hanoi

- Ms. Niharika Gupta, Director (Content), Sahapedia, New Delhi
- Dr. Douangchammy Vouthisouk, Deputy Director-General of Performing Arts Department, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, Vientiane

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**14.30 -15.45 hrs : Session III: Strengthening Cultural Links between ASEAN and India**

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In Chair: Mr. George Lantu, Director for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Cooperation, Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jakarta

*Speakers*

- Mr. Haji Mohd Abdoh Bin Haji Awang Damit, Acting Director of Culture and the Arts, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Bandar Seri Begawan
- Mr. Mohamed Shawali Haji Badi, Deputy Director General (Policy) Department of Museums, Malaysia
- Dr. Garima Kaushik, Assistant Professor, School of Buddhist Studies, Comparative Religions & Philosophy, Nalanda University, Rajgir, Bihar
- Dr. Nilima Chitgopekar, Associate Professor, Jesus Marry College, Delhi University, New Delhi

**15.45 – 16.00 hrs : Refreshments**

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**16.00 – 17.15 hrs : Session IV: Looking Forward: ASEAN-India Partnership in Culture**

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In Chair: H. E. Mr. Myint Thu, SOM Leader of Myanmar, & Director-General, ASEAN Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yangon

*Speakers*

- Prof. Himanshu Prabha Ray, Former Chairperson, National Monuments Authority, Ministry of Culture, New Delhi
- Ms. Sophana Srichampa, Associate Professor and Chair for Bharat Studies, Organisation Research Institute for Language and Culture of Asia, Mahidol University, Bangkok
- Dr. Joefer Santarita, Associate Professor and Dean, Asian Centre, University of the Philippines, Manila
- Dr. Nor Arlinda Binti Mohamed Khalid, Undersecretary of International Relations Division (Culture), Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Kuala Lumpur

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**17.15 – 17.45 hrs : Valedictory Session**


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In Chair: Ms. Maria Hellen B. De La Vega, Acting PH SOM Leader to ASEAN & Director General, ASEAN-Philippines National Secretariat, Manila

- Valedictory Address by Amb. Preeti Saran, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India
- Vote of Thanks by Dr. Prabir De, Coordinator, ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) and Professor, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi

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**19.00 – 22.00 hrs : Reception cum Dinner, Hosted by Indian Ambassador to ASEAN (Venue: Hosted by Indian Ambassador to ASEAN)**


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- Musical Programme: *Java Yatrir Patra* [Tagore's Sense of Wonder in Indonesia] by Mr. Santanu Roychoudhury and Group from Kolkata, India (Dua Mutiara Ball Room, Hotel JW Marriott)

**2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference**  
**ASEAN-India Cultural and Civilisational Links**

19 January 2017, Jakarta

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**Keynote Address**

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**Gen. (Dr) V K Singh (Retd.)**

Minister of State for External Affairs, India

*Your Excellency Mr. A.M. Fachir, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia;*

*Your Excellency Nguyen Quoc Dzong, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Viet Nam;*

*Your Excellency, Mr. Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee, Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN;*

*Smt. Preeti Saran, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India;*

*Shri. Suresh K. Reddy, Ambassador of India to ASEAN;*

*Distinguished Speakers;*

*Excellencies;*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a pleasure to be with you here today for the 2nd International Conference on ASEAN-India Cultural and Civilisational Links. This is the first major event in 2017 to mark the 25th anniversary celebrations of the ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership. We plan to mark this year with a series of commemorative events across ASEAN Member States and India.

1. Today's conference provides us a platform to continue to build synergies between India and ASEAN member states based on our civilizational links and commonalities between India and South East Asia. It celebrates our historical ties from ancient times dating back two millenia to the present, based on rich cultural affinities, spanning art, architecture, language, religion, etc.
2. Recognizing our Prime Minister's desire for building a deeper engagement with South East Asia by expanding and comprehensively documenting India's civilizational links with ASEAN countries, our Act East Policy lays significant focus on this third pillar of the ASEAN-India relationship.
3. The conceptualization and organization of the first edition of the "ASEAN-India Conference on Cultural Links: Historical and Contemporary Dimensions" at New Delhi on 23 July 2015, was a signal effort in this direction.
4. Sustaining the focus, promotion of socio-cultural ties through people-to-people contacts such as exchange programmes for students, media persons, diplomats, parliamentarians and farmers and the ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks and Eminent persons lecture series have continued.
5. To celebrate our shared Buddhist heritage, we had designated ASEAN as the Guest of Honour at the 5th International Buddhist Conclave held in India from 2-6 October 2016. I take this opportunity to thank ASEAN member countries for their enthusiastic participation including of Tourism Ministers, Buddhist monks, scholars and media persons for this event.
6. The ASEAN India Centre in New Delhi is rendering yeoman's service to the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership through its studies in areas of mutual interest. We have, moreover, inaugurated the ASEAN Studies Centre at the North Eastern Hill University in Shillong on 8 August 2016, to work on developing cross-border connections between our Northeastern region and ASEAN countries.
7. Another major project underway is the re-establishment of the Nalanda University, once a world-renowned knowledge hub where scholars from around the world, including South East Asia and India, exchanged knowledge and ideas. India is working to recreate a similar world class university in the 21st century, with the support of

its South East Asian partners, and has offered scholarships to students from CLMV countries to study there.

8. A Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Museum of Traditional Asian Textiles inaugurated in Siem Reap, Cambodia, has proudly showcased affinities in our weaving styles and textiles. As part of our effort to document our cultural and civilizational ties, we also propose to map Indian inscriptions along the Mekong River as well as record shared cultural symbols that are found in the river basin.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

9. I said before, 2017, marks 25 years of our Dialogue Partnership, 15 years of our Summit Level interaction and 5 years of our Strategic Partnership with ASEAN. Our celebrations will include hosting of a Commemorative Summit, a Commemorative Foreign Ministers' Meeting, a Youth Summit and a host of other events including ASEAN-India Cultural Festivals, business events, policy seminars, public competitions and a car rally and sailing expedition. The theme of our commemorative celebrations is 'Shared Values, Common Destiny', which aptly reflects the close cultural and civilizational links India and countries of South East Asia have enjoyed over the millennia.
10. Some of you must wonder why this focus on the historical and cultural connect between India and South East Asia? It is because a generation which ignores history has no future. As responsible citizens, it is incumbent upon us to trace and preserve our shared heritage and leave this legacy for the future generations.
11. India and Indonesia are close neighbors. We share a deep civilizational and cultural link. We had the privilege of hosting President Jokowi in India recently. His landmark visit reflected the special relationship that India and Indonesia share. It is, therefore, my distinct pleasure to be in Indonesia, which has long been our maritime bridge to South East Asia.
12. I would like to thank His Excellency A. M. Fachir and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Indonesia, for jointly hosting this event with us in Jakarta.
13. ASEAN has evolved into a role model for regional cooperation as it celebrates the 50th anniversary year of its foundation this year. Today, it is appreciated for the stability it has brought to the region

and its immediate neighborhood. We look forward to working closely with ASEAN to weave a mutually beneficial legacy which would be cherished by future generations.

*Mr. Deputy Secretary General,*

14. I would also like to felicitate ASEAN for completion of one year of the formation of the ASEAN Community. With the adoption of the ASEAN 2025 document along with its ASEAN Community Blueprints, ASEAN has paved its way to a prosperous future.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

15. Our ancient interactions demonstrate South East Asia's widespread religious and political affinities with the Indian sub-continent. Scholars have observed that the Gupta dynasty provided an attractive coherent model of political, social and religious integration for rulers of South East Asia, and its success was emulated in South East Asia, where Indian constructs such as iconography, the Sanskrit language and Hinduism as a way of life were celebrated. Importantly, these constructs spread, not through conquest but essentially through non-political agents such as merchants and religious men.
16. The three pillars of the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership – political, economic and socio-cultural – have thrived for many centuries. Evidence of linkages between ancient India and South East Asia abound in texts and folklore, architecture, literature, dance-forms, music, religion and culture. The Malay annals, Burmese chronicles and ancient inscriptions in Viet Nam, all celebrate links with India. The Sri Vijaya Kingdom of Indonesia maintained regular political and commercial ties with the Cholas, Pandyas and Chera dynasties of South India.
17. From the ancient period upto the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Hinduism as a way of life permeated South East Asia. Thailand incorporates significant elements from Hinduism in its architecture, arts, sculpture dance, drama and literature. The Cham temple complex of My Son Wat in Viet Nam is dedicated to Bhadresvara, an incarnation of the Lord Shiva. The magnificent Angkor Wat in Cambodia was originally built as a Hindu temple dedicated to the Lord Vishnu. The Vat Phou temple in Lao PDR, Ananda temple in Bagan, Myanmar and the Borobudur Buddhist temple in Indonesia are examples of the influence of Hindu architectural principles. Malaysia was a centre of Hinduism and



Buddhism until the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. In Viet Nam, Shaivism was the predominant religion until the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

18. Buddhism spread to South East Asia from India through travelling monks who were sent by the rulers of Indian kingdoms. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., nine Buddhist emissaries led by the monks Sona and Uttara were sent by King Ashoka to South East Asia. With the passage of time, Buddhism took an indigenous form in all parts of South East Asia and gradually underwent a process of localisation of its tenets.
19. With the spread of Hinduism and Buddhism also came the assimilation of Indian mythology and folklore into local mythology of the South East Asian region. The various forms of Ramayana prevalent in the region, be it Ramakien in Thailand, Pha Lak Pha Lam in Laos, Yama Zatddaw in Myanmar, Kakawin Ramayana in Indonesia or Hikayat Seri Rama in Malaysia, bear testimony to our historical connect.
20. Moreover, Islam travelled to South East Asia from India via traders. It thrives today as a tolerant religion in the region, with Indonesia of course being the largest Muslim country in the world, followed by India. Together, we set an example for the rest of the world, in peaceful co-existence, tolerance and compassion.
21. Contemporary popular culture in the form of music, Bollywood movies and TV soap operas, is forging a new understanding between us. The human element is vital in contemporary discourse. Our youth, our future generation, must engage and bond in a more systematic way and at a deeper level. To this end, in addition to organising the annual student exchange programmes, India will host a Youth Summit this year to encourage closer contacts among our youth, who hold the future of our relationship.
22. Let me conclude by saying a few words about this evening's cultural programme on Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore's travels to South East Asia. Tagore, as we know, was a master litterateur who weaved magic with words. He was so impressed by the manifest cultural diversity of South East Asian countries that he set out to develop close cultural cooperation between India and South East Asia and to discover the quintessential Asian identity. He introduced cultural elements from South East Asia in the curriculum of his Visva Bharati University to enrich its cultural kaleidoscope. Following his footsteps, we should continue to work together to strengthen our very rich cultural partnership.

23. I look forward to hearing the views of all the intellectuals and specialists gathered here today on how we can strengthen our civilizational links amid the new challenges and opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference**  
**ASEAN-India Cultural and Civilisational Links**

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**Inaugural Remarks**

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**H.E. A. M. Fachir**

Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Indonesia

*Your Excellency, Dr. Vijay Kumar Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs of the Republic of India,*

*Your Excellency Nguyen Quoc Dzung, Vice Foreign Minister of Viet Nam,*

*Your Excellency Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN,*

*Ambassador Suresh Reddy,*

*Excellencies,*

*Distinguished Guests,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is an honor to be here among distinguished participants of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on ASEAN-India Cultural and Civilizational Links. On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, I would like to welcome you to Jakarta.

Please allow me to also commend the Ministry of External Affairs of Republic of India for co-hosting this important event. This event represents the dynamic and strong engagement between ASEAN and India. Moreover, this year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dialogue relation between ASEAN and India.

*Excellencies,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

We speak the same language. Borobudur, Ayyuthaya, Sanskrit, Ramayana, for example. So what we learned from this? We notice how close we are both emotional and physical.

What shall we do about it? Let's identify linkages as well as stakeholders of those emotional and physical links. Three biggest religion here in Indonesia are coming from India: Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam in Indonesia brought by people and traders from Gujarat, located in the subcontinent of India. So this links in undeniable.

In Indonesia, we do not need to advertise India, because every day you'll find Indian movies and series in TV. You can find Indian culinary easily. Not to mention in Singapore and another capital of ASEAN Countries. So, the question is how to empower this? How to make our tourism even stronger by connecting people who have this emotional links. For example, setting up religious tourism. Another example area of cooperation to be explore: movie industry or maritime.

*Excellencies,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Again, I wish to thank the government of India for contributing a lot for this conference in which we should get a benefit of that to strengthen our emotional and physical links. With those linkages we will be able to resolve our problems. For instance, the current global economics crisis, we could address it with the spirit of cooperation.

And another challenges for us on how to address the current global challenges and how to inherit our values to our young generation. We should speak with the language being used by our young people: Twitter, Facebook, and other social media platforms to encourage those shared value which are so precious and inclusive.

*Excellencies,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

So lets empower this. First, to strengthen our current cooperation. Second to explore further possible area of cooperation. Third, to address our problems.

So with this note I wish you success on your endeavours.

Thank you so much.

**2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference**  
**ASEAN-India Cultural and Civilisational Links**

19 January 2017, Jakarta

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**Remarks**

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**H.E. Nguyen Quoc Dzung**

Vice Foreign Minister and ASEAN SOM Leader of Viet Nam

*H.E. General Dr. V.K. Singh, Minister of State of External Affairs of India,  
H.E. Mr. A. M. Fachir, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia,  
H.E. Mr. Vongthep Arrthakaivalvatee, Deputy Secretary-General of  
ASEAN,  
H.E. Suresh K. Reddy, Ambassador of India to ASEAN,  
Distinguished participants,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my great pleasure to join you today at the Second International Conference on Cultural and Civilizational Links between India and Southeast Asia. I would like to thank our Indonesian and Indian colleagues for your warm welcome and excellent arrangements for the Conference. As the ASEAN and India partnership is a unique one that has been built upon the foundation of a strong civilizational connection, this Conference offers great opportunity to further deliberate on cultural, civilizational linkages and historical interaction between the two regions. This will help to build up our mutual understanding and confidence, and strengthen the ASEAN-India relations, particularly when we are celebrating 25 years of the ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations, 15 years of our Summit Level interaction and 5 years of our Strategic Partnership.

*Distinguished participants,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is so proud that ASEAN countries and India share long history and civilizational linkages, which have evolved together through exchanges of people, ideas and trade over the millennia, long before we decided to embark upon a partnership in 1992. Notably, it is the Indians and Southeast Asians who played an active role in that long interaction process, and the sea links were vital in connecting our two regions. Initial contacts started with the trips of Indian traders, missionaries from coastal regions of eastern India through the Bay of Bengal to Southeast Asia. Along with Ganga and Mekong rivers, ancient ports such as Tamralipti in Ganga, Oc Eo in Viet Nam and Irrawaddy Vally of Myanmar provided key routes for the flow of people, goods between the two regions. Legacy of these exchanges remain in many places in Southeast Asia, ranging from the famous temple architecture of Borobudur and Prambanan in Indonesia, Angkor Wat in Cambodia, temples and pagodas in Thailand, to the presence of Sanskrit words in Bahasa Indonesia and epic tales of Ramayana in folk literature.

Today, it is our duty to not only preserve but also advance these shared values and legacy for the benefits of our peoples as well as regional peace, stability and prosperity. I would like to take this chance to appreciate great efforts made by all ASEAN countries and India as well as the ASEAN Scretariat to develop the ASEAN-India relations in all areas of cooperation, particularly cultural and people-to-people exchanges. These include the projects to re-establish the Nalanda University, to restore the cultural relics like My Son sanctuary in Viet Nam, the initiative to boost cooperation in the region defined by two great rivers, the Mekong and the Ganga, and various measures taken to speed up regional connectivity and facilitate the movement of people, goods and services in the region over the past years.

*Distinguished participants,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

After 25 years of dialogue relations, ASEAN and India are working towards a more substantive and reinvigorated relationship that could tap the full potential and meet the expectation of our peoples. Based on a solid foundation of shared civilizational heritage, the ASEAN-India partnership will be driven by our strategic priorities of securing peace,

stability and prosperity in the region as well as India's Act East policy and the ASEAN Vision 2025. For ASEAN, culture and people-to-people links continue to have a significant role in building a cohesive and culturally vibrant ASEAN Community.

In that context, I am convinced that with the active participation of distinguished officials, scholars and academicians today, the Conference will energize our joint efforts to deepen the ASEAN-India relations through sharing knowledge, practices and providing valuable inputs and initiatives to strengthening cultural links as well as trade and maritime cooperation between Southeast Asia and India.

As the country coordinator for ASEAN-India dialogue relations during the 2015-2018 period, Viet Nam is looking towards the positive outcomes of the Conference, particularly specific ideas or proposals to intensify ASEAN-India cooperative activities, including those in the field of education, tourism, cultural exchanges and trade. Especially, it would be much appreciated if our Conference could propose some concrete projects or activities to be conducted in 2017 when we are commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN.

In this regard, I would like to wish the Conference success. Wish you all health and happiness in the new year of 2017.

Thank you.







## ACT EAST: ASEAN-INDIA SHARED CULTURAL HERITAGE

Culture is the key to the India-ASEAN partnership. Shared historical ties, culture and knowledge continue to underpin India's sustained interactions with Southeast Asia. The commonalities between India and Southeast Asia provide a platform for building synergies with the countries of the region. As India's engagement with the ASEAN moves forward with support of the Act East Policy (AEP), the socio-cultural linkages between the two regions can be utilized effectively to expand collaboration, beyond economic and political domains into areas of education, tourism and people to people contact. This book presents historical and contemporary dimensions between India and Southeast Asia with particular reference to cultural heritage. One of the recommendations of this book is to continue our efforts to preserve, protect, and restore cultural heritage that represents the civilisational bonds between ASEAN and India. The book will serve as a knowledge product for policymakers, academics, private sector experts and regional cooperation practitioners; and is a must-read for anyone interested in the cultural heritage.



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