

## Cultural and Trade Links between India and Siam: Their Impact on the Maritime Silk Road

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India, Southeast Asia in general, and Siam in particular share a long history of cultural and commercial relations. Located in each other's extended neighbourhood, India and Thailand have a shared maritime boundary in the Andaman Sea. Situated in the strategic position, midway between West Asia on the one hand and East Asia on the other, India and Siam combined played a significant role in the maritime transactions in Asia and beyond. The geographical proximity between India and Siam led to multifaceted maritime interactions and exchanges. Siam was in the Indian sphere of cultural, religious, philosophical, technical, and linguistic influence much before the Common Era. The cultural and mercantile networks between India and Siam are well-attested by archaeological and literary sources. The archaeological findings in Siam and other Southeast Asian countries have revealed the dynamic trade and cultural exchange between India and Southeast Asia since the pre-Common Era. The Takola (modern Takua Pa) area served as a more suitable landing place for Indian merchants and there existed the settlement of the Indian mercantile community. Ligor (Nakhon Si Thammarat), Jaya (Chaiya), Patalung (Phatalung), U Thong, Ban Don Tha Pet, Ban U Taphao, Khao Sam Kaeo, and many other sites in Siam have brought to light a large variety of objects which demonstrate that ancient Siam had close mercantile contact with India as well as the Mediterranean world and China. The paper discusses in detail the cultural and trade links between India and Siam and their impact on the Maritime Silk Road.

**Keywords:** Siam, Takua Pa, Silk Road, Suvarṇabhūmi, Buddhism, Funan, Dvaravati, Rouletted ware, Khmer empire, Sukhothai kingdom, Ayutthaya kingdom

## Introduction

India and Siam have a long history of cultural and commercial relations. The classical Sanskrit and Pali texts from India carry references to the Southeast Asian region using various names such as Kathakosha, Suvarṇabhūmi (the land of gold), or Suvarṇadvīpa (the golden island). The exact location of Suvarṇabhūmi is unidentified and thus remains a matter of debate about its location. However, it was certainly an important area along trade routes that ran through the Indian Ocean. Perhaps the earliest reference to Suvarṇabhūmi occurs in the *Arthaśāstra* from the 4th–3rd century BCE.<sup>1</sup> It mentions that *kaleyaka*, a kind of incense of Suvarṇabhūmi came to India. Suvarṇabhūmi was referred to as *Aurea Regio* in Claudius Ptolemy’s *Trans-Gangetic India* or *India beyond the Ganges* and the Golden Chersonese of the Greek and Roman geographers and sailors.<sup>2</sup> The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* refers to the region as Chryse (the land of gold) and explains it as an island in the ocean in the extreme east of the inhabited world, remaining under the rising sun.<sup>3</sup> There are references to Suvarṇabhūmi or Gold Country in some of the Buddhist *Jātaka* stories such as *Mahājanaka-Jātaka*,<sup>4</sup> *San̄kha-Jātaka*,<sup>5</sup> and *Sussondi-Jātaka*.<sup>6</sup> The *Jātaka* stories narrate that Suvarṇabhūmi had been reached after sailing across a hazardous sea. The *Jātakas* also mention the voyages undertaken by the Indian merchants to Suvarṇabhūmi. A reference to Suvarṇabhūmi is also found in the *Milindapañha* (Question of Milinda’), a Buddhist text dated to the 1st–2nd century CE.<sup>7</sup> The voyages of the audacious merchants from India to Suvarṇabhūmi are mentioned in many literary works such as *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* (400 CE)<sup>8</sup> and Somadeva’s *Kathāsaritasāgara* (1063–1081 CE).<sup>9</sup> *Mahāvamsa*, the historical chronicle of Sri Lanka (5th century CE) states that two

<sup>1</sup> R. Shamasastri, ed. and trans., *Kautilya’s Arthashastra* (Bangalore: Government Press, 1915), 107.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Wheatley, “Presidential Address: India Beyond the Ganges—Desultory Reflections on the Origins of Civilization in Southeast Asia,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 42, no. 1 (1982): 13–28.

<sup>3</sup> Wilfred H. Schoff, *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), 45–48.

<sup>4</sup> E. B. Cowell and W. H. D. Rouse, eds. and trans., *The Jataka or The Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births*, Vol. VI (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), no. 539, p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> E. B. Cowell and W. H. D. Rouse, eds. and trans., *The Jataka or The Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births*, Vol. IV (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), no. 442, p.10.

<sup>6</sup> E. B. Cowell, H.T. Francis, and R.A. Neil, eds. and trans., *The Jataka or The Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births*, Vol. III. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), no. 360, p. 124.

<sup>7</sup> R.K. Dube, “Southeast Asia as the Indian El-Dorado,” in *India’s Interaction with Southeast Asia*, ed. G. C. Pande, vol. 1, pt. 3 of *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2006), 87–110.

<sup>8</sup> R.K. Dube, “Suvarṇahumi, Suvarṇadvīpa: Origin, Identity, and its Richness in Gold in Ancient and Medieval Times,” *Bulletin of the Metals Museum* 36 (2003): 3–23.

<sup>9</sup> C.H. Tawney, *The Ocean of Story* (translation of Somadeva’s *Kathāsaritasāgara*) (London: Chas J. Sawyer Ltd.,

Buddhist monks, Soṇa and Uttara, were sent to Suvarṇabhūmi for missionary activities at the time of the Emperor Asoka (3rd century BCE).<sup>10</sup>

This paper attempts to provide an account of the deep cultural and trade contacts between India and Siam since prehistoric times. This analysis is based primarily on archaeological findings, including pottery, stone and glass beads, remains of crops, coins, pendants, intaglios, seals and sealings, sculptures, inscriptions, and textile remains gathered through explorations and excavations in Thailand and India. Additionally, it considers existing cultural and religious traditions in Thailand.

### **Prehistoric/Early Historic Period**

India and Siam have delighted in a close and mutually enriching relationship for millennia. In fact, traces of contact between India and Siam can be seen even in the prehistoric time. The advent of the Iron Age in Thailand not only stimulated cultural transmission but also expanded the avenue of the exchange of ideas, crops, goods, and technological knowledge between Siam and India. The study of the materials found in the excavations at Ban Don Ta Phet, an Iron Age burial site, and a few other Iron Age sites in Thailand has revealed the possible exchange of materials and techniques between India and Siam very early period.<sup>11</sup> Ban Don Ta Phet and Khao Sam Kaeo are positioned on the notable early trans-Asiatic trade routes. Ban Don Ta Phet is close to the tin belt of western Thailand and is accessible by river and land route. Khao Sam Kaeo is located on the east coast of the Kra Isthmus. Tin has been an important commodity for export along the trans-Asiatic route. However, it is not clear when the Peninsula began to play the role of producing and exporting tin. Ranong, the rich tin deposit in the Thai-Malay Peninsula, well connected to the Andaman Sea by channels, probably served as a prominent center of tin export to South Asia.

### **Semi-Precious Stone Beads**

The grave goods found in the burials excavated at Ban Don Ta Phet and Khao Sam Kaeo exhibit the inter-regional contacts of various Asian cultural horizons. The analysis of the beads made of semi-precious stones, mainly agate and carnelian found at Ban Don Ta Phet, Non Muang Kao, Tha Kae, Khao Sam Kaeo, Ban Chiang, Noen U-Loke, and other sites in Thailand, reveals that the raw-material (carnelian and agate), finishing, shaping and

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1927), 15.

<sup>10</sup> Wilhelm Geiger, ed. and trans., *The Mahāvamsa or The Great Chronicle of Ceylon* (London: Pali Text Society, 1912), 86.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Franklin Higham and Fiorella Rispoli, "The Mun Valley and Central Thailand in Prehistory: Integrating Two Cultural Sequences," *Open Archaeology* 1 (2014): 2–28.

manufacturing, and drilling techniques are very similar to the beads found in India.<sup>12</sup> Etched carnelian beads similar to the ones found in south India have been discovered from central, north-eastern, and southern Siam, the major ones being Khlong Thom, Khao Sam Kaeo, U Thong, and Krabi.<sup>13</sup> The collar beads found at various sites in Thailand are very much akin to similar beads found in South India. On the basis of the above, scholars have proposed the hypothesis that the local artisans were taught by Indians for long enough to be well-skilled in the production technology or, at the initial stage, the beads might have been produced by the Indian craftsmen who had settled in Thailand and from them the local artisans probably learned the skill.<sup>14</sup>

## Crops

Archaeological evidence in Thailand suggests that many prehistoric and early historic communities of Siam possessed various cultural traditions and technology through interaction with India, China, and other neighboring regions. The remains of crops of Indian origin, such as mung bean (green gram), horse gram, kodo millet, pigeon pea (congo pea, red gram), black gram, tree cotton, and sesame found at Khao Sam Kaeo, Phu Khao Thong, and a few other sites in Thailand in the Late Prehistoric period (ca. 400-100 BCE) indicate that the crops might have been introduced due to the contact with India or they might have been cultivated or used by the Indians settled there.<sup>15</sup> The excavations at the burial site of Ban Don Ta Phet in central Thailand have yielded cotton fragments and thread. The analysis of cotton found at Ban Don Ta Phet reveals that it was made of *cannabis sativa* fiber, which most probably originated from the cotton plants of South Asia. Similarly, remains of textiles, probably of Indian origin, have been found at Ban Chiang in Thailand. Furthermore, the terracotta spindle whorls with iron spindle rods in the central perforation, used for the production of yarn, found at Tha Kae, Ban Don Ta Phet, and other sites in Thailand from the 3rd century BCE to the 3rd century CE are similar to those found in south India.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ian C. Glover and Berenice Bellina, "Ban Don Ta Phet and Khao Sam Kaeo: The Earliest Indian Contacts Re-Assessed," In *Early Interactions between South and Southeast Asia: Reflections on Cross-cultural Exchange*, eds. Pierre-Yves Manguin, A. Mani, and G. Wade (Singapore: ISEAS, 2011), 17–46.

<sup>13</sup> Ian C. Glover, *Early Trade between India and Southeast Asia: A Link in the Development of a World Trading System* (Hull: University of Hull, 1989), 24.

<sup>14</sup> Berenice Bellina, "Beads, Social Change, and Interaction between India and Southeast Asia," *Antiquity* 77, no. 296 (2003): 285–97.

<sup>15</sup> Cristina Castillo, "The Archaeobotany of Khao Sam Kaeo and Phu Khao Thong: The Agriculture of Late Prehistoric Southern Thailand, Vol. 1" (PhD diss., University College London, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Himanshu Prabha Ray and Susan Mishra, *Sailing to Suvarnabhumi: Cultural Routes and Maritime Landscapes* (New Delhi: Research and Information System for Developing Countries, 2019), 15.

## Pottery

The mercantile exchange between India and Siam has been further substantiated by the finding of numerous Indian artifacts, such as pottery, glass, and semi-precious stone beads. The Black Polished Ware noticed at Khao Sam Kaeo, Tam Sua, Kapoe, Phu Khao Thong, Tham Thuay, and other sites in Thailand<sup>17</sup> is very similar to the Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW), dated to 600 BCE to 200 BCE, found in the Gangetic plain in India. Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) is also found in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Perhaps, the export of the pottery or the production technique of the pottery might have reached from India to Thailand and other countries during the Mauryan period (c. 3rd–2nd century BCE) through traders or Buddhist missionaries.<sup>18</sup>

Rouletted ware, another deluxe ware of the early historic period, known to have had a very wide distribution all along the eastern coast of India and Peninsular India along with Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt, Oman, and Yemen, evidently had a strong association with the ancient maritime trade centers. Rouletted wares have been found at Pak Chan, Kapoe, Phu Khao Thong, Khao Sam Kaeo, Bang Kluai Nok, Tham Thuay, Tha Chana, Chansen, and a few other sites in Thailand.<sup>19</sup> Although there is no unanimous opinion about the origin of Rouletted ware, many scholars believe that it evolved in India.<sup>20</sup>

Knobbed wares with a conical knob in the center circumscribed by a series of concentric grooves or incisions occurred in various materials such as earthenware, bronze, stone, and silver in Thailand. Earthen knobbed wares are found at Tham Sua, Khao Sam Kaeo, and a few other sites, and bronze knobbed wares are found at Ban Don Ta Phet, Khao Sam Kaeo, Kok Khon, Ban Chiang, Ban Nadi, Huai Pan near Chombung, Pak Beung, and Khao Kwark Cave. The concept of knobbed ware probably might have derived from India.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Shahnaj Husne Jahan, “Maritime Trade between Thailand and Bengal,” *Journal of Fine Arts* (Chiang Mai University, Thailand) vol. 3, no. 2 (2012): 205–228.

<sup>18</sup> Phaedra Bouvet, “Preliminary Study of Indian and Indian Style Wares from Khao Sam Kaeo (Chumphon, Peninsular Thailand), Fourth–Second Centuries BCE,” in *Early Interactions Between South and Southeast Asia*, eds. Pierre-Yves Manguin, A. Mani, and Geoff Wade (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011), 47–82.

<sup>19</sup> Jahan, “Maritime Trade,” 211–212; Aude Favereau and Berenice Bellina, “Late Prehistoric Ports in the Thai-Malay Peninsula: Mapping Regional and Long-Distance Connections through Pottery,” in *Archaeological Sites on the Maritime Silk Road*, ed. John N. Miksic (Singapore: National University of Singapore (in press), submitted on 13 Dec 2020), hal-03060081 <https://hal.science/hal-03060081>; Bennet Bronson, *Excavations at Chansen and the Cultural Chronology of Prehistoric Central Thailand* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1976), 113–120, 358–360, 532, and 687; Bouvet, “Preliminary Study.”

<sup>20</sup> Vishwas D. Gogte, “The Chandraketugarh-Tamluk Region of Bengal: Source of the Early Historic Rouletted Ware from India and Southeast Asia,” *Man and Environment* 22, no. 1 (1997): 70–85; Vimala Begley, “Rouletted Ware at Arikamedu: A New Approach,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 92, no. 3 (1988): 427–440; Shahnaj Husne Jahan, “Rouletted Ware Links South and Southeast Asia through Maritime Trade,” *SPAFA Journal (Old Series 1991-2013)* vol. 20, no. 3 (2010): 5–15.

<sup>21</sup> Jahan, “Maritime Trade,” 213–214; Ian C. Glover, “The Southern Silk Road: Archaeological Evidence for Early Trade between India and Southeast Asia,” in *Ancient Trades and Cultural Contacts in Southeast Asia*, edited by



Black and Red Ware, a typical pottery of the Iron Age–Early Historic Period of South India, is also found at Khao Sam Kaeo in Thailand. The shape and the firing process of the Black and Red Ware pottery found at Khao Sam Kaeo is similar to that of the Black and Red Ware pottery found in India.<sup>22</sup> The Black and Red jars found at Khao Sam Kaeo, Khao Sek, and Tha Chana in Thailand were also perhaps produced using Indian technology and style.<sup>23</sup>

Additionally, sherds with a band of rosettes from Phra Pratom in Central Thailand strongly resemble the example excavated in Kondapur in Andhra Pradesh, India.<sup>24</sup> Although the stamped or molded ceramics found in Thailand were produced locally, they reflect the influence of Indian technique and style.<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, many sherds of Thai celadon, probably produced from the Si-Sachanarai kilns in northern Thailand, were found in Kottapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India.<sup>26</sup> A good number of painted Thai ironware, also perhaps from the Si-sachanarai kilns were found at Kottapatnam. Large glazed and unglazed jars from Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries have been found in Kottapatnam and a few other sites in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.<sup>27</sup>

## Glass Beads

The glass beads were usually found in the excavation of ancient sites in South and Southeast Asia from the first millennium BCE onwards. The earliest occurrence of true glass in the Indian sub-continent is reported in the Painted Grey Ware culture (PGW) of north India dating to about 1000 BCE. After that, glass products, mainly beads and bangles, were reported in many parts of the sub-continent.<sup>28</sup> Beads that were drawn into long hollow tubes

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Amara Srisuchat (Bangkok: The Office of the National Culture Commission, 1996), 79.

<sup>22</sup> Phaedra Bouvet, “Rotative Kinetic Energy-Produced Pottery,” in *Khao Sam Kaeo, An Early Industrial Port City between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea (Mémoires Archéologiques 28)*, ed. Berenice Bellina (Paris: Ecole Française d’Extrême Orient, 2017), 345–72; Favereau and Bellina, “Late Prehistoric Ports.”

<sup>23</sup> Favereau and Bellina, “Late Prehistoric Ports.”

<sup>24</sup> Berenice Bellina and Ian C. Glover, “The Archaeology of Early Contacts with India and the Mediterranean World from the Fourth Century BC to the Fourth Century AD,” in *Southeast Asia, from the Prehistory to History*, eds. Ian C. Glover and P. Bellwood (London: Routledge/Curzon Press, 2004), 82.

<sup>25</sup> Bellina and Glover, “The Archaeology of Early Contacts,” 82.

<sup>26</sup> K. P. Rao, “Early Trade and Contacts between South India and Southeast Asia (300 BC–AD 200),” in *Proceedings Volume of the XVth International Conference on South Asian Archaeology*, ed. E. M. Raven (Leiden: Leiden University, 1999), 353–61; K.P. Rao, “Kottapatnam: A South Indian Port Trading with Eastern Lands,” in *Ancient and Medieval Commercial Activities in the Indian Ocean: Testimony of Inscriptions and Ceramic Sherds—Report of the Taisho University Research Project 1997–2000*, ed. Noboru Karashima (Tokyo: Taisho University, 2002), 125–33.

<sup>27</sup> H. Sasaki, “Chinese and Thai Ceramics in Kottapatnam,” in *Ancient and Medieval Commercial Activities in the Indian Ocean: Testimony of Inscriptions and Ceramic Sherds—Report of the Taisho University Research Project 1997–2000*, ed. Noboru Karashima (Tokyo: Taisho University, 2002), 134–144.

<sup>28</sup> Ian C. Glover and J. Henderson, “Early Glass in South and Southeast Asia and China,” in *China and Southeast Asia—Art, Commerce, and Interaction*, eds. R. Scott and John Guy (London: Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, 1995), 141–69.

and then cut into sections to be annealed are referred to as “Indo-Pacific monochrome glass beads” or “Indo-Pacific beads.” They were manufactured mainly in south India at least from the 4th–3rd century BCE onwards. They were widely traded to Africa, Japan, and Korea as well as to Southeast Asia. The production was dominated by small opaque monochrome red beads, often known as *mutisalah* (false pearls).<sup>29</sup> In Thailand, glass beads are found in many Iron Age sites such as Ban Don Ta Phet, Khlong Thom, Takua Pa, Khuan Lukpad or Khlong Thom, Phu Khao Thong, Bang Kluai Nok, Tha Kae, Ban Chiang, Prasat Muang Sing, Kok Ra Ka, Ban Bon Noen, Khao Sam Kaeo, and others.<sup>30</sup> Probably, these beads were either imported from India or produced in Thailand using Indian technology or by involving Indian artisans who settled in Thailand.<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, the analysis of glass found in the graves of the 1st–2nd century CE in Korea has also revealed that they are probably of Indian origin or produced based on Indian methods.<sup>32</sup> It seems glass ingots and finished glass products were prominent products of export from India to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia at an early period. Glass ingots retrieved from a shipwreck that happened between the 2nd century BCE to the 2nd century CE off the southern coast of Sri Lanka near Godawaya (Godavaya) reveal the maritime trading of glass ingots between South India and Sri Lanka.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Francis Jr., Peter, *Asia's Maritime Bead Trade: 300 BC to the Present* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), Part 2; Bellina and Glover, “The Archaeology of Early Contacts,” 74–75.

<sup>30</sup> Fiorella Rispoli, Roberto Ciarla, and Vincent C. Pigott, “Establishing the Prehistoric Cultural Sequence for the Lopburi Region, Central Thailand,” *Journal of World Prehistory* 26, no. 2 (2013): 150.

<sup>31</sup> Bellina and Glover, “The Archaeology of Early Contacts,” 78; Berenice Bellina and P. Silapanth, “Khao Sam Kaeo and the Upper Thai Peninsula: Understanding the Mechanism of Early Trans-Asiatic Trade and Cultural Exchange,” in *Uncovering Southeast Asia's Past, Selected papers from the Tenth Biennial Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists, London, 14–17 September 2004*, eds. E.A. Bacus, Ian C. Glover, and V.C. Pigott (Singapore: National University Press, 2006), 379–92; Ian C. Glover and Berenice Bellina, “Ban Don Ta Phet and Khao Sam Kaeo: The Earliest Indian Contacts Re-Assessed,” in *Early Interactions between South and Southeast Asia—Reflections on Cross-Cultural Exchange*, eds. by Pierre -Yves Manguin, A. Mani, and Geoff Wade (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2011), 41; Bhaswati Mukhopadhyay, “Connectivity between India and Siam: As Evident by Archaeological Sources (From the Late Pre-Christian Era to Sixth Century CE),” *International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS)* vol. 2, no. 3 (2015): 209–210; James W. Lankton, “Early Glass and the Development of the Maritime Silk Road,” in *The Maritime Silk Road—Global Connectivities, Regional Nodes, Localities*, eds. Franck Bille, Sanjyot Mehendale, and James W. Lankton (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022), 74, 80, 82, 84, 85, and 89; Laure Dussubieux, James W. Lankton, Bérénice Bellina-Pryce, and Boonyarit Chaisuwan. “Early Glass Trade in South and Southeast Asia: New Insights from Two Coastal Sites, Phu Khao Thong in Thailand and Arikamedu in South India,” in *Crossing Borders: Selected Papers from the 13th International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists*, vol. 1, eds. Mai Lin Tjor-Bonatz, Andreas Reinecke, and Dominik Bonatz (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2012), 307–328.

<sup>32</sup> Lankton, “Early Glass,” 86 and 89.

<sup>33</sup> Osmund Boppearachchi, Senarath Disanayaka, and Nimal Perera, “The Oldest Shipwreck in the Indian Ocean,” In *Ports of the Ancient Indian Ocean*, eds. Marie-Françoise Boussac, Jean-François Salles, and Jean-Baptiste Yon (Delhi: Primus Books, 2016), 411–428; Lankton, “Early Glass,” 78–79; Shinu Anna Abraham, “Glass Beads and Glass Production in Early South India: Contextualizing Indo-Pacific Bead Manufacture,” *Archaeological Research in Asia* 6 (2016): 4–15.

## Pendants

Small lion or tiger or *triratna* or *makara*-shaped pendants made of carnelian and rock crystal are found at Ban Don Ta Phet, Phu Khao Thong, Ban Phu Khao, Ban U Taphao, Khao Sam Kaeo, Khuan Luk Pad, Tha Chana, and Chansen in Thailand.<sup>34</sup> These pendants have been closely correlated with Indian ones and are also evidence of Indian technology adapted to a regional style. Moreover, they have some symbolic functions in early Indian traditions.

## Intaglios, Seals, and Sealings

Notwithstanding, there are many Roman intaglios and gems found in the Isthmus of Kra region, a few of them seem to not have been imported from the Mediterranean region but were produced either locally or in the Indian subcontinent. An agate seal with Heracles found at Phu Khao Thong in the Isthmus of Kra region demonstrates the workmanship of the Kushan period. It is well comparable with the figures in the coins of the Kushan period dated to the 1st century CE.<sup>35</sup> It probably arrived from India to the Isthmus of Kra region through maritime trade. It seems more likely that the objects of Mediterranean origin of an early period would have reached Siam by intermediary trade along the maritime routes via India.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, many intaglios with Indian motifs or symbols of Buddhist or Hindu religion have also been found in Thailand. One of the intaglios from the 7th–8th century CE found at Khok Thong has the depiction of a bull with a crescent moon above.<sup>37</sup> The inspiration for the depiction certainly came from South India. An intaglio with an engraving of a lion, elephant, and an unidentified figurine of a goddess or woman found at Khuan Luk Pad (Khlong Thom), Thailand also shows Indian influence or could have been imported from India.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Boonyarit Chaisuwan, “Early Contacts between India and the Andaman Coast in Thailand from the 2nd Century BC to 11th Century AD,” in *Maritime Contacts of the Past Deciphering Connections amongst Communities*, ed. Sila Tripathi (New Delhi: Delta Book World, 2015), 124–142.

<sup>35</sup> Brigitte Borell, “Herakles on an Intaglio Seal Found at Phu Khao Thong in the Upper Thai-Malay Peninsula,” *Zeitschrift für Archäologie Außereuropäischer Kulturen*, Band 7 (2017): 59–82.

<sup>36</sup> Brigitte Borell, Berenice Bellina, and Boonyarit Chaisuwan, “Contacts between the Upper Thai-Malay Peninsula and the Mediterranean World,” in *Before Siam: Essays in Art and Archaeology*, eds. N. Revire and S. Murphy (Bangkok: River Books, 2014), 98–117.

<sup>37</sup> Siriporn Sanghiran, “Archaeological Sites and Findings on the Lower Peninsula of Thailand from the Seventh to Thirteenth Century Reflecting the Maritime Silk Road,” in *Ancient Maritime Cross-Cultural Exchanges Archaeological Researches in Thailand*, eds. Amara Srisuchat and Wilfried Giessler (Bangkok: The Fine Arts Department, Ministry of Culture, 2019), 54–77.

<sup>38</sup> Bennet Bronson, “Glass Beads at Khuan Lukpad, Southern Thailand,” in *Southeast Asian Archaeology 1986*, eds. Ian C. Glover and Emily Glover (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, International Series 561, 1990), 213–230; Glover, *Early Trade*, 6–8; Ian C. Glover “Recent Archaeological Evidence for Early Maritime Contacts between India and Southeast Asia,” in *Tradition and Archaeology: Early Maritime Contacts in the Indian Ocean*, eds. Himanshu Prabha Ray and Jean-Francois Salles (New Delhi: Manohar publishers, 1996), 135.



Furthermore, a ring-stone decorated with many auspicious symbols, floral designs, animals, and birds found in the Tha Tapao River valley near Khao Sam Kaeo and presently with the Suthi Ratana Foundation exhibits the exact resemblance of the ring stones of the Maurya-Sunga periods in India.<sup>39</sup> A gold earring found in Khmao Yee, Myanmar is much akin to the earrings depicted in the sculptures of the Suṅga-Sātavāhana period in India.<sup>40</sup> The gold *triratna* symbols found in many early Phu sites in Myanmar and from the coastal sites of the Thai peninsula also exhibit Indian influence.

### Inscribed Seals

The discovery of a large amount of pottery, coins, and seals with *Brāhmī* inscription of Indian origin found in the Isthmus of Kra region, indicates the active maritime trade link between India and this region from the 3rd–2nd century BCE to the 2nd century CE or later. The seals inscribed with *Brāhmī* and *Kharosthi* scripts have been discovered from Lopburi Province in Central Thailand to Krabi Province in Southern Thailand.<sup>41</sup> The notable sites in Southeast Asia yielding the *Brāhmī-Kharosthi* inscribed seals are Khuan Lukpad, Phu Khao Thong, Khao Sam Kaeo, Kuala Selinsing, Chaiya, and OC Eo.

In addition, a carnelian seal inscribed with *Brāhmī* characters from the 2nd–4th century CE was found at Khao Sam Kaeo.<sup>42</sup> Another carnelian seal engraved in *Brāhmī* characters from the 2nd–3rd century CE was also found at Khuan Luk Pat. The inscription says “*rujjo*.”<sup>43</sup> A rectangular bead with inscriptions in *Brāhmī* letters over it was also found at Khao Sam Kaeo. On one side of the bead the *Brāhmī* letter “*śa*” is written, straight as well as upside down with a symbol in between them. The other side of the bead also has *Brāhmī*-like script with symbols. One of the seals in glass found at Bang Kluai Nok with a small inscription belongs to the 6th–7th century CE. The inscription reads “*taa tu gha (ja)*.” There are many armlets, beads, and seals found at Klongtom with inscriptions in *Brāhmī* letters.<sup>44</sup> One of them can be read as “*pa taa ra gha*.” The other one found in the same place reads “*bha mma dhi na sa*.” All these scripts are datable to the 1st century–3/4th century CE. The meaning of the words is not clear, perhaps, these may refer to some proper names.

<sup>39</sup> Anna Bennet, “Suvarnabhumi Land of Gold,” in *Suvarnabhumi: The Golden Land*, eds. Bunchar Pongpanich and Somchet Thinapong (Bangkok: GISTDA and BIA, 2019), 95–105; S. P. Gupta, *The Roots of Indian Art: A Detailed Study of the Formative Period of Indian Art and Architecture: Third and Second Centuries B.C.–Mauryan and Late Mauryan* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1980), 75–80.

<sup>40</sup> Bennet, “Suvarnabhumi Land of Gold,” 81–94.

<sup>41</sup> Jahan, “Maritime Trade,” 219–220.

<sup>42</sup> Himanshu Prabha Ray, *The Winds of Change: Buddhism and the Maritime Links of Early South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 107.

<sup>43</sup> Ray, *The Winds of Change*, 105.

<sup>44</sup> Bunchar Pongpanich, *Beyond Beads* (Bangkok: Matichon Publishing House, 2009), 80, 100, and 147.

## Inscribed Goldsmith's Touchstone

Interestingly, a goldsmith's touchstone with Tamil-*Brāhmī* inscription dated to the 3rd century CE found at Khuan Luk Pat (bead mound), also called Klong Thom, provides reliable proof that Indian merchants and goldsmiths were traveling to Thailand in search of gold. It is presently kept in Thom Phra Kru Athan Sankarakit Museum, Krabi. The Tamil-*Brāhmī* inscription engraved on the touchstone reads “*Perumpataṅ kal*” (the (touch) stone of Perumpataṅ).<sup>45</sup> Indian merchants were not only sourcing gold but also were involved in the production of gold ornaments for trading. Khuan Luk Pat, located along a tidal stream on the west coast of Thailand has yielded many indigenous and foreign coins, pendants, intaglios, stone and glass beads, and pottery dating from the 3rd to 6th century CE.<sup>46</sup>

## Inscribed Pottery

Apart from Khuan Luk Pat, Phu Khao Thong on the western coast of the peninsula and Khao Sam Kaeo on the east were also early entrepôts on the peninsula engaged in busy maritime trade. One pot-sherd of Rouletted ware found at Phu Khao Thong is also engraved with a Tamil-*Brāhmī* character of the 2nd–3rd century CE.<sup>47</sup> The pottery was broken and therefore the inscription on it could not be made out fully. The broken piece of pottery retains only three letters, which has been read as “*tu ra vō*.” Another small fragment of Rouletted ware found at Phu Khao Thong retains a *Brāhmī* letter “*pu*” followed by a ᳚ symbol. A similar type of symbol is reported in many sites in India, particularly from the Iron Age–Early Historic sites in Tamil Nadu. Khao Sam Kaeo has also yielded a large amount of pottery fragments, seals, and beads of Indian origin. An ivory comb with *Swastika* motif dated to the 2nd–3rd century CE found at Chansen, Thailand might have probably been exported from India.<sup>48</sup>

## The Gold Plaque at Bang Kluai Nok

A gold plaque found at Bang Kluai Nok has *Brāhmī* inscriptions written in a circle all along the margin within a beaded border. A symbol that looks like a kettledrum with a stroke in the

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<sup>45</sup> P. Shanmugam, “An Early Tamil Brahmi Inscription from Thailand,” *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India* 22 (1996): 100–03; Noboru Karashima, “Tamil Inscriptions in Southeast Asia and China,” in *Ancient and Medieval Commercial Activities in the Indian Ocean: Testimony of Inscriptions and Ceramic Sherds—Report of the Taisho University Research Project 1997–2000*, ed. Noboru Karashima (Tokyo: Taisho University, 2002), 10–18.

<sup>46</sup> Bronson, “Glass Beads,” 213–214; Brigitte Borell, “Gold Coins from Klong Thom,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 105 (2017): 151–77.

<sup>47</sup> Iravatam Mahadevan, “Thailantil Tamil-Brahmi Poritta Panai Otu” [Potsherd with Tamil-Brahmi Script from Thailand], *Avanam, itai* 17 (2006): 12–13.

<sup>48</sup> Benudhar Patra, “Kalinga and Siam: A Study in Ancient Relations,” *Odisha Review* 73, no. 9 (2017): 23.

middle is found at the center. On the reverse side of the plaque, two elongated blocks are fixed with a broad groove in the middle. The inscription reads, “*nāvikasa brahaspati Sarmasa*.” On palaeographical ground, this inscription may be assigned to the 2nd–3rd century CE. Interestingly, the looped form of “*ti*” is peculiar to southern *Brāhmī* found in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. It seems the plaque belonged to a shipman (*nāvika*) named Brahaspati Sarma, who most probably belonged to South India.<sup>49</sup> In fact, the title *Sarma* is found in many South Indian inscriptions. It is interesting to mention here that a stone slab noticed by Captain James Low near the ruins of an old Buddhist temple in the northern district of Wellesley Province, Malaysia in 1834 and presently kept in the Indian Museum, Kolkata also refers to *mahānāvika*. The inscription in *Brāhmī* characters dated to the 5th century CE reads “*mahānāvika Buddhagupta*.”<sup>50</sup>

The kettledrum-like symbol  $\overline{\text{X}}$  found in the center of the gold plaque of Bang Kluai Nok is quite interesting. A similar symbol is also depicted in the seal found at Phukhao Thong, Thailand. In the Phukhao Thong example, the symbol is found above a standing tiger with one of its front paws raised. The triangle-headed standard  $\nabla$ , which is slightly dissimilar to that of the kettledrum-like symbol, is found on the bull-type and elephant-type coins of the Sātavāhana rulers found at Nevasa, Sannati, and many other places in India. It may be considered a royal insignia of the Sātavāhana rulers. In an elephant-type coin of a Sātavāhana ruler found at Nevasa, the symbol is depicted prominently in front of the animal with an upraised trunk as if paying obeisance.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, an almost similar type of symbol is found in the elephant-type coin of the *Saṅgam* period.<sup>52</sup> The symbol is found in the *Saṅgam* coins along with other symbols, such as a triangular geometric design, *Srivatsa*, tree-in-railing, etc.

## Coins

The occurrence of many coins of Indian origin in Thailand demonstrates the trans-oceanic trade network between India and Siam from the pre-Common Era onwards. One coin supposed to be of the *Saṅgam* period (2nd century BCE–2nd century CE) was found at Khuan Luk Pat. It has a horse-drawn chariot with an elephant following it on one side and the royal emblem of the *Saṅgam* Cōlas, namely the image of a tiger, on the other side. The coin has no legend on it.<sup>53</sup> Two copper coins of the Kushan ruler Vasudeva I (c. 190–227

<sup>49</sup> Pongpanich, *Beyond Beads*, 174; D. Dayalan, “Plaque of South Indian Shipman in Thailand,” in *Pura-Jagat-Indian Archaeology, History, and Culture (Latest Researches) in Honour of Late Shri Jagat Pati Joshi*, eds. C. Margabandhu, A. K. Sharma, B. R. Mani, and G. S. Khwaja (Delhi: Bharatiya Kala Prakashan, 2012), 535–538.

<sup>50</sup> B. Ch. Chhabra, *Expansion of Indo-Aryan Culture* (Delhi: Munshiram Manohar Lal, 1965), 20–26.

<sup>51</sup> I.K. Sarma, “Lead Coins of King Satavahana from Sannati,” in *Studies in South Indian Coins*, vol. 3, ed. A. V. Narasimha Murthy (Madras: New Era Publications, 1993), 65–72.

<sup>52</sup> R. Krishnamurthy, *Saṅgam Age Tamil Coins* (Madras: Garnet Publications, 1997), 80, coin nos. 121 & 122.

<sup>53</sup> P. Shanmugam, “Two Coins of Tamil Origin from Thailand,” *Studies in South Indian Coins*, Vol. 4, ed. A. V. Narasimha Murthy (Madras: New Era Publications, 1994), 97–99; P. Shanmugam, “South Indian Cultural Links with Indonesia,” in *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia*, eds.

CE) were also found at Bang Kluai Nok. The coins have the Kushan God Oesho on one side and Śiva with a bull on the other side.<sup>54</sup> Three Sātavāhana copper-alloy coins with a double-masted ship on one side and a humped bull on the other have been found at Khlong Thom (Khuan Luk Pad) in Krabi Province. One coin is in the local museum and the other two are with the SuthiRatana Foundation.<sup>55</sup> A baked clay impression of an Indian seal datable to the 4th–5th century CE depicting a ship with stitched plank construction, a single mast, lantern sail, and lateral stern rudder has been found in Nakhon Pathom and presently is kept in the National Museum, Bangkok.<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, the clay seal impression depicting a boat dated to the 4th–5th century CE, also found at Chandrakhetugarh, the ancient seaport of India, exhibits the nature of ships during that period.<sup>57</sup> The excavations at Khuan Luk Pat have yielded a copper coin of the Pallava period, which ruled the northern part of Tamil Nadu from the 3rd–4th century CE to the 9th century CE, with the depiction of a double masted ship on one side and a bull with the insignia of the Pallavason the other side.<sup>58</sup> Fascinatingly, many of the ancient coins found in Thailand have motifs of Indian affinities, such as Śrīvatsa, Conch (*San̄kha*), Rising Sun, Bull, and so on.<sup>59</sup>

## Textile

The influence of Indian textile technology and costumes is conspicuous in Southeast Asian countries.<sup>60</sup> The remains of cotton (*Gossypium Sp.*) from the Iron Age site (400 BCE) of Ban Don Ta Phet, Thailand obviously indicate the contact between India and Thailand during

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Hermann Kulke, K. Kesavapany, and Vijay Sakhuja (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), 209–210.

<sup>54</sup> Bunchar Pongpanich, “Lakthan borannakhadi chin noi thi at kiao kap roi raek phra phutthasasana nai phuen thi phak tai khong thai” [Some Possible Archaeological Evidence Related to Buddhism in Southern Thailand], in *Pathommat Phra Phutthasasana nai phak tai prathet thai: lak tham lae lakthan borannakhadi* [Beginnings of Buddhism in Southern Thailand: Principles of Damma and Archaeological Evidence], eds. P. Phumaton, P. Singban, and B. Phongphanit (Nakhon Si Thammarat: Nakhon Si Thammarat Ratchaphat University Press, 2014), 109–111; Borell, “Herakles,” 75–77.

<sup>55</sup> Phasook Indrawooth, “The Archaeology of the Early Buddhist Kingdoms of Thailand,” in *Southeast Asia: From Prehistory to History*, eds. I. C. Glover and P. Bellwood (London: Routledge/Curzon, 2004), 120–148.

<sup>56</sup> Pierre Baptiste and Thierry Zéphir, eds., *Dvavarati: aux sources du Bouddhisme en Thaïlande, Exhibition catalogue* [Dvavarati: Sources of Buddhism in Thailand, exhibition catalog (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux and Musée Guimet, 2009), 54; John Guy, “Catalogue: Indian Imports,” in *Lost Kingdoms: Hindu Buddhist Sculpture of Early Southeast Asia*, ed. by John Guy (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014), 32, no. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Ray, *The Winds of Change*, plate 17.

<sup>58</sup> Shanmugam, “Two Coins,” 97–99; Shanmugam, “South Indian Cultural Links,” 209–210.

<sup>59</sup> Pamela Gutman, “The Ancient Coinage of Southeast Asia,” *The Journal of the Siam Society* 66, no. 1 (1978): 8–21; Robert S. Wicks, “The Ancient Coinage of Mainland Southeast Asia,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 16, no. 2 (1985): 195–225.

<sup>60</sup> Judith Anne Cameron, “Textile Technology in the Prehistory of Southeast Asia,” vol. 1 (PhD diss., The Australian National University, Canberra, 2002).

that period.<sup>61</sup> In fact, Indian textiles were a dominant export product due to the plentiful production of cotton, the adoption of advanced dyeing and designing technology, and skilled manpower. The textiles imported to Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries from India include the double-*ikat* silk *patola* and block-printed cotton textiles, because of their status and ritual significance.

There is substantial evidence that textiles produced in Southeast Asia had Indian influence in their designs, motifs, materials, and methods of production. One of the techniques common in both Indian and Southeast Asian textiles is *ikat*. It is the tying process of the warp or weft yarns before dyeing to create a pattern. Some scholars' opinions that the weft *ikat* technique (resist-dyeing for the weft yarns) with Indian designs was introduced into some Southeast Asian countries during the Indianization period.<sup>62</sup> Even though silk was perhaps introduced to Southeast Asia from China, it is referred to by a name derived from Sanskrit, i.e. *Sutera* (in Malay). Probably, the introduction of silk in the Srivijaya kingdom that flourished between the 7th and the 13th centuries CE was influenced by Indian custom.<sup>63</sup>

## Afterword

India and Siam have enjoyed a deep-rooted and mutually enriching interaction for more than two millennia. This close relationship understandably resulted not only in an adaptation of Indian culture and tradition to suit the Siamese milieu but the formation of many Indianized kingdoms in Siam.

## Funan Kingdom

The Funan kingdom (1st–6th century CE), which comprises present-day Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam,<sup>64</sup> controlled strategic land and coastal trade routes in Southeast Asia and thus occupied a prominent position in the trade route of the Indian Ocean trade network and China from the 1st century CE to the 6th century. The spread of Indian philosophical, religious, and political influence during the early years of the first millennium CE in Southeast Asian countries paved the way for a busy trade link between India and those countries. The trade contacts with various countries like India, the Roman Empire, and Persia are revealed

<sup>61</sup> Ian C. Glover, "Ban Don Ta Phet: The 1984–85 Excavation," in *Southeast Asian Archaeology 1986, Proceedings of the First Conference of the Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists in Western Europe*, BAR International Series 561, eds. Ian C. Glover and Emily Glover (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1990), 139–183.

<sup>62</sup> Fiona Kerlogue, "Textiles of Jambi (Sumatra) and the Indian Ocean Trade," in *Textiles in Indian Ocean Societies*, ed. Ruth Barnes (New York: Routledge, Curzon Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 130–131.

<sup>63</sup> Kerlogue, "Textiles of Jambi," 130.

<sup>64</sup> Pierre-Yves Manguin, "The Archaeology of Fu Nan in the Mekong River Delta: The Oc Eo Culture of Viet Nam," in *Arts of Ancient Viet Nam: From River Plain to Open Sea*, eds. Nancy Tingley and Andreas Reinecke (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2009), 100–118.



by the occurrence of Indian, Roman, Persian, and Chinese coins, pottery, and other artifacts from various sites in the Funan kingdom. In the area of Óc Eo and the Ba The mountain, two coins of the Kushan period, one of Wima Kadphises (c. 113–127 CE) and the other of Kanishka I (c. 127–150 CE) were found. An ivory comb from the 3rd–4th century CE with auspicious symbols and a terracotta Gajalakshmi found in the excavations at Chansen are positively imported from south India.<sup>65</sup>

According to a legend, a lineage from an Indian Brahmin priest or prince named Preah Thaong in Khmer, Kaundinya in Sanskrit, and Hun-t'ien in Chinese records, and a local princess established the Kingdom of Funan. Due to prolonged socio-economic interaction with India, the Hindu religion, Indian political thought, language and literature, mythology, and artistic motifs gradually became integral elements in the Funan kingdom. The court ceremony and the structure of political institutions were based on Indian models. The Sanskrit language was widely used, and an alphabet based on Indian writing systems was introduced. The laws of *Manu*, the Indian legal code, were adopted. The Chinese mission that visited the Funan kingdom in the 3rd century CE mentioned Funan as a distinct Hindu culture. The Funan empire promoted cross-cultural trade, mainly with Chinese and Indian merchants. The religions and spiritual practices of the Funan region were mixed with animism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

## Oc Eo

Óc Eo, located in southern Vietnam close to the coast of the Gulf of Thailand and almost opposite to Khao Sam Kaeo across the Gulf, was a notable port town of the Funan kingdom. Oc Eo was probably mentioned as Kattigara by Alexandrian geographer Claudius Ptolemy. It seems that the name “Kattigara” is probably derived from the Sanskrit term *Kirti-nagara* (Renowned City) or *Kotti-nagara* (Strong City).

## Takua Pa

Takua Pa, in the Isthmus of Kra, considered to be the ancient Takkola, was another important trade center mentioned by Ptolemy that has yielded lots of archaeological materials from an early period. A Tamil inscription of the 9th century was found in a hill along the Takua Pa River (Khao Phra Narai) along with many stone sculptures of Hindu gods and goddesses and is presently kept in the Nakhon Si Thammarat museum.<sup>66</sup> This inscription at Takua Pa

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<sup>65</sup> John Guy, “Tamil Merchants and the Hindu-Buddhist Diaspora in Early Southeast Asia,” in *Early Interactions between South and Southeast Asia: Reflections on Cross-Cultural Exchange*, eds. Pierre-Yves Manguin, A. Mani, and G. Wade (Singapore: ISEAS, 2011), 243–245.

<sup>66</sup> Captain Boonyarit Chaisuwat and Rarai Naiyawat, *Thung Tuk: A Settlement Linking Together the Maritime Silk Route* (Songkhla: Phang-nga Province and the Fine Arts Department, 2009), 10–26.

seems to record that a tank was constructed by somebody and put under the protection of *Manikkiramattar*, *Senamugattar*, and another similar body.<sup>67</sup> *Manigramam* is a famous merchant guild, which flourished in Tamil Nadu and Kerala from the 9th to 14th century CE. This inscription is clear proof of the activities of Tamil merchants in Southeast Asia. Another Tamil inscription from Nakhon Si Thammarat in Thailand is presently kept in the Buddhist temple Wat Boroma That. The date of the inscription is either 1183 or 1283. Although the inscription does not mention any king's name, it records that one Danma Senapati made a grant to the Brāhmanas in three shares.<sup>68</sup>

### Kingdom of Chenla or Isānapura

The Kingdom of Chenla or Isānapura (6th–8th century CE), which includes the north-eastern part of Thailand also was dominated by Hinduism. The kings of Chenla generally had the name of the Hindu deity with a Sanskrit suffix “*Varman*” such as Bhavavarman, Isanavarman, and so on. Interestingly, the Pallava rulers of South India also had the suffix “*Varman*” in their names.<sup>69</sup> The Chenlas, who succeeded the Funan kingdom, generally preserved the earlier political, social, and religious institutions of Funan, thus preserving the elements introduced from India. The Khmer script, which developed fully during this period, had a strong influence from the Pallava *Grantha* script of South India. Many of the words in the Khmer language originated from the ancient Indian Sanskrit language. Finally, Isanavarman-I (616–637 CE) built many temples of Indian style, including the main temple Prasat Sambor, in his capital Isanapura.

### Dvāravatī Kingdom

Śyāma, the original name of Thailand, was the cradle of many ancient kingdoms. Dvāravatī (c. 7th–11th century CE) was one of the early and prominent kingdoms of Śyāma, which comprised the central, north-eastern, and eastern parts of Thailand and belonged to the Mons. Its capital was Nakhon Pathom. Some historians believe that the Mons were descendants of immigrants from southern Orissa and northern Andhra Pradesh of India. Even though the Dvāravatī kings patronized Buddhism, they took up Hindu religions' customs and concepts. They also performed Vedic rites such as *Rājasuya*. They introduced the Indian concept of state

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<sup>67</sup> E. Hultzsch, “Note on a Tamil Inscription in Siam,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1913): 337–39; K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, “The Takua-pa (Siam) Tamil Inscription,” *Journal of Oriental Research* 6 (1932): 299–310; K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, “Takuapa and Its Tamil Inscription,” *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 22 (1949): 25–30.

<sup>68</sup> Karashima, “Tamil Inscriptions,” 10–18.

<sup>69</sup> Guy, “Tamil Merchants,” 243–262.

and kingship to the Dvāravatī monarchy.<sup>70</sup> Carved stone tablets of a ritualistic nature depicting a series of royal insignia were discovered in Nakhon Pathom, Chainat, and other provinces. The monuments and sculptures of the Dvāravatī are found at U Thong, Nakhon Pathom, Chansen, Ban Khu Mueang, Tambon Phra Praton, Tha Kae, Non-Pa Wai, Dong Khon, Si Mahosot, Ku Bua, Mueang U-Ta Pao, Bueng Khok Chang, Kancanaburi, Thap Chumphon, and many other places. These monuments and sculptures reveal that both Buddhism and Hinduism were patronized in Siam during the Dvāravatī period.<sup>71</sup> The influence of Indian art and architectural styles is conspicuous in Dvāravatī monuments and sculptures. In fact, Dvāravatī art and architecture have evolved as a distinctive style amalgamating Indian and indigenous traditions. There are many sculptures of Hindu and Buddhist gods and goddesses found at various sites in Thailand, viz. Phukhao Thong, Khao San Kae, Klongton, Khao Wiang, Khao Phra Narai, Khao Phra Noe, Thung Tuk, Chaiya, Khao Sri Vichai, Khuan Pun Pin, Muang Thong, and a few other sites. Many of the sculptures exhibit an unmistakable affinity with Indian sculptures.

### Khmer Empire

The Khmer Empire (9th–15th century CE), which comprises the present Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, had extensive trade interactions with Western and Eastern countries. In the beginning, they followed Hinduism and, after that, shifted to Buddhism. Khmer art and architecture exhibit a fusion of local and Indian traditions. The basic themes are from Indian mythology and epics, mainly *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata*. Ayutthaya, which emerged in the medieval period, derived its name from Ayodhya, the birthplace of Rama, the hero of *Rāmāyana*. Khmer kings also took titles similar to those of Indian rulers, viz. *Varman*. Many Hindu and Buddhist temples were constructed following the Indian tradition in Thailand during the Khmer period. Notable among them are found at Phanom Rung, Prasat Phimai, Prang Sam Yot, Prasat Sikhoraphum, Prasat Muang Tam, Mueang Sing, Sdok Kok Thom, and other places. The Sukhothai kingdom and the Ayutthaya kingdom of Siam also inherited the Indian-influenced religion, tradition, and culture from the earlier dynasties that ruled in Siam.

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas J. Hopkins, *The Hindu Religious Tradition* (Belmont, California: Dickenson Publishing Co., 1971), 92–101; Dhida Saraya, *(Sri) Dvaravati: The Initial Phase of Siam's History* (Bangkok: Muang Boron Publishing House, 1999), 208–213.

<sup>71</sup> Phasook Indrawooth, “Dvaravati: Early Buddhist Kingdom in Central Thailand,” in *Indo-Thai Historical and Cultural Linkages*, eds. Neeru Misra and Sachchidanand Sahi (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2007), 37–64.

## Conclusion

Although sources of information are occasionally scanty, the above narrative convincingly argues that there were continued cultural and trade interactions between India and Siam from prehistoric times. Our endeavour has been to trace the deep-rooted cultural, religious, and maritime trade relations between India and Siam to encourage further intensive studies based on additional exploration and excavation. As it stands, the Indian impression is evident in Thai religion, culture, art and architecture, tradition, mythology, script, language, place names, and more. Thai people retain a strong influence from Indian rituals, idolatry, and mythology and thus many of their rituals show a resemblance to Indian rituals and traditions.

Finally, India and Thailand, bordering the Andaman Sea, played a vital role in the maritime trade network between Eastern and Western countries. The Thai-Malay Peninsula lies at the heart of Southeast Asia and serves as the crossroads between maritime networks from the east and west, connecting in the middle with a land crossing to avoid circumnavigation. Thus, India and Thailand, both situated in a strategic position on the Maritime Silk Road, served as crucial maritime trade hubs, linking Eastern and Western countries.

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