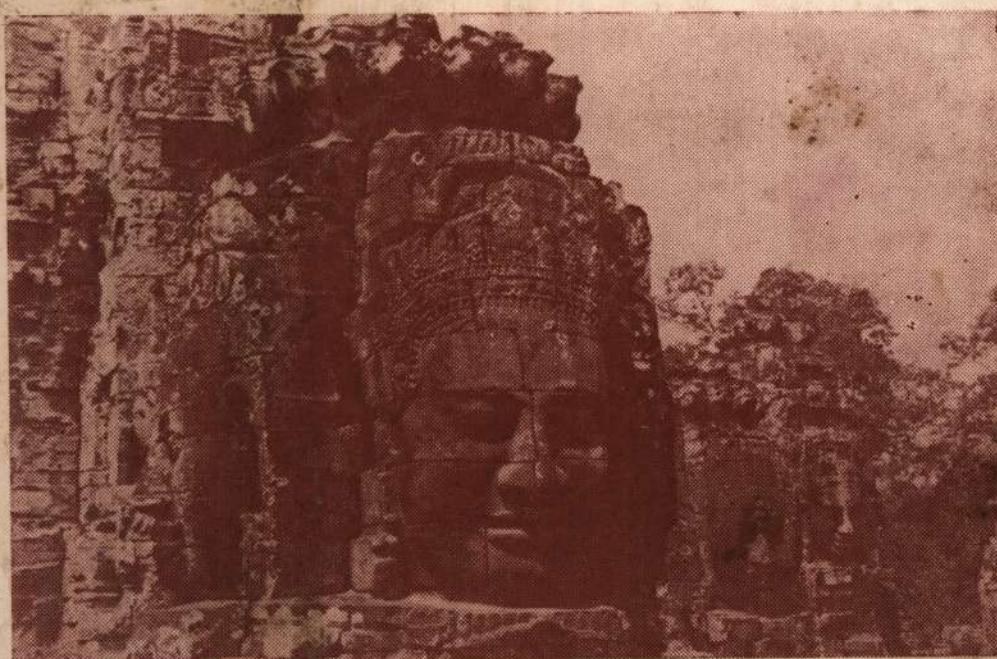


Bulletin of the Government Museum, Chennai

INDIA'S CULTURAL RELATIONS WITH SOUTH EAST ASIA

(International Women's Association Endowment Lecture-3)

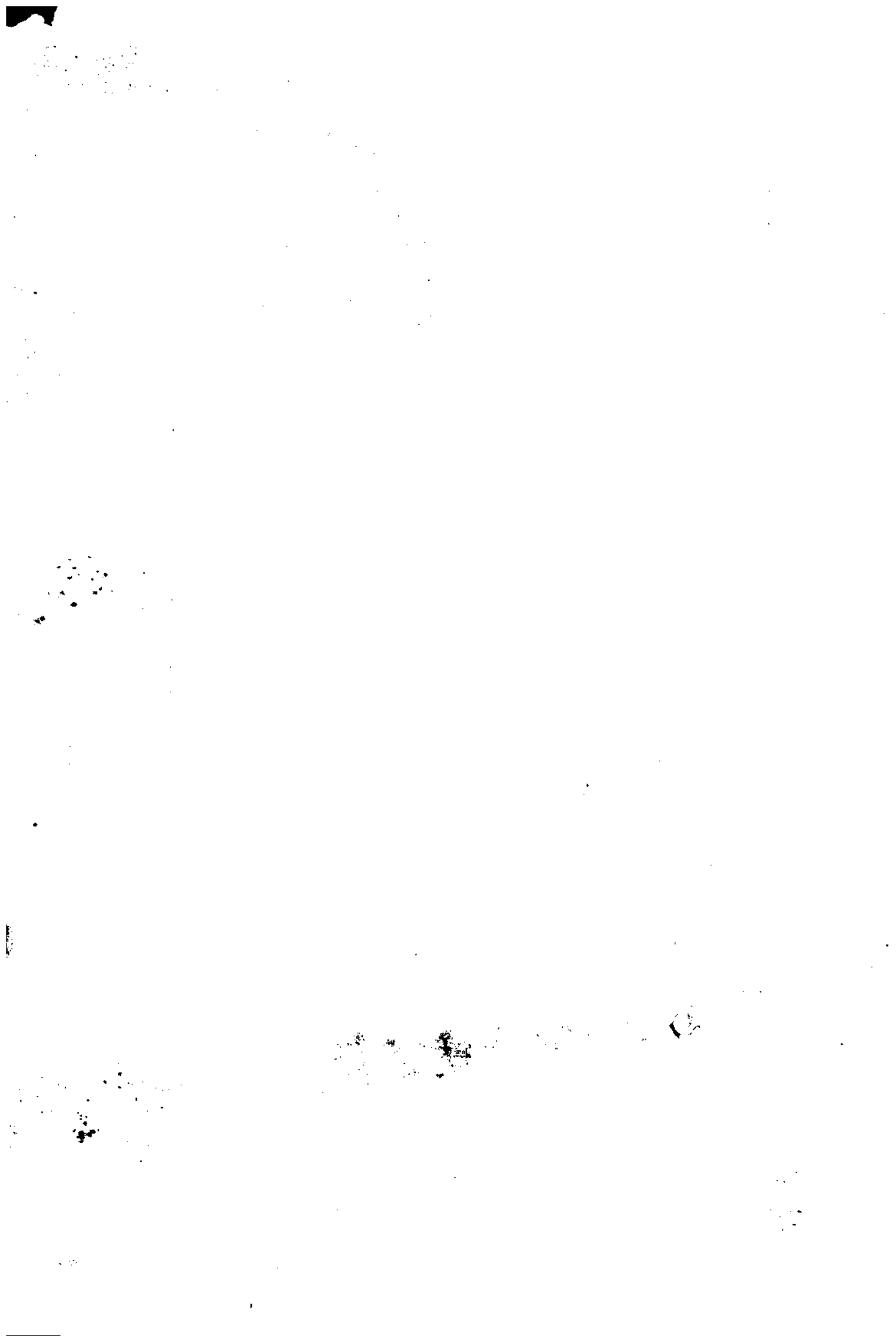


Dr. K. V. RAMAN

Former Professor and Head,
Department of Ancient History and Archaeology,
University of Madras, Chennai-600 005

New Series - General Section Vol XV No.6

**Commissioner of Museums,
Government Museum, Egmore, Chennai-600 008.
September, 2000.**



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INDIA'S CULTURAL RELATIONS WITH
SOUTH – EAST ASIA

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Dr. R. KANNAN, Ph.D., I.A.S.,
Commissioner of Museums,
Government Museum,
Egmore, Chennai-600 008.

Phone : { Off : 8261578
Res : 4341209
Fax : 8218735

FOREWORD

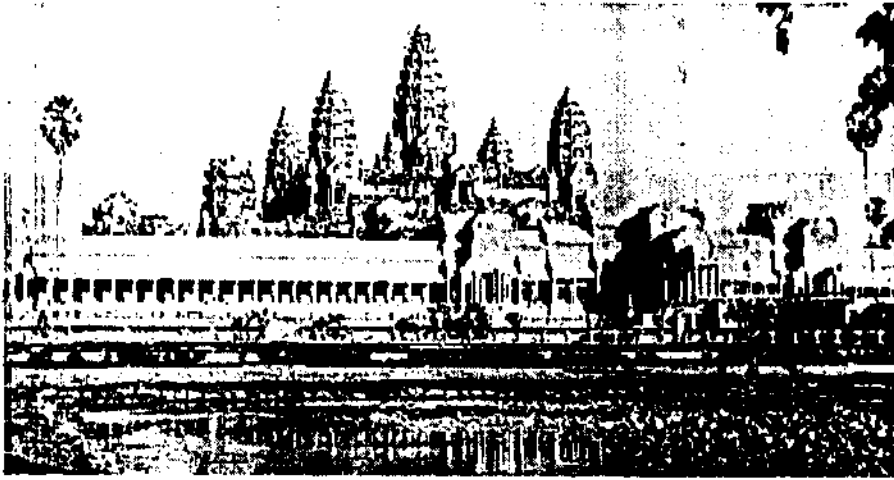
This bulletin has been brought out especially on the occasion of the 3rd Lecture in 'The International Women's Association Endowment Lecture Series'. This lecture delivered by Dr.K.V.Raman, an eminent historian and archaeologist deals with "India Cultural Relations with South-East Asia". It has been brought out as a Bulletin simultaneously as the lecture is being delivered for the first time in the history of the Government Museum, Chennai. For this, we must thank Dr.K.V.Raman for providing the manuscript and photos in advance which shows not only the painstaking preparation put in by him but also his promptness.

The lecture deals with India's close cultural relationship with South-East Asian countries especially Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. He has used as his sources Literary works, Epigraphy, Monuments and other archaeological sources, Place names and Personal names. He has analysed the nature and routes of immigration especially the land and sea routes and how the names in these countries, beliefs and culture are closely bound with those of Hindu and Buddhist religions and cultures. The cultural beliefs and names have survived in an attenuated form even today. Angkor Wat is of course the internationally known heritage monument and symbol of this close relationship.

I am sure that this Bulletin would be a valuable addition to the literature on the subject. It is highly relevant in the present context of a corridor to connect with these *tiger* economies since they are leaders in the Information Technology (IT) revolution and globalisation. Close economic ties with these countries are necessary if India is to integrate with the new global village economy. The historically close cultural ties will enable the easy forging of the new ties. Therefore, this Bulletin is a must for any entrepreneur and IT professional, who wants to interact with the peoples and governments of these countries, since it gives the cultural flavour of the past which can be used to forge new types of relationships in the present and as a basis for future interaction.

26-9-2000

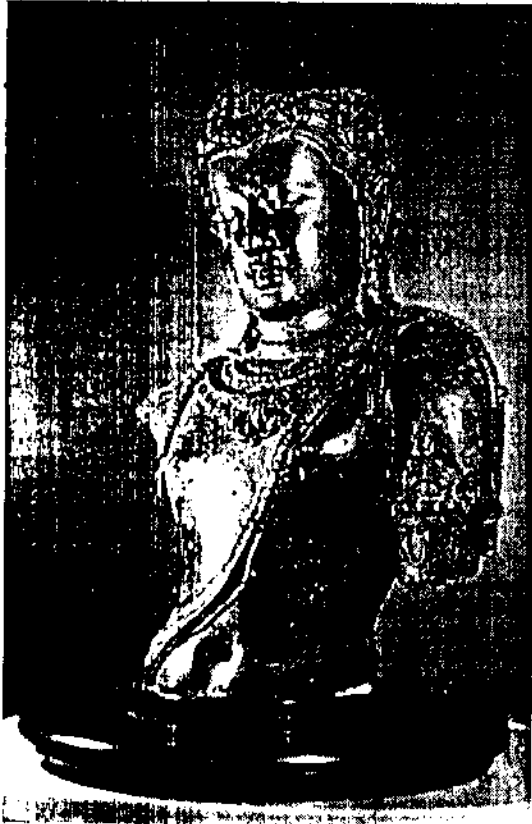
(R.KANNAN)



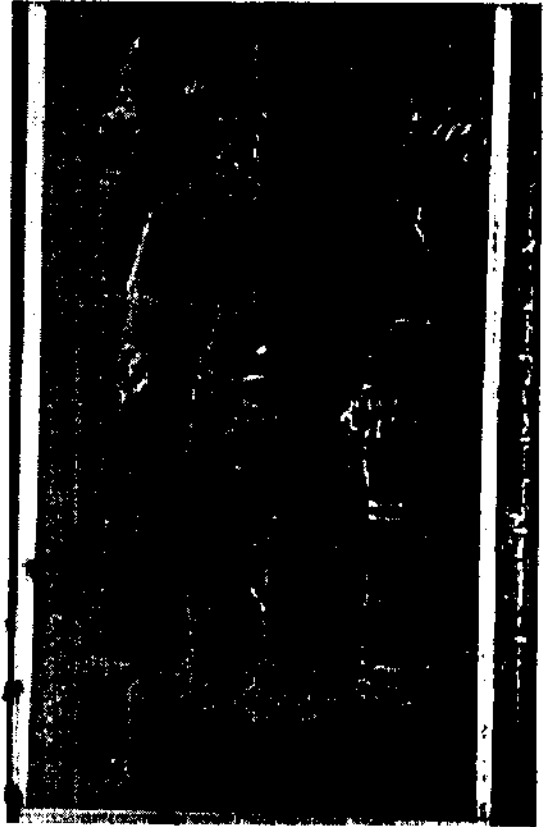
Angkor-Vat Temple



Hindu Temple, Bali



Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, Bangkok



Vishnu, Vietnam



Trimurti, Wat Phu (Laos)



Ramayana Dance, Thailand



Agasthya, National Museum, Jakarta



Sita (Leather Puppet), Thailand

INDIA'S CULTURAL RELATIONS WITH SOUTH – EAST ASIA

India's commercial and cultural contacts with South East Asian countries were deep-rooted and go back even to the proto-historic times. But they became stronger in the historical times. The imprint it had left is to be seen in many spheres – political and social institutions, religion, language and literature, art and architecture. Many distinguished historians, and scholars in literature and art Indian, South East Asian and European – have delved deep into this fascinating field of study and made valuable contributions which are briefly indicated in the Bibliography at the end. Among the European scholars, the Dutch, the French and the English, because of their long colonial rule in this area, had greater opportunity to undertake longstanding and institutionalised studies in the fields of archaeology, epigraphy, literature and art and architecture. The subject is vast, complex and fascinating and I propose to give only a few glimpses here¹.

Literary Sources

The sources for the study of this subject are numerous and varied. Ancient and mediaeval literature of India and South East Asia form an important source, e.g., there are references to the Suvarṇabhūmi and Suvarṇadvīpa in Indian epics and the Buddhist Jātaka tales. There are also many references to places like Yavadvīpa (Java), Kambuja, Kādaram (Kalagam in Tamil or Keda in Malaya) in ancient Sanskrit and Tamil works. References to trade contacts with Kādaram or Kalagam are found in an early Tamil work (Pattinappalai) of 2nd c. C.E). Later Indian literature also contains many brief or incidental references to some of the South East Asian countries or affairs.

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1. I had the unique opportunity to visit many of the South East Asian countries as a member of the joint Indo-Japanese project team under the leadership of the well-known Indologist of Japan Professor Noboru Karashima between 1991 and 1994. I express my thanks to him and other members of the team, Dr.K.V.Ramesh, Prof. Y.Subbarayalu, Prof. P. Shaninugam, Profs. Y.Ishizawa, Ogura and Sukurai of Japan for their scholarly discussions and analysis of our findings.

The Chinese annals and other literary works constitute an important source for the study. Many historical facts not known to Indian sources are preserved in the Chinese annals. For instance, the story connected with the foundation of the Hindu kingdom of Funan by one Houen-tien (Kaundinya) is well preserved there. This is confirmed by a Sanskrit inscription from Champa which mentions Kaundinya was a Brahman who got a javelin from Asvatthama, son of Drona and who married a Naga princess and became a progenitor of a dynasty. The names of Kaundinya's successors (Pan-Pan) are also provided by the Chinese annals. In fact, the early history of Funan kingdom heavily depends on the Chinese sources. The travel accounts of the Chinese pilgrim Hsüang Tsang to India throw fresh light on the Sri Vijaya kingdom in whose capital Jambi/Palemsay in Sumatra he stayed on his way to India and back.

An important work of considerable historical value is Chu-fan-chi, written by Chan-ju-kuva the Chinese inspector of foreign trade around A.D. 1225. The data provided by it on the Chinese trade and other relations with Sri Vijaya and India including the Chola embassies is very important. The other Chinese works like Tao-I-Chi-lü (Description of the Barsanians of the Isles) furnish valuable details regarding the stage of trade between China and India via South East Asia in the 14th c.A.D.

The literary works produced in the countries of S.E. Asia throw valuable light on the deep religious and philosophical influences of India on those countries. The profound influences of Prakrit, Pali and Sanskrit languages on those of S.E. Asia are well documented in the language and literature of (Bhasa) Indonesia, Thailand, Malay etc. The two great epics of India, Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the Vedas, Puranas, Agamas had widespread popularity and many local versions were produced. e.g., Ramakein in Thailand. In the language of Kawi in Java linguists see a free admixture of Sanskrit. Versions of Brahmandapurana, Agastya purana, Bhuvanakosa and works based on Kalidasa's Kumara-sambhava and Meghadhuta besides Pancha-tantra and several didactic works were produced in Kawi language.

Epigraphical Sources

Like in India, Epigraphical records constitute a major source for the chronology and history of S.E. Asia. Hundreds of inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit and

the local languages (like Khmer in Cambodia or Old Javanese in Java) form the backbone of the historical developments in the region right from the early centuries of the Christian era. They are modelled on the epigraphical traditions and the format or pattern set in India like the invocatory verses in praise of the Buddha or the Hindu gods like Siva or Vishnu, brief genealogical details of royal family and the greatness of the ruling king, the purpose of the grant, the details regarding the donees etc. The practice of recording the date of the inscription invoking the Saka era and is another clear proof of India's influence. The script employed to write the Sanskrit inscriptions was also of Indian origin mostly in the Grantha script of Southern India, popularly known as the Pallava Grantha. Regarding this script, Prof. Nilakanta Sastri described it "as the script prevalent in East Coast of Madras Presidency, as the Telugu country has flourished many early records of the type of writing which do not belong to the Pallavas but to other lines like the Salankayanas" (1949). A few inscriptions, according to R.C. Mazumdar, of the oldest Sanskrit records from Indo-China (Funan) are derived from the writing employed by the Kushanas in the Central regions of Northern India. There are also quite a few in Tamil language and Tamil script in Malaysia-Thailand border and in the island of Sumatra. The inscription of Takua-pa recording the establishment of a Vishnu temple and a tank called Avaninaram by a Tamil merchant guild (Manigramattar) belong to the period of the Pallava king Nandivarman III. A fragmentary Tamil inscription from Sumatra mentioning the presence of the Tamil merchants is dated in 1088, i.e. during the Chola period, when there was intimate trade relations between South India and S.E. Asia. Though they are not royal grants (as the Sanskrit was the language of the official records as in ancient India), they are of great value as they attest to the presence of the Tamil merchants in the islands and their patronage to Hindu temples there. The Tamil inscriptions are, however, limited in number and confined to Malaysia and Sumatra. A very valuable recent discovery is that of a small touchstone bearing a brief Tamil Brahmi inscription Perum-Pattan-kal datable to second – third century AD in a site in Southern Thailand (by Prof. Noboru Karashima and his team).

Monuments and other Archaeological Sources:

Archaeological and monumental sources constitute an important and visible evidence for the deep cultural ties between India and S.E. Asian countries. Both Buddhism and Hinduism, which were the two major religions of S.E. Asia before the

13th Century, had profoundly influenced the religious monuments of the region. Numerous Buddhist stupas and viharas of both Hinayana and Mahayana schools are to be found in all parts of S.E. Asia. The outstanding examples are: the Buddhist Pagodas of Burma particularly that of Ananda at Pagan and the ones at Shewzigon, the magnificent Buddhist stupa of Borobudur in Java with a vast array of Buddha Jataka Sculptures in the classical Gupta style; the famous Hindu Temples of Lara-Jangrang group in the Prambanan valley in Java with shrines (with Vimanas) dedicated to the Hindu deities, Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Durga, Garuda, Nandi; the ruined Buddhist establishments of Jambai in Sumatra belonging to the the Sri Vijaya patronage; the holiest Buddhist stupa Phra Pathom Chedi at Nakhon Pathon in Thailand, traced back to the times of Asoka in its origin. The sculptural panels show clear influences of Amaravati School. The Buddhist and Hindu temples seen at places like Lots Bim, Phimai, Phanom Rung, Aayutya (Ayodhya), Bangkok etc., in Thailand show the architecture and sculptural influences from India of different periods. The Hindu and Buddhist temples of Cambodia like the famous Angkor-Vat and Angkor Thom besides numerous others attest to the fusion of the Indian and local artistic traditions. One of the longest sculptural reliefs in the World at Angkor-Vat depict the famous Hindu mythology related to the churning of the ocean.

Vietnam, which was predominantly Buddhist country, was once a stronghold of Hinduism also. Archaeological excavations done in the Mekong valley brought to light "OCEO Culture" with artefacts having clear links with India even from the first century of Christian Era. The culture of OCEO has been described half-indigenous and half-Indian by M. Malleret. It was here the Hindu kingdom of Funan was founded by Kaundinya. The artefacts included ruined temple bases, images of Hindu deities like four-armed Vishnu, Garuda, Ganesa, Srivatsa and gold leaves with Sanskrit inscriptions of 6th c. now kept in the museum at Tan An and Long Xujen. More than a hundred Sanskrit inscriptions have been discovered in different parts of Vietnam from 4th to 15th centuries indicating its long and persistent usage as well as proficiency achieved in the language there.

The Hindu kingdom of Champa flourished in Vietnam from second to 16th c. has left behind a splendid legacy in art and architecture as seen in monuments in Misson. Amaravati, Vijaya, Kanthara, Phan Rang (Pandurang), Po Nagar. It has been

remarked that Mi-son monuments are to Vietnam what Angkor is to Cambodia and Borabudur to Indonesia. They are rich in Hindu iconography and Sanskrit inscriptions. There was a temple for the great Sanskrit poet and author of the Ramayana Valmiki at Trakieu (Sivahapura) built in 656 by a king named Prakashadharma.

Even the tiny country of Laos contains interesting Buddhist and Hindu monuments. As it was part of the Indianised state of Funan in the earlier period and of the Khmer from 8th-9th century, it abounds in temples for Siva, Vishnu, Buddha. The most famous among them is Wat Phu near Champassak in South Laos. The temple is located on the hill called Lingaparvata with beautiful sculptures to Hindu Trinity and typical Hindu architectural parts. The area was ruled by kings having names like Sreshtavarman and the capital town was called Sreshtapura. Vientian, the capital of Laos has a number of majestic Buddhist stupas and viharas like That Luong, Wat Phra Keo, Wat Si Siket etc. At the latter, one can see the paintings of scenes from the Ramayana.

Place-names and Personal names:

Besides all that has been said above, the innumerable names of places, provinces, rivers, hills, kings, queens and common folk bear eloquent links with Indian counterparts. This aspect as well as the one related to social institutions, customs and practices form another important source from the cross cultural study. Even in the Islamised country like Indonesia the use of Sanskrit or Prakrit terms for persons and places is deeply entrenched e.g., personal names like Sukarnoputri, or Sahasranamajoyo; place names like Yogyakarta, Mathura; dynasty like Sri Vijaya. When we take the whole of S.E. Asia we see many strikingly familiar Indian names such as Dvaravati, Ayutya, Lob Puri, Puri Nam, Patho Nokon (Pratama Nagara), Kanchanapuri (all in Thailand); Vyadapura, Sreshtapura, Champa, Amaravati (all in Vietnam).

Burma

Place names like Srikshe (Prome) and Hamsavati (Pagu) Sankasya (Tegaung on Upper Irrawadi), Vaisali modern Vethali, Ramapura (Moulmein),

Ramanyadesa (Lower Burma), Dhanyavati (modern Rataingmyu), Tamradhvipa, Tamrapattana – all in Burma.

Cambodia (Kambuja) – There were cities with the name Kamboja in Indian literature. Bhavapura, Isanapura (after the king Isanavarman), Indrapura, capital of Jayavarman II (9th c.), Amarendrapura, Hariharalaya (modern Poluos); Yasodharpura (after Yasovarman), Isvarapura (present Bantey Srei). Jayavarman V built Jayendranagari around 978 AD at the centre of which stood the Hemagiri.

In Bali streams are named after famous Indian rivers like Ganga, Sindhu, Yamuna, Sarayu, Narmada. In Java there are canals named after Chandrabhagi and Gomati (modern Gomti) (D.C. Sircar).

Personal names of the kings clearly bear the stamp of Hindu names; Kaundinya and his wife Nagi Soma (of Funan) Kaundinya Jayavarman (c.500); Gunavarman; Purnavarman, Rudravarman (c.514) – all of Funan, Bhadravarman, Sambhuvarman (of Champa).

Nature and routes of immigration

The contacts between India and the S.E.Asian countries could be traced back to even to pre-and proto-historic times as attested by the similarity between the Neolithic tools of Eastern India and those of Burma and other S.E.Asia. The Megalithic burial tombs seen in both the areas also provide another possible link. They suggest migrations of the people through land resulting in some ethnic links especially with Eastern India – places like Assam, Bengal and Orissa. In the historical times the spread of Buddhism initiated by Asoka had far-reaching sweep and probably the origin of the religion in S.E. Asia is traceable to his times. This is preserved in some of the local traditions in Burma and Thailand. The Hindu traders and settlers should have also been active and archaeological and literary accounts clearly attest to their presence in different places like Vietnam (Funan), Kambuja from the early centuries of Christian era.

Land and Sea routes

In the historical times, the commercial and cultural interface between India and S.E. Asia was facilitated by both land and sea routes. It was through what is

known as Silk road across Central Asia that Buddhism reached China from India. It was by the same route that Chinese pilgrim Fahien and others reached India. There was a regular trade route by land between Eastern India and China through Burma and Yunnan. From Chinese chronicles we gather that merchants used to travel from China across the whole of northern India and Afghanistan with their merchandise around second century B.C. ItSing has recorded that visit by land route of some twenty Chinese priests to India for whom an Indian king built a temple in the 3rd c. AD. This route gave access to Lower Burma and other parts of Indo-China. Another Chinese writer, Kia Tan has also referred to a land route between Annam and India. The Burmese chronicles refer to a direct route between Eastern India and Burma through Arakan.

The sea-route also played a vital role in the historic trade contacts. Ships plied between ports of Bay of Bengal and the lands opposite to the bay. Tamralipti, the modern Tamluq in Bengal was a celebrated port and by many voyages to it from Chinese ports have been recorded (R.C., Mazumdar). From here the ships could sail through the Andaman Islands or via 10°-latitude channel south of them en route to ports in the Isthmus. Some could also go through Malacca straits to Sumatra or eastern Borneo coast. The three most widely used Isthmian portage routes, according to John F. Cady, ran between Takuapa and Chaiya, between Trang and Ligu and between Kedah and Patani (Lankasuka). The port of Kedah was particularly popular, as it was easily accessible via the passage between Sumatra and Nicobar isles, during summer monsoon. It was widely used by Indian traders from early centuries of Christian era and also later by the Arab merchants. The port of Patani was also used. Fahien's return journey to China was from Tamralipti to Ceylon and from there to Sunde Straits on the Western end of Java. Kalinga was another important port from which ships were regularly going to the eastern island across the Bay. Because of this Indian immigrants were sometimes referred to as 'Klings'. The presence of Amaravati Buddhist influences clearly attests to the contribution of the Andhra in many S.E. Asian countries. The Mons of Burma were also referred to as Talainga i.e., from Telingana. The discovery of the ship coins of the Satavahanas in Malaya coastal sites is also noteworthy. Further down South, maritime contacts from the ports of the Tamils coasts are attested by classical writers and archaeological findings. Goods from the Malaya coast (Kalagam) and Sri Lanka reached

Kaveripumpattinam or Puhar, according to an early Tamil work (Pattinappalai c. 2nd AD). It figures as the Khaberi's Emporium in Greco Roman accounts. Tamil literature of the early centuries gives vivid accounts of the celebrated Chola port, its warehouses, sailors, merchants from many countries speaking different languages, ships with fluttering masts. Manimekhalai speaks of the Sea Goddess propitiated by the sailors and the rulers. Kaveripumpattinam lost its importance after 3rd c. AD as it was affected by sea-erosion. But Nagapattinam (formerly in Thanjavur district) was a busy port particularly in the mediaeval times. Some would identify it with 'Nigamos' of Ptolemy. It was the first port on the mainland touched by the vessels from the East becomes clear from the Chinese pilgrim Itsing's travel accounts (Sastri, 1955, 185-186). This must have been the reason for the Sailendra king Sri Mara Vijayottungavarman, the Lord of Srivijaya, to establish a Buddhist vihara at Nagapattinam with the permission and patronage (land-grant) of the Chola king Rajaraja I in 1006 AD (Ep.Ind.XXII). This colony of South East Asian Buddhist traders continued to flourish under successive Chola kings. Kulottunga I gave fresh gift to this establishment on the representation made by the king of Kadaram (Malaya) through his ambassadors. On the whole, the Cholas had excellent relation with S.E. Asia except for a brief period of hostility during the reign of Rajendra Chola I who sent a naval expedition of conquest and even took the title 'Kadaram-Kondan' – one who captured Kadaram. The naval expedition and the places he captured are vividly described in his inscription.

The importance of Nagapattinam increased in the subsequent centuries especially in the 17th-18th centuries is attested by the Dutch and the Portuguese records who had their settlements then in the 16th and 17th centuries and used their goods for their trade with the East and the West. Similarly, many other ports in the Coromandal coast like Mylapore (near Madras), Pulicat, Pondicherry (under the French), Machilipattinam (Andhra Pradesh) played an important part in the trade with the East during the colonial period. Durate Barbosa in 16th c. states that many articles especially costly cloth from Mylapore and Pulicat reached the markets of Malacca, Pegu, Sumatra and China (Raman 1957).

Under the British rule, hundreds of Tamils and Telugus migrated to Malaysia, Singapore, Burma etc., as labourers and some as enterprising traders from many parts

(like Gujarat) which led to a sizeable Indian population there. The community of enterprising traders of Tamilnadu known as Nagarattars or Nattukottai Chettiars had played a leading role in the commercial intercourse between South India and S.E. Asia. They have constructed a number of Hindu temples there even as far as Saigon, in South Vietnam. The temple for Muruga (Karttikeya) at Kolalampur, Mariamman temples at Singapore are famous for the festivals attracting a vast concourse of devotees.

BURMA (Myanmar)

Geographically, Burma is the closest neighbour amongst the S.E. Asian countries and is reachable by land and sea routes. Ethnically, the people of Burma have many close links with the Eastern Indian ethnic groups. The Mons of Burma were also known as Talaings which according to some scholars denoted the Indian migrants from Telingana i.e. Telugu speaking people of the east coast (R.C.Mazumdar). The Mon settlement in Lower Burma went under the collective name Ramanne-dese. The Mons were Hinayana Buddhists and their political and religious influences spread to Siam (Thailand) and Laos. Another important ethnic group of Burma was represented by Pyns who occupied Irravady Valley even around third century AD and continued their political domination till 9th c. AD. They established their kingdom with Sriksheṭra (modern Hmawza, near Prome) as their capital. One of the leading kings of this line of rulers was Jayachandravarman. His Sanskrit inscription of 7th c. on the pedestal of a Buddha image mentions that it was set up by him. After the decline of the Puns and the middle of the 9th c. came the Mrammas (or Myanmar) from the north. The present name of Burma viz., Myanmar is said to have been derived from this name. According to some scholars the name Burma is probably derived from Brahma-desa. The Mrammas must have come under the influence of the Hindu Colonists from remote times. Soon, the Hinduised Mrammas founded the independent kingdom with Pagon as its capital. The earlier name of Pagon according to R.C.Mazumdar was Arimardanapuri and the kingdom was known as Tamradipa. The Chief architect of the glory of the Mrammas the empire builder was Aniruddha or Ananrath who ruled between 1044-1077. His conquest of Mon kingdom of Thaton and triumphant return with the booty which included priceless Buddhist scriptures (Tripiṭaka) and sacred relics marked a great turning point in the religious and artistic history of his kingdom. He was chiefly

responsible for the introduction of Theravada Buddhism together with Pali language in his kingdom. He also built numerous pagodas (temples) and monasteries. He married an Indian princess. His successor Thiluin Man, also named Kyazittha (1084-1113) developed intimate contacts with India and built the famous temple of Ananda at Pagan, designed on the Indian temple model with many innovations of his own. He also completed the Shwezigon pagoda where his predecessor Aniruddha enshrined a replica of the Buddha's tooth relic presented by the Sinhalese king. He also visited the holy shrine at Bodh Gaya in India and made contributions to its repairs. Though Theravada Buddhism was the official religion of Burma, the legacy of many Hindu beliefs practices formed part of the court. The ruling king was regarded as the avatar of Vishnu and the court ceremonies were in Brahmanical tradition or Vishnu type Devaraja ceremony and conducted by the Brahmin priests. The latter served as court astrologers (John Cady).

The impact of Hinduism in Burma is well supported by Hindu temples and sculptures found there in places like Pagan (Nat Hlaung Gyaung temple), Hmawaza, Mergin, and Arakan. They are generally datable to a period between fifth and eighth centuries. In one of the Vishnu temples a donation made by a merchant from South India with a verse from the famous work Mukundamala of king Kulasekhara, a saint-king of Kerala. The renowned temple of Nat Hlaung Gyaung in Pagan is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and sculptures of His ten incarnations (Dasavataras) are carved, and the Buddha is included as the ninth.

The large-scale immigration of Indians into Burma in the 19th century led to an increase in the Hindu settlements who for their own worship built many a Hindu temple. For example, the temple of Dandayudhapani (=Muruga or Kartikeya) a favourite deity of the Tamils at Pazundaung, Rangoon.

THAILAND

Thailand or Siam as it was known earlier had been described as a melting pot of many races, languages and cultures. Migrants from China, India, Tibet, Burma, had come here at different times and mingled with the local people like the Mons. We notice the rise and fall of the earliest states like Haripunjaya and Dvaravati but unfortunately not much is known about them. The first important Thai kingdom was

that of Sukhothai whose king was consecrated with the Hindu title "Indraditya". His son Ram Khaheng who probably ruled between 1283 and 1292 extended his kingdom far and wide including Burma and regions round Angkor. He is credited with the introduction of script or art of writing among his subjects. His grandson assumed the pompous title Surya-vansa Rama Maharajadhiraja. He was a devout Buddhist. This kingdom was however overrun by the newly risen line of rulers who assumed the name Ramadhipati. Ayuthia became the leading State from 1350 A.D. and in its heyday, its authority spread to Laos and parts of Kambuja. Ayuthia was a flourishing city with innumerable monasteries, temples, libraries etc., but it witnessed a great devastation in 1568 by the Burmese invaders. However it recovered and continued to be the capital until about the middle of the 18th Century after which Phaya Taksin removed the capital to Thonburi. But his successor and military commander established a new dynasty called Chakri dynasty and reigned as King Rama I. The capital was shifted to Bangkok on the opposite bank of Chao Phraya. The completion of the renovation of the city of Bangkok and the temple of Emerald Buddha was celebrated in 1787 and the city was named as Ratanakosin. All the monarchs of the dynasty assumed the official title Rama, the present monarch being Rama IX of the Chakri dynasty.

Buddhism is the dominant religion of Thailand; but its adaptation and flexibility accommodated customs, beliefs embracing not only Theravada Buddhism but also those of Hinduism and the worship of deities and spirits. Missionaries introduced Buddhism during the reign of Asoka (3rd century B.C.) from India and Nakhon Pathon is traditionally associated with it. Around 700 A.D. Mahayana Buddhism spread through Malaysia and Sri Vijaya. By about the 11th century Hinayana Buddhism made its powerful impact mainly by the influence from Burma under the king Aniruddha. This was further strengthened by the influences from Ceylon monks who settled at Nakhon Sri Dharmaraja. So, today Thailand follows Theravada Buddhism but the Hindu royal court rituals and ceremonies are still followed e.g., the annual ploughing ceremony, presided over by the king: Rice seeds are blessed and sown and the success of the new harvest is predicted by Brahmin priests. The wedding and other ceremonies also have considerable blend of Buddhism and Hindu contents. The blend can be noticed in religion, philosophy and art. In the corridors of the palace complex at Bangkok, one can see the longest

painted panels depicting the Ramayana scenes in exquisite colours and composition. Thais had their own version of the epic which was called Ramakian, written originally by King Rama I of the Chakri dynasty. It is a very popular literary work and a great source of inspiration for many poets, painters and dancers. Indeed it has become the national epic of Thailand. It is the most popular subject matter of Thai dance performed in the court and the temples.

In the Buddhist and Hindu monuments of Thailand, one can clearly see the influence of Indian style of architecture and sculpture and iconography, blended with the local traditions. Art historians have identified the spread of the influences of different schools of Indian art like the Amaravati, Gupta, Pala and the South Indian in the art of Thailand. The small terracotta and stucco figures found in the district of U-tong in Central Thailand display clear influence of the famous Amaravati School of Southern India according to Prof. Jean Boisselier. The sculptural stucco panels found at the Buddhist stupa site of Nakon Ba Prathan and Nakon Rajasima (Korat) also resemble the Amaravati style. Buddhist images found at Pre Pathan Chedi and the carved red sandstone image found at Wieng Sa, Surattani, show the profound influence of the classical Gupta style. The influences of the Eastern Indian styles like the Palas of Bengal can be seen in the images found at Pong Tuk, Kanchanaburi and the sculpture of Eight Miracles of the Buddha found at Wat Ratburana in Ayudha (8th, 9th centuries according to Prof. M.C. Subhadradis Diskul).

The dances are enacted with bright coloured traditional dress and crown in the courtyard of the temples to the accompaniment of soft and melodious instrumental music. They are of slow paced movements with the emphasis on hand gestures (hastas and mudras).

The discovery of innumerable images of Hindu temples and deities from many parts of Thailand indicate their popularity as an important part of religious and artistic heritage of Thailand e.g., Standing Vishnu with four arms and attributes with cylindrical crown found at Chaiya, Surattani is in typical Gupta style (4th-5th c). Images of Hindu deities like Vishnu, Surya have come from places like Si-Tep (Sri-Deva) on the north central province: Lop Buri (Dancing Siva sculpture from Prasat Phanom Ring); a temple for Brahma at Erwan in Bangkok city, images of Vishnu,

Harihara, Uma, Dikpalas, Lingas, Nandi, Garuda etc., preserved in the National Museum at Bangkok.

The temples found in places like Lob Buri (Lava Puri?) clearly show the curvilinear or '*rekha-nagara sikhara prasada*' style of Northern and Eastern India with their characteristic *amalaka* finial.

Place names:

The depth of Indian influence can be easily seen in the Thai language and especially in place names and personal names. It is amazing to see the names of our major ancient cities and town there. The following are some of the place names of Thailand. Dvaravati (Dwaraka), Ayutaya (Ayodhya), Kanchanaburi, Pratam Nakon (Pratama Nagara) Prachena Nakon (Prachina Nagara), Aranya prateth (Aranya Pradesh), Buri Ram, Phishnulok (Visnulok), Indralok, Svaranalok, Suphan Buri (Svarna bhumi).

Thai language itself has received considerable influences from Sanskrit or Prakrit and we find many familiar words in day today language like Swatee (Svasti-welcome), Karuna (Please), Devalaya (Temple), Vichyalaya (college), Prasat (Prasada=Temple), Dhyana, Dhamma, Sangha, Bikku, Dhana, Chedi (Chaitya), Udyana (garden), Achan (acharya). Among the popular names of the women folk are: Uma, Patma, Subhadra, Latchimi, Ratna, Rukmini, Vanide (Vanita). One of the queens of Thailand was Sunanda Kumari-ratna.

INDONESIA

Indian cultural links with South East Asia are no where better seen than in the islands of Indonesia. The Indonesian archipelago, the largest in the world, stretches between Asia and Australia. It comprises five major islands Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sualwasi (Celebes), West Irian, besides the minor islands like Madura and Bali hundreds of smaller ones. The climate is tropical with abundant rainfall and equatorial forest. But many islands are prone to volcanic eruptions, which have destroyed or damaged many of the historical monuments including Borobudur and Prambanan.

The population of the Republic of Indonesia is multi-racial comprising more than 300 ethnic groups speaking about 200 languages and dialects. But they have successfully evolved one national language Bhasa-Indonesia that serves admirably as a link. It is a composite language derived from the numerous local dialects like Betawi, Malay, Javanese, Balinese, Sundanese besides words from Sanskrit, Arabic, Dutch and the Chinese, Islam is professed by the majority but Indonesia is described as a "Panchashila State" based on the principles of respect for all faiths. Buddhism and Hinduism have so deeply influenced Indonesian religion language and culture that they have become part of their historical inheritance.

Names of places, persons, institutions and other day-to-day objects are in the choicest Sanskrit words. Jakarta the capital is the shortened form of Jayakarta and Jogjakarta, the second largest city, is Yogyakarta, "Jaya" is considered as auspicious and is popularly used as prefix for hotels and shops all over Indonesia. Here are a few popular words: nama (name), mantra (ritual), sastra (literature), sakti (power), Wanita (woman), guru (teacher), agama (religious and social laws), Sutradhari (director), prasasti (inscription), upacara (ceremony), sodhara (brother), gajaha (elephant) etc., names like desa (village), nagari or pura (town), mandala are in common usage.

Commercial and cultural ties between India and the Indonesian islands go back to a remote antiquity and Swarnadvipa and Yavadvipa figure in ancient Hindu and Buddhist texts. The earliest inscriptions of Indonesia are in Sanskrit belonging to king Purnavarman of Western Java of the fifth century A.D. His sanctuary in Java with his footprints is likened to those of Vishnu. From the eastern Kutei region of Borneo have come the Sanskrit inscriptions of king Mulvarman, son of Asvaraman, datable to around 400 A.D. The earliest and most celebrated kingdom of Indonesia was that of Srivijaya which rose to great commercial and political eminence from Palembang and Jambi in the fifth century A.D. Both Buddhism and Hinduism flourished here, the former being almost a state religion. The famous Chinese Buddhist Itsing visited Sri Vijaya both on his way to India and back in 671 and 685 A.D. After a long period of study at Nalanda, Itsing stayed in Sri Vijaya capital was a centre of Sanskrit learning and Mahayana Buddhism.

The Sri Vijaya Empire under the Sailendras became the most dominant power, which held sway not only over Sumatra, but also over Borneo, Java, Bali and the Malay Peninsula. They had friendly, diplomatic and cultural relations with the Palas of Bengal in the 7th and 8th centuries they were permitted to build and maintain a monastery in Nalanda. As a result, the Pala style of art and architecture influenced the Javanese art. Later on, in the 10th century, they had commercial and cultural contacts with the Cholas who permitted them to build a monastery at Nagapattinam. It was named Sulamanivihara (after the Sailendra king) and also Rajaraja Perumpalli (after Rajaraja I). The Chola king gifted a large village for the maintenance of this monastery.

Today, the ancient city of Muara Jambi is a deserted archaeological site not easily accessible to the visitor because of swampy surroundings and dirt roads. But the best route is by ferry across the Batanghari. The site is about 12 sq.km. And is full of ruined monastery votive stupas, temples and mounds. The Directorate for the Preservation of Archaeological Remains of Indonesia, which has undertaken the restoration work in the site since 1976 has exposed several brick-built temples or chandis like Chandi-Tinggi (a terraced temple) Chandi Gumpung, Chandi Kedaton, Chandi Gedong and Chandi Astano located in the sylvan surroundings, amidst groves and ponds. The several valuable artefacts like statues, Padmasana pedestals, makara-balustrades, inscribed bricks, colourful beads and ceramics recovered in the excavations and most of them are preserved and displayed in a museum at the site. Certain features of the site remind us of the Buddhist complex at Nalanda. The Palembang region had yielded some of earliest inscriptions of Srivijaya kingdom. They are in the language called old Malay. Most of them are dated in the Saka Era have free admixture of Sanskrit words. The oldest among them from Kedukan Bukit is dated S'604 (A.D.683) and refers to the successful arrival of the Srivijaya king with very vast riches (Sri Vijaya Jaya Siddhayatra). Another dated in A.D.684 records the establishment of Sriksheṭra by order of a king as an act of Buddhist merit. The two museums in Palembang preserve many of the inscriptions (prasatis) besides Hindu and Buddhist sculptures. There are two huge sculptures of Buddha standing and seated kept in the S.M.Badaruddin Museum Palembang.

The National Museum in Jakarta is one of the oldest in South East Asia. It has one of the largest and finest collections of sculptures, inscriptions, besides antique gallery, paintings and ceramics. One is astounded to see the wide range of sculptures representing Hindu deities right from 6th to 19th centuries. Several representations of Brahma, Vishnu, Garuda, Nandi, Siva, Ganesa, Durga, Harihara, Agasthya fill the vast sculpture-gallery.

The Epigraphy section has many Sanskrit and old Javanese inscriptions (with admixture of Sanskrit) the earliest belonging to king Mulavarman of Java (5th century A.D.) in the Kadamba style of script. Of particular interest are the two Tamil inscriptions from Sumatra. One of them dated as 1010 (1088 A.D.) from Barus, which mentions a charity by the well-known South Indian merchant guild Thisai-ayirattu-ainutruvar (a mercantile body of 500 who were trading in a thousand directions).

It is in central Java, around the city of Yogyakarta, that the most impressive and prestigious monuments including the world famous Borobudur and Prambanan are to be found. Built around 800 A.D. by the Sailndras, Borobudur is a magnificent stupa rising in several terraces to immense height, each terrace representing a stage in the ascent of man from the worldly life to the ultimate state of Nirvana. It has been described as an impressive and convincing textbook of Buddhism as taught by the Nalanda School. A walk through the galleries of all the terraces would be nearly three miles. The walls of the galleries are studded with relief sculptures representing the Buddha Jatakas and the life-episodes and display the classic modelling of the Gupta-Pala tradition blended with the Javanese tenderness and grace.

Equally magnificent is the Hindu temple complex at Prambanan dedicated to Brahma, Siva and Vishnu. Like North Indian temples, the shrines are built on high platforms reached by steep and narrow staircases and leaving sufficient space for circumambulation. The shrines simulate the curvilinear vimanas in outline with amalaka finials at various corners characteristic of North Indian temples. Life-size Durga and Guru (Agastya) are found enshrined in the sanctums. Goddess Durga known by her local name Loro Jonggrang is highly revered by the local people as a bestower of boons. The Durga cult, which was widespread throughout Indonesia,

might be traced to the influences from Eastern India. The walls of the circumambulatory corridor of the Siva temple have beautiful relief panels depicting the scenes from the Ramayana and Krishnayana. These narrative panels are characterised by natural and rhythmic flow and movement besides superb mastery of modelling and perspective. A number of miniature dance sculptures of apsaras and auspicious symbols like the purna-ghata, Kalpa-vriksha adorning the different parts of the temples lends beauty to the monuments.

The glorious achievements of the Sailendras in the fields of art and architecture can also be seen in a number of magnificent Buddhist temples and viharas they erected in central Java like Chandi Mendut, Chandi Sari, Chandi Plaosan and Chandi Kalasan. The latter with inscription dated Saka 778 is noted for its gorgeous Vimana.

By about the same period (8th and 9th centuries) the Sanjaya line of Sailendra Kings patronised Hinduism. The temples of Dieng plateau are probably attributable to this dynasty. Interestingly, the group of temples (chandi) are called after the Mahabharata and the Puranic characters like Bhima, Arjuna, Draupadi, Pundarikaksha and Sikandi. These temples are no longer in active worship except on some rare occasions: but they attract tourists for their archaeological interest. There are many good sculptures of Hindu divinities in the niches of the temples.

Eastern Java was the seat of three successive Hindu kingdoms, those of Kediri, Singasari and Majapahit between the 9th and 13th centuries. The artistic achievements of these later Eastern Java dynasties are to be seen in the fine temples like Chandi Singasari, Chandi Jawi, Chandi Jago and Chandi Kidar. The Chandi Jago, which is considered to be the tomb temple of Vishnuvaradhana, has sculptural panels illustrating the scenes from the Arjuna-vivaha. The temple complex at Panataran is a fine example of the architecture of the Majapahit period (14th century). It is a tomb temple on a large and elegantly carved stone terrace (Upapitha) providing the circumambulatory passage around with stepped entrances to the inner terrace. Here again we see the sculptural panels from the Indian epics but in a style that is different from their better-known counterparts in the Prambanan. Figures are rather angular and flat and resemble closely the puppets used in the shadow plays (Wayang) of Java.

In fact during the period Indian epics were adopted as popular themes for the Indonesian theatre, a tradition zealously preserved even today. It is indeed amazing to see the two immortal epics serving as great cultural links between India and Indonesia for over a thousand years.

BALI

Of all the islands of the Indonesian archipelago, Bali is a unique. The people live in close harmony with nature, and are this land where rhythmic patterns of village life, colourful ceremonies, a lively theatrical heritage and the traditional arts of painting and dance are still vibrant. With no skyscrapers or garish city lights, Bali is lush with green vegetation, shaded roads, calm beaches and simple dwellings. The Balinese have preserved their environment as zealously as they have done their religious and artistic traditions, which are a happy blend of the Balinese, the Javanese and the Hindu.

The customs and beliefs of the Balinese, though largely indigenous, display considerable Hindu influences. In fact, more than 95 percent of the Balinese practice Hinduism, which they have adapted to suit their cultural ethos. The Balinese believe in one supreme Widi. He manifests himself in different deities like the Hindu concept of the supreme Brahman manifesting in the three major aspects of the Hindu trinity.

The Balinese call it the Trisakti. There are many shrines for the Hindu Trinity marked by three decorated pedestals representing Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. The village temple is called Pura-desa and is often the hub of the religious and cultural activity of the village. The holiest Hindu temple described as "the mother temple of all Bali" is as Pura Besakih. Set amidst picturesque slopes of Gunung Agung, it is dedicated to the Hindu Trinity, marked by three lofty spires (merus). Considered to be more than thousand years old, it has grown to be a big sprawling complex comprising numerous temples, memorial shrines, split gates (gopuras) and pavilions.

During festivals, the three main shrines are decorated with colourful umbrellas and cloth, symbolic of the deities-white for Siva, red for Brahma and black for Vishnu. Inside the complex, there are shrines for the Sun and Moon (Batara-Surya and Chandra), Baruna (sea-god), celestials (Vidhyadaras), and pavilions for musicians and

reciters of Omakara-mantras and a pavilion for the offerings brought by the devotees. This temple teems with unending streams of devotees, men, women and children draped in orthodox dress who carry bamboo baskets with flowers, fruits, coconuts to be offered to the deities. The priest officiates as the medium during the ceremonies and recites mantras with hand gestures and sprinkles holy water upon the devotees. There are similar holy water tanks near ancient temples at many places like Denpasar, Setangan Kintamani, Tampaksiring, Singarja, Gunung Kawi, Amalpura, Nagara and Tabanam.

Serangan is an island town noted for its sacred Sea Temple Pura Sakennan associated with the famous Hindu priest Niranrtha of the 16th century. Nearby is the place where he attained moksha and it is called Ulu Watu, revered by the Balinese. Tampaksiring is an important pilgrim centre called Agama Tirta, noted for its sacred spring known as Tirta Empul. The Balinese associate it with amrita, the elixir of immortality created by Indra and visits the place for a holy dip to purify them.

Not far from here is the historic place Gunung Kawi noted for its famous rock-cut Chandis and monastic cells, attributed to the 11th century A.D. Chandis here are memorial shrines for the deified kings and queens. There are altogether ten Chandis here, five of which are said to be in honour of King Udayana, his queens and his two sons Marakata and Anak Qungsu. The monastic cells were meant for the several monks who chose this serene environment for their meditation.

Another important centre of Balinese cave architecture is the Elephant Cave Goa (Guha) Gajah, found amid the rocky hills and water springs. It is a peculiarly designed cave with the face of a monster popularly called Kaala looming over the entrance surrounded by an intricate foliage of floral motifs. The design can be compared with the Kirti-mukha motif in our temples. The place is said to have served as a hermitage for Buddhist and Hindu ascetics from about 11th century A.D.

The bathing place in front of the cave has a series of female figures representing nymphs holding water pots in their hands. The celestial nymphs of the Hindu pantheon like the Apsaras and Kinnaris form popular art-motifs in Bali, as indeed they do all over South East Asia. Colourful wooden figures of Kinnaris are in demand probably because they are considered auspicious. Stone sculptures of Ganesa,

Garuda, Hanuman, Dwarapalakas are in constant demand and there are many sculpture shops selling them.

The temples of North Bali are built in a different style. Instead of small shrines and Meru towers of the southern temples, they are terraced shrines with steep in the centre as in Java. A fine example of this temple dedicated to Devi-Sri(Lakshmi) at Pura Beji in Sangsit. Devi-Sri is revered as the Goddess of agriculture and fertility. The Naga balustrades and Kaala faces and other sculptural works show exaggerated features and stylisation. There is also a temple for Mother Earth known as Pura Maduwe Karang at a place called Kubutambajan.

Denpasar, the capital of Bali State is the nerve centre of Balinese art and culture. It is a well-laid out city with fascinating names for its roads and streets that are called out from the Hindu epics. Some of the names of the roads and Srirama, Wibhsana, Kreshna, Yudistira, Bhima, Nakula, Sahadeva, Bhisma, Kunti and Widura. Even smaller characters like Kumbakarana and Gatotkacha are not left out.

There is a large sculpture of Vishnu on Garuda seen right in front of the airport as if to welcome the visitors. The principal temple of Denpasar is called Pura Jagatnatha, dedicated to the supreme God Sanghynag Widi. The Museum in Bali displays the historic relics and ancient art pieces while the art centre at Abiankapas has a permanent exhibition of modern Balinese painting and woodcraft.

But the two programmes, which the tourists throng to watch at Denspar, are the Ramayana ballet through Wayong Wong and the Kecak media of dance. The former is a classical dance drama enacting the scenes over a period of three or four days. The traditional artistes from the villages perform them. More recently, this has been adapted to suit the modern stage ballet to the accompaniment of gamelan gong orchestra. All the characters are played by women with costumes and movements appropriate to the character. Hanuman is a popular figure not only for his bravery but also for creating hilarious situations much to the delight of the children.

The Kecak dance also performs the Ramayana in a different setting and style. It is also a modern adaptation of the ancient folk ritual of trance dance (sanghyang). In this

mode, a person in the state of trance communicates with the god or the ancestors and conveys his wishes to the people. It is performed in the open air in the late evenings. A circle of light around a torch becomes a stage surrounded by a concourse of nearly 150 men who supply the oral orchestration or chorus 'Chak-chak' sounds in varied patterns as to create ecstasy and rhythm. Here again the costumes and the gestures of the dances are delightful and pleasing. This performance is enacted every evening in the Kecak Art centre in Denspar for the tourists.

Cambodia (Kampuchea)

According to a Chinese account of the third century A.D. the ancient kingdom of Kambuja was founded by a Brahmana named Kaundinya who hailed from India. The Hindu rulers established their authority over the whole of Cambodia and even extended it to Siam and parts to Laos. We have a number of Sanskrit inscriptions there belonging to the Hindu kings whose names read as Jayavarman, Rudravarman, Indravarman, Yasovarman, Suryavarman, etc., from 6th century to about the 14th century. During the period of Jayavarman II (9th century A.D.), the Tantric cult of Devaraja became the State religion of Kambuja. Yasovarman (889-909 A.D.) was not only a great conqueror but also well versed in the Sastras, and the Kavyas. He composed a commentary on Patanjali's Mahabhashya. He also built a number of temples and ashramas. There are many Sanskrit inscriptions attesting to their greatness.

In Cambodia, one sees the imprint of art and architecture in the numerous temples with which country is studded. They are known as Prasat, derived from the Sanskrit word Prasada. Numerous names of temples and Places have retained their Hindu forms: such as 'Angkor Thom' (Nagardharma), Hanchey shrine' (Namasajaya), 'Ashrama Maha Rosei' (Maha Rishi), 'Bantei Serei' (Sri), Sambor Pree Kuk' (Isanapura, the capital of Isanavarman.) There are beautiful sculptures of Harihara, Ananatasayi Vishnu, Garudaruda Vishnu, Ganesha. Other Indian motifs occurring commonly are the makara, padma, nagas, gajasimhas and the kalpa-vriksha.

Angkor Vat:

The biggest temple for Vishnu in the world is situated in Camobodia. Angkor Vat, the temple and Angkor Thom, the town, constitute "one of the most extensive,

beautiful and moving ensembles in the world. They reveal the genius and the power of the khmer people of whom they are immortal legacies". Angkor Vat was built by Suryavarman II (1113-1150). The vast dimensions of the area, the endless series of sculptural panels and the magnificent façade with high towers are simply breathtaking. The façade of Angkor Vat has aptly been taken as the national emblem of Cambodia.

The sculpture gallery of the temple is a wonder and covers wide ranging themes of Hindu epics and mythology drawn from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Harivamsa. In it is the magnificent scene of the Samudramathana or the churning of the milky ocean by the devas and asuras. Rows of figures of asuras on one side and the devas on the other engaged in the titanic duel is shown. In the interior, in one of the Mahabharata scenes, the battlefield of Kurukshetra is depicted in which the Pandavas and Kauravas are shown mounted on horses, elephants and chariots. The scene in which Bhishma, the Commander-in-Chief of the Kaurvas is shown lying on the deathbed of arrows is full of pathos.

Angkor Thom:

Angkor Thom, founded by Javarman III, has the temple having towers, with four faces looking in four directions. Here, we find in front of the temple, giant size figures of the devas and asuras pulling the snake, Vasuki to churn the milky ocean. This is shown on a size unparalleled in its dimension and realism.

Bantay Srei:

Bantay Srie contains a group of small temples full of sculptural beauties from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The fight between Vali and Sugriva and Rama shooting his arrow against Vali is a masterpiece. These temples were built in the 10th century A.D.

The spell of the Indian epics:

The twin epics of India the "Ramayana" and the "Mahabharata" acted as great cultural links between India and South East Asia from very ancient times. They have inspired the classical theatre, dance, literature, art and architecture of South East Asia and continue to be part of their cultural heritage. The Thai version of the Ramayana

is known as the Ramakein, written by one of the kings of the Chakri dynasty of Thailand. The kings assumed the coronation name of Rama and the present sovereign Bhumipal Atulya Thej r is Rama IX. Their original capital was appropriately named as Ayuthya not far from Bangkok. There are several places in Thailand having names associated with the Ramayana such as Aranya-prateth, Buri (Puri) Ram, Lobpuri(Lavapuri).

Sculptural panels representing scenes of the "Ramayana" are to be seen in many ancient temples to Thailand like Prasad Phimai. The long series of the exquisite paintings of the "Ramayana" adorn the corridor walls of the royal palace complex at Bangkok. They show considerable local adaptation of the epic. Hanuman is very lively character. "Ramayana" is a popular theme of Thai dances, puppet show and shadow plays.

Ramayana dances are performed regularly in the temples as a sacred ritual. Beautiful masks are used to distinguish the different characters of the Ramayana. Mandothari is known as 'Monto' and Ravana as "Dasakanta". Similarly, the Ramayana is the national ballet of Indonesia and there are different dance styles like the famous Kachak dance of Bali.

The great temple of Prambanan in Java contains some of the most vivid and exquisite portrayals of the epic story. In Cambodia (Kampuchea) too, the Ramayana forms a living tradition and the dance is performed in the temple of Angkor Vat in the evenings by young artists to the accompaniment of fine music.

The performance of the Ramayana at Angkor Vat is quite appropriate because here is found one of the longest sculptural panels in the worlds. Scenes of the epics are carved in low but exquisite reliefs like ivory carvings. We see the scenes of the Ramayana sculptured on the front door lintels in many temples of Cambodia like Ta Keo and Prah Khan.

The popular themes are: rishis requesting Narayana, reclining on the serpent-couch Adishesha to descend to the earth as Rama, the Vali-Sugriva fight, crossing the ocean, Lakshmana's encounter with Indrajit, Hanuman's exploits including his meeting with

Sita and bringing the Sanjeevi Hill, the Rama-Ravana duel and the ultimate triumph of Rama. Rama is frequently depicted wielding his bow and arrow at the top lintel of the entrance-doorways in Cambodian temples.

The Cambodian poetic version of the Ramayana is to be found in the Reamker ('glory of Rama') composed in the 17th century, based on the earlier versions which have not survived. The local names are Ream for Rama, Leak for Lakshmana and Reab (Ravana). The poem has come down as a series of brief episodes, each suitable for mime, geared to dance performances and leather – shadow puppets. They were performed not only in the courts but also in the countryside temples and village festivals, as in the islands of Bali and Java.

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