IMPACT OF INDIAN CULTURE ON SOUTHEAST ASIA: A CASE STUDY OF INDO-CHINA

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled **"Impact of Indian Culture on Southeast Asia: A Case Study of Indo-China"** submitted by **Mr. Pankaj Kumar Sinha** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of **Master of Philosophy (M. Phil.)** of the University, is an original work and has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or any other university to the best of my knowledge.

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DEDICATED TO MY FAMILY . . .

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Pankaj Kumar Sinha

Pankaj Kumar Sinha

New Delhi
July 21, 2002

SOUTH-EAST ASIA, INDIA AND CHINA
(To illustrate early contacts)
MILES
0
500
1000
INDIAN OCEAN
BAY OF BENGAL
CHINA SEA
SUMATRA
BORNEO
JAVA SEA
FLORES SEA
ANDAMAN Is.
NICOBAR Is.
CEYLON
FORMOSA
PHILIPPINES
CELEBES
BALI
FU-KIEN
KWANG-TUNG
KWANG-SI
YUN-NAN
HAI-NAN
ASSAM
MAGADHA
GULERAT
KALINGA
AMARAVATI
TELINGANA
MALAYALAM
ARAKAN
MALAYA
KEDAH
KUTEI
BANGKA
R. Yangtze
R. Red River
R. Si-kiang
R. Brahmaputra
R. Irrawaddy
R. Chindwin
R. Mahanadi
R. Godavari
R. Kistna
R. Tapti
R. Narbada
R. Sittang
R. Menam
R. Mekong
Canton
West River
Hanoi
Hue
Tourane
Imphal
Calcutta
Tamralipti
Halin-gyi
Pagan
Prome
Thaton
Pegu
Martaban
Moulmein
Tavoy
Mergui
Tenasserim
Tenasserim
Ayuthaya
Bangkok
Lopburi
Korat
Angkor
Angkor-Borei
Saigon
Bassak
Panduranga
Singora
Takua Pa
Trang
Penang
Singapore
Riouw Archipelago
Jambi
Palembang
Jakarta
Batavia
Semarang
Surabaya
Bali
Timor
Macassar
Celebes
Sulu Archipelago
Nias
Mutra
Broach (Bharukacha)
Baroach
Bombay
Goa
Vengi
Chicacole
Puri
Conjeveram
Madras
Calicut
Kayarpatnam
Anuradhapura
Podouke
Ujjain
Prabang
Vientiane
Lampun
Lampang
Srikshetra
Sandoway
Arakan
Chandwin
Manipur
Jaintia
Kamrup
Pundra
Gaur
Pabna
Bhagalpur
Rajmahal
Patna
Gaya
Benares
Allahabad
Kalinga
Orissa
Telingana
Amaravati
Kistna
Godavari
Tapti
Narbada
Mahanadi
Sopara
Kayarpatnam

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

"When we tied golden threads of kinship
round each other's wrist,
That ancient token, grown pale,
has not yet slipped off they right arm,
And our wayfaring path of old
lies strewn with the remnants of my speech.
They help me to retrace my way to the inner chamber of my life,
where still the light is burning
that we kindled together on the forgotten evening of our union.
Remember me, even as I remember thy face,
and recognize me as thine own, the old that has been lost, to be regained
and made new."

– Rabindranath Tagore, *To Java*[1] (translated from Bengali)

The above lines are the most beautiful description of the golden days of togetherness between India and Southeast Asian countries/kingdoms in ancient and medieval times. We can vividly discern the nostalgic reminisces of the closeness between the two neighbouring regions as expressed and put to words by the first Asian Nobel laureate and one of the great poets of Asia in modern times, Rabindranath Tagore. He reminds us of our hallowed past when there was a very close relationship between South and Southeast Asian regions and cultural transmission from the Indian subcontinent eastwards took place on a massive scale and left deep imprints on the land and people of our eastern neighbours.

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1 Sarkar, H.B., *Cultural Relations Between India and Southeast Asian Countries*, ICCR and Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1985, p. i.

The term Southeast Asia is of recent origin. It became popular during World War II, when the territories south of the Tropic of Cancer was placed under Lord Louis Mountbatten's South-East Asia Command. The latter included Sri Lanka and at least one study covers that island country along with Southeast Asia because of "similar" experience with Portuguese, Dutch and British colonialism and because it is "closely related to the Malaya Archipelago."[2] On the other hand, Professor D.G.E. Hall excluded the Philippines in the first edition of his monumental history of Southeast Asia because that country lay "outside the region's main stream of historical developments."[3] Most scholars presently use the term Southeast Asia to include the geographical areas bounded by the states of Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Laos, Kampuchea, Vietnam, Brunei and Philippines.

Older books on Southeast Asia designated it variously but mostly in reference to either of the two neighbouring countries- India and china. Thus, many British, French and Indian scholars called it Farther/Further India, Greater India, *L'inde Exterieure*, and the Hinduised or Indianised states. On the other hand, most Chinese writings identified the region as Kun Lun or Nan Yang (Little China). Still others have called the landmass between India and China as Indo-China, from which the term French Indochina, to include Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, was derived. The noted geographer, George B. Cressey, has suggested that the region be called "Indo-Pacific", since it lies between two oceans and cultures.[4] A large area of this region is one upon which from very early times Chinese and Indian influences have been brought to bear, and in one part of which, Annam and Cochin China, there was for many centuries an

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2 Hay, S. and Case, M.H., *Southeast Asian History, a Bibliographic Guide*, OUP, New York, 1962, p-3.

3 Hall, D.G.E., *A History of Southeast Asia*, Macmillan, London, 1955, p-3.

4 Cressey, G.B., *Asia's Lands and Peoples*, New York, 1963, p-258.

intense struggle between them for supremacy. Its cultural history is of marked interest, therefore, especially during the period of the Middle Ages in Europe, when under the stimulus of Indian influence, art and architecture developed to a pitch which bears comparison with anything the rest of the world can show.[5]

By the end of the Middle Ages, when the Portuguese appeared on the scene, Southeast Asia was divided into two main cultural areas: one called by the French scholars *L'Inde exterieure*, as mentioned earlier, where Indian influences predominated, and the other, consisting of Tongking, Annam and Cochin China, where, with the fall of the 'Hinduised' kingdom of Champa in the fifteenth century, Chinese influences had the mastery.[6]

The Indo-Aryan culture, itself initially alien to the soil of India, after fertilising it, spread over Southeast Asia, sometimes in a gush, sometimes in trickles, for nearly sixteen hundred years, adding new nuances and shades of meaning in different centuries, but never losing its idiom. The tone was indeed set by India, but all its syllables were not so.

Other nations have also contributed to the growth of the cultural and racial mosaic that Southeast Asia is. As H.B. Sarkar says, a culture is not born, Minerva-like, armed at all points from the start: it is a complex phenomenon fed by the streams of other civilisations coming from different lands at different points of time in manifold ways through various agencies. The process is a continuous one and is transmitted from one generation to another. The Indian civilisation was itself fertilised with elements flowing from Austric, Indo-Aryan, Persian, Greek, central Asian, Mongoloid, west Asian and others components of culture at various points of history,

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5 Hall, *ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

with the Europeans lending their quota at the last stage. The people of Southeast Asia too have received Austric, Mongoloid, Indo-Aryan, Perso-Arabic, and European transfusion of culture at different points of time in the march of its civilisation.[7] With the Neolithic and earlier megalithic, and then with the Dongson[8] and later megalithic, Southeast Asia had already entered upon its long history as an area of successive culture-contact. From the earliest times the pattern of Southeast Asian cultural history has been woven upon the background of the history of cultural forces in the surrounding areas of Asia. And as those cultural forces became more integrated and articulated, they began to exercise a correspondingly stronger and more easily defined influence.

In the Southeast Asian region, Indian culture and civilisation, as it developed through the centuries by a process of conflict, assimilation and evolution, faced the people and culture of this region in their native grandeur. A study of this interaction between two dissimilar people and cultures, the Indo-Aryan and the Austronesian, in the melting pot of Southeast Asia is a proof of how a primitive people, with only rudiments of culture, reacted to an alien, advanced civilisation. It was a moment of supreme importance in Asian history, because, in the fringe-areas of Southeast Asia, on the North and the West, stood two of the greatest powers of Asia, India and China, which, intentionally or unintentionally, entered into a race for the conquest of this region in two different ways at the dawn of its history. In this endeavour, India made more inroads, whereas China, with its imperialistic designs, failed to make much headway for a long time, except in the deltas of Tongking and North Annam. According to H.B. Sarkar, "Nursed by a spirit of haughty imperialism at home and

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6 *Ibid.*

7 Sarkar, H.B., *ibid.*, p-XV.

unsociableness or groupism sedulously encouraged in their personal life in the lands of their adoption, the Chinese could not join in the cultural stream of the country they settled in."[9] One can infer from the history of ancient Southeast Asia that the Chinese immigrants who lived for long years in places like Indonesia, carried on trade there and freely intermarried with the native population but could not appreciably influence the language and literature, art and religion, society and government of the country. Coedes opines that India's success was due to a radically different approach: it allowed the indigenous elements to grow in a free climate of natural growth. Hence, despite a similar start, the culture of the major ethnic groups in Southeast Asia, such as the Khmers, the Chams and the Javanese, differ in important respects. As Sarkar puts it, "If China could have got her way, such differences would have been stifled or considerably modified under the impact of Han imperialism, as the history of Central Asia reveals."[10] Thus the major aims of the Indian immigrants seem to have been non-political pursuits rather than political hegemony.

In the first and second centuries of the Christian era, as archaeological and Chinese evidence indicate, Indian culture and civilisation groped its way into certain parts of Southeast Asia. Wherever recognisable states existed in the uncertainly defined Southeast Asian region, the rulers and their courts gradually came under the influence of 'imported' religions, of Hinduism and Buddhism, and became their followers and patrons. These Indian religions were one of the most important features of a development that took place in the Southeast Asian region over many centuries, beginning early in the Christian era. The development has been variously referred to as

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8 In the coastal areas of Tongkin and Annam, where the Chinese culture blended with that of the indigenous population there developed what is known as the Dongson culture.

9 Sarkar, H.B., *Some Contribution of India to the Ancient Civilisation of Indonesia and Malaysia,* Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1970, p-1.

10 *Ibid.*, p-2.

'Indianisation', 'Hinduisation', 'Brahminisation' (after the main carrier-group of Indian culture influence, as we shall see in the forthcoming chapters), though once again there is a continuing disagreement among scholars as to just what the term means. However, a broad agreement does exist about certain features of the Indianisation process, as we shall shortly see.

Beginning in the second and third centuries AD there was a slow expansion of Indian cultural contacts with the Southeast Asian region. It was an uneven process, with some areas receiving Indian influence much later than others, and with degree of cultural impact varying from century to century. In the case of the Vietnamese, who were in this early period living under Chinese rule, the process of Indianisation never took place. For different reasons – distant geographical location – the Philippines, too did not participate in this process. Indianisation did not mean there was a mass migration of Indian populations into Southeast Asia. Rather, a relatively limited number of traders and priest-scholars brought Indian culture in its various forms to Southeast Asia where, much, but not all, of this culture was absorbed by the local population and added to their existing cultural patters.

There is, however, a need to maintain some caution in one's understanding. Because Indian culture 'came' to Southeast Asia, one must not infer about Southeast Asians as lacking a culture of their own. Indeed, the most generally accepted view is that the Indian culture made such an impact on Southeast Asia because it fitted easily with existing cultural patterns and religious beliefs present among populations that had already moved a considerable distance along the path of civilisation. Just because this was the case, the process of Indianisation should not be seen as simply involving a Southeast Asian acceptance of Indian cultural values. Indian culture was absorbed in

much of Southeast Asia, and Indian religions, art form, and theories of government came to be the greatest importance. But these various cultural contributions from Indian became Southeast Asian and in doing so changed their character. In some cases, moreover, quite fundamental features of Indian culture and society were not adopted. The caste system of India did not, for instance, accompany the practice of Hinduism in Southeast Asia, however much the early Southeast Asian kings might have felt that they were modelling themselves on Indian rulers and making use of caste terminology to describe themselves and their court. Southeast Asian art drew upon Indian artistic models, but then developed its own forms. Indian languages were used in government and religion. Yet while the inscriptions written in Sanskrit remain one of our most important source for early Southeast Asian history, the use of this language ultimately lapsed as Southeast Asians came to use Indian scripts to render their own languages.

Southeast Asians thus, in short, borrowed but they also adapted. In some very important cases they did not need to borrow at all. The techniques of wet rice cultivation seem to have been indigenous to Southeast Asia and not a technological import from another area. In addition, if there borrowing and adaptation that justifies the term, Indianisation, one must realise that our view of this process tends to be shaped by the evidence with which historians must work. We know infinitely more about the world of kings, courts, and priests than we do about the world of peasantry. The anonymous worker in the rice fields was probably little affected by Indianisation. The complex features of Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism – the form of Buddhism that first had an impact in Southeast Asia – were the concerns of his (the worker's) masters as he retained his fear and respect for the spirits that he believed were associated with both the animate and inanimate beings and objects that surrounded him.

The Indian ideas became popular especially among the rulers and men of religion. A reason for this might be that Indian culture provided an organised and developed pattern of doctrine and knowledge for Southeast Asians who were ready to grasp at new ideas promising greater religious and secular power. The legends that tell of the arrival in Southeast Asia of Brahmin priests from India often have a highly practical twist to them. The Brahmins of the legends bring wisdom and advice to Southeast Asian rulers, instructing them in statecraft as well as in religion, for Brahmins were scholars as well as priests. They could advise on the proper ways to conduct relations with a ruler's neighbouring states. They were astronomers as well as astrologers, and architects who shaped their temples not only in accordance with the demands of building technology but also in terms of religious symbolism and astronomical observation. Men such as these were invaluable advisors and it is not surprising that the Cambodian national birth legend,[11] to take only one example, sees the legendary marriage of a Brahmin with a local princess as the beginning of Cambodia's rise to greatness that culminated in the Angkorian period.

The objective of this Dissertation is to make a descriptive study of the spread of Indian culture in Southeast Asia and its impact thereon. As Indo-China was one of the most thoroughly influenced part of the region, this areas is being given primary emphasis. In analysing the effect of the South Asian culture and civilisation on those of the eastern neighbours, an endeavour is sought to be made towards examining the agents, aspects and areas of Indian influence. The succeeding chapter makes a critical study of the dissemination of Indian culture in Southeast Asia , and Indo-China in particular, delving into the causes and characteristics of the inter-regional cultural transmission. The third chapter of this Dissertation examines the nature of cross-

cultural influence in the Indianised kingdoms of Southeast Asia and seeks to delineate the various aspects of Indian influence that paved way for the process of Indianisation. Besides, the chapter also traces a brief history of the different Southeast Asian kingdoms that came under the Indian cultural spring, for instance, Funan, Champa, Khmer, Srivijaya and Sailendra Empire. This chapter thus gives a description of the cultural growth in Southeast Asia effected on the lines of the Indian subcontinent. The fourth and very crucial chapter of this work deals with the implications of the Indian cultural influence on the land and people of Southeast Asia. It takes a critical approach in bringing forth the different issue areas of the Southeast Asian society that drew from the Indian cultural fountain. The chapter aims at examining the impact or consequences of the Indian influence on Southeast Asia that left such a deep impact on the culture and civilisation of the different modern states that constitute the region today. The fifth and final chapter of this Dissertation brings out the summary and conclusion of the study by way of laying out the significant points discussed in the preceding chapters. It attempts to draw out the essence and references of emphasis as studied within the scope of the work.

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[11] Discussed later in this Dissertation.

Chapter II

Causes for the Spread of Indian Culture in Indo-China and other parts of Southeast Asia

Much before the historical era, Southeast Asia had built up a society and organisation of its own, based on irrigated civilisation, sharing the benefit and problems common to the inhabitants of monsoon Asia. There is no doubt that before the Indian cultural influence became widespread, Southeast Asia had fostered an indigenous civilisation. To be sure, it was not homogeneous, nor was it evenly spread. Yet there were certain common characteristics linking the peoples who developed a culture in the mainland deltas and those in the fertile, low-lying plain of Java. Among the major ethnic groups inhabiting the region are the Malays, Mons, Shans, Karens, Chins, Kachins, Burmans, Khmers, Indonesians, Laotians, Filipinos, Thais, Vietnamese, Chams, Hill Tribes, Sea Dayaks, Land Dayaks, Melanesians, Sabahnese, Highlanders, Indians and Chinese. In spite of their varying sources of migration to the region and differing periods of settlement chronology, they made Southeast Asia their home and evolved their own cultures in the new geographical condition undergoing diverse socio-cultural processes of miscegenation, adaptation and cultural assimilation.

It is on such an indigenous substratum that the later cultural superstructure, based on Indian and Chinese influences, was erected in many parts of Southeast Asia. Let because of the earlier separate development, the indigenous cultures never lost their identity, even as they developed a "family resemblance" derived from their common borrowings, mostly Indian. Large-scale penetration by Indian and Chinese cultures began around the Christian era, two or three centuries after the first major political consolidations in those countries in the third century BC, China under Shih Wang Ti and India under Ashoka Maurya[1].

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[1] Sardesai, D. R., *Southeast Asia: Past and Present*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1981, p. 14.

In the succeeding centuries, we note the gradual spread of the Indian cultural and commercial domain in Southeast Asia, except in the Tongking Delta. Here, Chinese cultural and political dominance was evident. The Sino-Indian cultural demarcation is noted by a French scholar-diplomat, Reginald Le May, thus:

On the map of Asia, there is a range of mountains running down the spine of Annam, and this range marks the boundary or dividing line between Chinese and Indian culture. Everything north and east of this range is culturally based on China, while everything west and south is based on India, and the two neither overlap nor clash.[2]

Southeast Asia did not become a cultural battlefield between China and India. In the field of religion, for instance, there was no rivalry between the two great Asian peoples to save souls in Southeast Asia.[3] On the contrary, the Chinese themselves adopted Buddhism, which was introduced from India by way of central Asia at the court of the Eastern Han Emperor in the first century A.D. Moreover, Confucianism, peculiar as it was to the Chinese society and polity, lacked the explorable orientation of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Throughout the first millennium scholars and pilgrims from China as well as Southeast Asia visited places of worship and scholarship in India. Many of them stopped half way in Borneo or Sumatra to learn Sanskrit and Pali before proceeding to India for advanced study. China and Southeast Asia were both areas of Indian religious influence in this period.

With the exception of the Vietnamese, most Southeast Asians followed the Indian cultural patterns. The absorptive, syncretic quality of Indian culture, itself enriched by numerous imported strands brought in by series of invaders of the Indian sub-continent, succeeded in striking riots in the Southeast Asian region, which adopted the alien cultural traits without on the process losing its own identity. The relative

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2 Le May, Reginald, *The Culture of Southeast Asia,* New Delhi, 1962, p.9

acceptability of Indian culture may be further attributed to geographical commonness, relative lack of Indian political ambition in the region and to the state of commerce between India and Southeast Asia. At the same time, it should be noted that the exact beginnings of the Indian culture in Southeast Asia, the agency of its transmission, the administrative mechanism of its implementation are still matters of scholarly speculation.[4] As Ian M. Mabbett has pointed out, the process of Indianisation[5] is nowhere reliably portrayed; what is portrayed by the earliest evidence is the operation of kingdoms already Indianised.

Geographically, India and Southeast Asia share the tropical monsoon climate, with all its implication for a way of life based on irrigated agriculture. In India, in the second millennium B.C., the immigrant Aryans had adopted some of the cultural traits of the pre-Aryan society. When Aryanised Indians migrated to Southeast Asia in the first millennium A.D., the people there discovered among the Indian immigrants a similar cultural base, a shared substratum, some of whose traits were pre-Aryan and common to all peoples of monsoon Asia[6]. Secondly, apart from the solitary instance of invasion of the Srivijaya Kingdom by the Indian king, Rajendra Chola in the eleventh century A.D., India did not show any political ambitions or expansionism in neighbouring Southeast Asia. Indian culture was welcomed in Southeast Asia because it came without political strings. Lastly, one should note that commerce has been an important carrier of culture throughout history. In Southeast Asia, diverse maritime peoples of the region – the Mons, the Funanese, the Chams, the Javanese, the Sumatrans, the Bugis and others – participated in the lucrative trade between China,

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3 Sardesai, *ibid.*, p. 15.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

5 Mabbett, I.M., "The Indianization of Southeast Asia: Reflections on the Historical Sources", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. VIII (2), Sep. 1977, p-55.

6 Paul Mus, translated from French and quoted in Sardesai, *ibid.*, p. 16.

India and the western world. Traditional Chinese shyness towards the sea left the field largely to Indians at first, and later, to the Arabs, Persians and Southeast Asians themselves. The overwhelming Indian participation on the East-West trade brought large numbers of Indian seamen and merchants to Southeast Asia, where the rulers were also the principal traders. Commercial contacts with the Indians must have developed in the Southeast Asian ruling elite an interest in the Indian culture.

However, the large-scale acculturation of the Southeast Asian elite on the Indian pattern could not have been the work of Indian traders, who belonged to the Vaisya class, or sailors, who came from the Shudra group. The prime agents of the process of Indianisation were indeed the Brahmans, the priestly class, who had monopolised knowledge of the sacred lore, the rites and rituals, customs and the laws. The initiative came from the regions ruling classes, who invited the Brahmins to serve at their courts as priests, astrologers and advisors. The Indian priesthood was used for the magical, sacred legitimation of dynastic interests and the domestication of subjects, and probably for the organisation of the ruler's territory into a state[7]. The Brahmins introduced Indian court customs and ensured their proper observance. They also underlined the divine nature of monarchy through a variety of virtual sacrifices and ceremonies, thereby enhancing the prestige and power of the Southeast Asian rulers in the eyes of their subjects. The Brahmins also helped administrative organisation on the Indian pattern and introduced laws based on Manu's code. The process of Indianisation also included the alphabetical basis (except for Vietnam) of the Southeast Asian scripts; importance of Sanskrit in the vocabulary; introduction of the Indian epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata and also works on a variety of subjects like philosophy,

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7 Van Leur, J.C., *Indonesian Trade and Society,* W. Van Hoeve, The Hague, 1955, pp.103-104.

astrology, medicine and mathematics, styles of art, dance, architecture and sculpture; and the religions lore, Brahminic, Buddhist or a combination of both.

Causes of Indian Expansion:

As we have seen earlier, relation between the western parts of Southeast Asia and India may well go back well into the prehistoric period. Traders and shippers from both sides were involved; and as we find at a much later date, groups of traders from particular places would reappear annually at the ports with which regular relations had seen built up and would reside there during the trading season dictated by the monsoons. One must, however, beware of using the term 'colonies' to describe these settlement, or reading backwards the condition of a later age when there is evidence that at certain emporia a nucleus of traders would remain behind during the wet monsoon to act as agents for the others and particularly to collect local produce pending the return of the trading fleets. Furthermore, since the myth of the land has grown up that the trading relation in the first instance, and the import of Indian culture in the second, have to be explained in terms of Indian enterprise alone, the point must be clearly made, as D.G.E. Hall cautions, that the Malays (Indonesians) were par excellence a sea-going people, and indications are enough that they resorted to the ports of India and Ceylon every bit as much as the shipmen of India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to the ports of Southeast Asia[8].

Sources. Exact information about the lands to the east of the Indian Ocean is conspicuously absent from Indian literature. There are purely incidental allusions,

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[8] Hall, D.G.E., *A History of South-East Asia,* Martin's Press, New York, fourth edition, 1981, pp.12-13.

almost impossible to interpret, in Sanskrit classical verse and Tamil court poetry[9]. Place-names like *Yavadvipa, Suvarnadvipa, Suvarnabhumi, Yamadvipa,* etc. find mention in texts like the *Ramayana,* the *Vayu Purana,* the Buddhist *Jatakas* and so on. But the only information to be drawn from all these references put together is that in India there was a vague idea of an 'el dorado' eastwards across the ocean. They tell us precisely nothing about the spread of Indian culture in that direction[10]. A statement in Kautilya's *Arthasastra,* recommending a king to people an old or a new country by sieving the territory of another or deporting the surplus of his own, has been taken to indicate an early ware of Indian immigrants to Southeast Asia before the Christian era. Though D.G.E. Hall has taken this more as imaginative interpretation rather than historically justified, it is certain that Indian culture was not brought to Southeast Asia by waves of immigrants.

Indigenous Southeast Asian writings and Chinese sources dealing with the early period, though invaluable, contain disappointingly slight information about the spread of Indian influence. Before the appearance of the earliest Sanskrit inscription at the end of the fourth century or later the Indian contact with the countries of Southeast Asia is obscure. European works too, like the classical texts, the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, Geographia, etc.,* give few accounts of the region regarding the diffusion of Indian culture.

In the late nineteenth century, when European scholars began the intensive study of the antiquities of Southeast Asia and began to realise the extent of the influence of Sanskrit culture upon the religion, art and architecture of the area, the tendency was to regard them as the results of a movement of Indian expansion

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9 Wheatley, Paul, *The Golden Khersonese: Studies in the Historical Geography of the Malay Peninsula before A.D. 1500,* Kuala Lumpur, 1961, pp.176-84.

10 Hall, *ibid.*, p-13.

eastwards. Attempts, therefore, were directed towards explaining it in terms of Indian conditions; Southeast Asia was at the receiving end and played a passive role. In due course Indian scholars joined in the fascinating chase for information, and made important contributions to the literature of the subject. Their work shows an enthusiasm which partly reflects the excitement of the quest, but largely also the nationalistic ardour that was sweeping through the educated classed of India as the twentieth century dawned.[11]

Some of the theories of Indian expansion towards Southeast Asia assume that it arose out of disturbed conditions in India, which caused large number of refugees to seek new homes across the sea. One theory attributes it to the bloody conquest of Kalinga on the eastern coast of India by Ashoka, the Mauryan emperor, in the third century B.C. and exodus of population it presumably provoked. But there is no evidence of such a movement, and Indian influence does not begin to show itself in Southeast Asia until several centuries later. At most, one can suppose that the fugitives, if there were any, opened the way to a more important later emigration.[12]

Another theory attributes the expansion to the pressure of the Kushana invasions of Indian in the first century A.D. The Yuehchi nomads, who gained control over Bactria shortly after 100 B.C., began some time later to expand southwards under Kushan control. Soon afterwards they dominated the Punjab and were pressing towards Gujarat and the Gangetic plain. Their leader became the Emperor Kanishka in 78 A.D., and from his capital at Peshawar ruled much of north India. There would be no

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11 R.K. Mukherjee, R.C. Majumdar, Phanindranath Bose and others talk about a *Greater India* and Southeast Asian countries as 'ancient Indian colonies'.

12 Coedes, G., *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, East-West Center Press, Honolulu, 1968, p. 19.

difficulty on the score of the time factor were there any evidence to prove that his conquest caused an emigration of Indians overseas. But there is none whatsoever.[13] Others again have assumed an exodus of Indians in consequence of the campaigns of Samudragupta, which, though unlikely, falls in the period of earliest Indian influence in Southeast Asia.

Another hypothesis is that high-caste Indian adventures were allowed to seek their fortunes overseas. But there is hardly any evidence to prove it.[14]

On the other hand, there are a number of indications that the Indian expansion in the first century A.D. was commercial in origin. According to Coedes,[15] the spread of Indian culture came as a result of an intensification of Indian trade with Southeast Asia early in the Christian era. He does not support the theory of a mass emigration of fugitives from India, but sees Indian trading settlements arising in Southeast Asian ports, through which the arrival was facilitated of more cultivated elements, priests and literati, able to disseminate Indian culture. He explains that the contact between the Mediterranean world and India following the campaign of Alexander, followed by the foundation of the Mauryan and Kushan empires on the one hand, and the rise of the Seleucid and Roman empires on the other, led to an important trade in luxury articles between the East and the West. During the two centuries preceding the Christian era India lost her principal source for the import of the precious metals when the movements of the nomads cut the Bactrian route to Siberia. Hence in the first century A.D. she sought to import them from the Roman Empire. But the grave effects of this upon the imperial economy caused the Emperor Vespasian to stop the flight of precious metals, and Indians had to seek for them elsewhere. They turned, Coedes says, to the

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13 *Ibid.*, p.20.
14 Hall, *ibid.*, 15.
15 Coedes, *ibid.*, pp.69-79.

Golden Khersonese, and the Sanskrit names, such as *Suvarnabhumi* and *Suvarnadripa*, which they gave to parts of Southeast Asia, indicate that to Indians they were famous chiefly for gold.

D.G.E. Hall has criticised Coedes' theory as suffering from the same defect, as those previously mentioned, of being based upon the assumption that the initiative in establishing relations between India and Southeast Asia was taken by Indians, and not Southeast Asians. Van Leur's comments, "To what extent Indonesian shipping played an active role is a question never raised!"[16] is quite apt. There is enough evidence to show that it was the Sumatran Malays who set off the trail in developing the all-sea trade-route to China, and that Malay seamen and ships played every bit as important a part as Indian in the trade of Southeast Asia with India and Ceylon.[17] The same is true of the diffusion of Indian culture. Van Leur also rejected the notion that trade and trader were disseminators of culture: most traders, according to him, belonged to the lower social groups, and ships' crews were often composed of African blacks and slaves. Such people, he posits, could not have been 'administrators of ritual, magical consecration and disseminators of rationalistic, bureaucratic written scholarship and wisdom'.[18] It was the work of the Brahmins. Nevertheless, it was through the operation of the trade that vital contacts were made, he points out; but they were made at court level and arose out of the dominant position rulers and nobles held in foreign trade. The Brahmanization of South India, Van Leur argues, was going on at the beginning of the Christian era, and South India was, more than any other part of the subcontinent, the trading region for Indonesia. Thus the princes of Indonesia were aware of what was

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16 Leur, J.C. Van, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History*, The Hague, 1955, p-92.

17 *Ibid.*, p.98-99.

18 *Ibid.*, p-99.

happening, and copied those of Dravidian India by inviting the Brahmin priesthood to their courts. The transmission was at court level and was the work of Brahmins.

In the light of the nature of the cultural elements transmitted from India to Southeast Asia, which we shall discuss on the next chapter, it can be shown that the diffusion had something to do with rulers and courts, not peoples; the Indian transmitters were court functionaries, not missionaries.[19] More often than not it was a case of an ambitious ruler, anxious to copy the grander style of the Indian courts, employing Brahmins to consecrate him as a god-king in accordance with the ideas and ritual of the Indian classics. It was essential, when forcing other rulers into a state of vassalage, to have consecration of this sort whereby the worship was established of a *linga* as the king's sacred personality and he himself was identified with Siva.[20] Thus Van Leur has emphasised the role of the Brahmin against the Indian colonisation theory of cultural diffusion.

A thorough examination of the whole question of the transmission of Indian culture was made by F.D.K. Bosch.[21] He gave careful consideration to the two immigration theories propounded by Dutch scholars; he labels them respectively the 'kshatriya-hypothesis' and the 'vaisya-hypothesis'. The former, which was propounded by C.C. Berg, saw Indian culture introduced as a result of the activities of Indian warrior immigrants, who played the part of the robber barons described in the Javanese Panji cycle of narratives, marrying native women end breeding a *kraton,* society of mixed blood. Moens took the idea a stage further by seeking to link the accession of new Indonesian dynasties with the fall of dynasties in India followed by the emigration of the scions to the region. The latter, expounded by N.J. Krom, was to the effect that

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19 Hall, *ibid.*, p-19.
20 *Ibid.*, p-19.
21 See Bosch, F.D.K., "C.C. Berg and Ancient Javanese History", New York, 1956, p. 8.

Indian penetration was peaceful, and that it began with traders who settled and married native women, thereby introducing Indian culture. In this way, he suggested, the Indonesians voluntarily accepted the higher Hindu civilisation. This applied to the other 'Hinduised' or 'Indianised' states of Southeast Asia too.

Bosch has criticised these hypotheses on several grounds.[22] Concluding that it was at the royal residence that the new culture was to be found with its blending of the native and Hindu elements. It was, he explains, reminiscent of such things as the learned manuscript, the code of law, the cell of the recluse and the monastery; it belonged to the sphere of religion, and its practitioners were, like the scribes and scholastics of medieval Europe, 'clerks'.[23]

Besides Brahminism, Buddhism played a very important part in the spread of Indian culture in Southeast Asia. In fact, Coedes seems to suggest that it wet the path and appeared in Southeast Asia before Brahminism. Certainly the number of images of Buddha of the Amaravati school that are associated with the earliest archaeological sites showing Indian influence are significant. Amaravati, on the river Krishna about eight miles from the east coast of India, was the home of a great school of Buddhist sculpture which flourished especially during the century from A.D. 150 to 250. Bosch describes the role of the many Buddhist pilgrims who flocked eastwards to propagate the ideals of Buddhism. Unlike Brahmins they were missionaries. They would appear at the local courts (in Southeast Asia), preach the law, convert the ruler and his family, and found an order of monks. This stream of devotees from India, according to Bosch, would stimulate a much stronger countercurrent towards India of native *bhikshus* bound for the holy land of Buddha and famous Indian missionaries, where they would often make lengthy stays.

The Nalanda monastery near Rajgrih in the old kingdom of Magadha, attracted vast numbers of pilgrims from abroad for a time it was the largest and most important Buddhist centre of the Mahayana school. They went in search of sacred manuscripts, relics and images. Southeast Asian pilgrims were so numerous that a monastery was founded there for them, and a famous inscription there dating from about 860, and referred to by the students of epigraphy as "Balaputra's Charter" records the donation of villages for its upkeep by a Pala king. These were the people, says Bosch, who conveyed Buddhist art to their homelands where it took root 'miraculously' causing architecture, sculpture, painting and poetry to flourish. Buddhism, Bosch opines, had a far greater popular append than Hinduism, which was 'an esoteric doctrine transmitted from guru to pupil' and confined to the Brahmin caste. But if Buddhism set the trail, Hinduism made a big impact when it revived in India under Gupta protection between the 4th and 6th centuries. When the Chinese pilgrim, Fa Hsein, on his way homewards after visiting India, found heresy and Brahminism flourishing in Java, Hinduism, Bosch opines, was new to Indonesia, and it was brought there by gurus of the Saiva-Siddhanta sect, who made a big impact upon the ruling class at the kraton because of the supernatural powers with which they claimed to be invested. Through the Brahmin, Siva could enter the king, conferring immortality upon him; through the Brahmin divine omnipotence could be invoked to maintain world order; and consecration by the Brahmin gave a higher sanctity to al the festivals of the popular religion. There was, therefore, a demand for Siddhanta initiates in Southeast Asia; rulers sent messengers to India to invite them, and on arrival they were given influential offices at the *kratons*.[24] Bosch, later, came down more strongly against the theory of Indian expansion (1952). He claimed that the evidence showed that Indian influence spread there mainly through

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22 For a tabulation of Bosch's criticisms of the Dutch hypotheses, see Hall, *ibid.*, pp.19-20.

local initiative in assimilating such elements of Indian culture as attracted them rather than as a result of Indian effort at cultural expansion.[25] It came about through the great number of Southeast Asians going to visit Indian sacred places and studying under Indian teachers.

Coedes has described the old civilisation of Cambodia and Java as an Indian superstructure upon an indigenous substratum.[26] As per Hall, Bosch comes nearer to the truth when he describes the old Hindu-Southeast Asian culture as the product of the 'fecundation' (impregnation) of the 'living matter' of the native society by the Indian spirit, and goes on to explain that a new life was procreated which was to develop into an independent organism. But, Hall cautious, one must be very careful to distinguish between the court culture and that of the people, for it was to be a very long time before Indian cultural elements were in any real way absorbed by the mass of the people themselves. Their traditional culture continued to prevail. What really happened was that the Southeast Asian peoples over a long period of their early history absorbed into their traditional culture patterns imported Buddhist and Hindu elements, which they adjusted to their own peculiar requirements and outlook. It was not until the thirteenth century onwards Theravada Buddhism, and somewhat later Islam, began to be propagated as popular religions, that external influences began to make any real impact upon the ordinary villager; and even then it was a much slower process. Moreover, in coming to terms with the indigenous cultures the imported religions were forced to change their character to a marked degree. And in the case of the Theravada countries the propagation of the faith was carried out by Southeast Asians, notably

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23 Bosch, *ibid.*, pp.8-10.
24 *Ibid.*, p-19.
25 See Hall, *ibid.*, p-21.
26 Coedes, *ibid.*, pp. 30-35.

Mon monks, who went to Ceylon to study, to collect canonical texts, and to receive orthodox orientation.

Though the sea was the obvious way of travel between India and Southeast Asia – the voyage from the Coromandal Coast to the Straits of Malacca was a comparatively short one, and at the right time of the year was easy and safe even for smaller vessels – there was, however, a northerly land route from India to China through Assam, Upper Burma and Yunnan. Historical evidence shows it to have been in use as early as 128 B.C. when Chang Ch'ien discovered the products of Szechwan and Bactria. Steps were taken to develop it, and in A.D. 69, for its better control and protection, China founded the prefecture of Yungchang across the upper Mekong with its headquarters east of the Salween, about 60 miles from the present Burma frontier. Along this route in A.D. 97 travelled envoys from the eastern parts of the Roman Empire to Yungchang. The Buddhist pilgrim It-sing tells us that it was used tat the end of the 3rd century by 20 Chinese monks, who went to the court of Sri-Gupta.

In the fourth century A.D. China relaxed her hold on the Burma frontiers to such a degree that in 342 A.D. the Yungchang prefecture was abolished. Thereafter the route was apparently closed until Ko-lo-feng (748-79 A.D.) of Nanchao reopened it, and thereby promoted much economic development in northern Burma and contacts between the Pyu of Burma and the T'ang court in China. Evidence discovered in Pyu sites tends to show that some Indian influence penetrated overland into Upper Burma. By the same route it came also to the Tai kingdom of Nanchao. But the usual way of communication between India and Burma was by sea.

To reach the countries on the eastern parts of Indo-China mainland ships had to pass through either the Malacca or the Sunda Straits. Owing to the prevalence of piracy in these narrow waters travellers sought to avoid them by using a number of short cuts

overland. Archaeological discoveries along these overland routes attach their importance, not only in the early days of Indian penetration, but later also when the empire of Srivijaya maintained strict control over the Straits and forced all ships to put in at one or other of its ports.

The favourite short cut was across the narrow Isthmus of Kra, from Takua Pa on the western side to Ch'aiya on the eastern, or from Kedah to Singora. Farther north there was a route from Tavoy over the Three Pagodas Pass and thence by the Kanburi river to the valley of Menam. Two ancient sites, P'ong Tuk and P'ra Pathom, lie on this route. Further still to the north lay a route to the Menam region by Moulmein and the Raheng pass. Later on these last two routes were used by the Burmese on their invasions of Siam, notably on eh 16 and 18th centuries. More recently they were used by the Japanese to invade Burma during the Second World War. There was yet another overland route used by early travellers. It led from the Menam to the Mekong and passed over the K'orat plateau via Si T'ep to the Bassak region, which was the cradle of the Khmer kingdom of Cambodia.[27]

Thus we see that the spread of the Indian culture to the different parts of Southeast Asia was a result of the endeavours and initiatives taken by people from both the places. Exogenous factors like, the need to benefit from the Indian teachings and teachers, knowledge and sanskritising forces (like Brahmins), trade in commodities, etc., as well as exogenous factors like the desire to spread Indian religion and artefacts, lure of trade and riches, territorial expansion campaigns and so on worked towards transplantation of the Indian civilisation into Southeast Asia. Though the whole process was not bereft of conflicts, it was relatively peaceful and assimilative in nature with Indian culture gaining a wide acceptance among the people of the region, especially the

ruling class and the elite. Agents and influences travelled from both sea and overland routes and in the course had an expansive reach. The various factors analysed in the preceding pages milted in the creation of small Indian states in Southeast Asia governed by leaders bearing Sanskrit names, of which we shall discuss in the succeeding chapters.

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[27] Hall, *ibid.*, pp.23-24.

Chapter III

The Nature of Influence from India and the History of Indianised Kingdoms in Southeast Asia

As we saw in the preceding pages, Southeast Asia became a confluence, a meeting ground, of two seemingly dissimilar cultures, the Aryanised culture of India and the Austro-Asiatic or Austronesian culture of Southeast Asia, facing each other in the racial and cultural milieu of the region, the latter absorbing much of the former as the needs of the races concerned would be prepared to admit. In this process, the tribal society, while retaining the best that was in their culture, was gradually brought within the framework of the Indian political models, with their kingship of divine origin, priestly hierarchy, royal court, magic and superstitions of the native world. The incoming Indians married sometimes in the families of the native chieftains and such ladies, knowing native society much better than their husbands, were along with others, in the vanguard to find a new social and religious order of a composite type.[1] The upper caste of the society, convinced of the many good points in the Indo-Aryan culture, also got attracted and their combined efforts initiated a process, whereby Indianised *kampongs* emerged. These were strengthened by the seasonal arrival of the missionaries and the mercantile community on their way to China and back. The tribal chieftains, initiated into the magico-religious rites of Indian flavour, had greater opportunity than the common people had to accelerate the process of Indian elements into their culture. In other cases, Indian adventurers directly installed themselves in power, as in cases of Kaundinya I and II, Chandana in Funan, while the patriarchal line of succession in the families of Mulavarman in Borneo/Kaliwantan and Purnavarman in west Java in the midst of patriarchal societies seem to indicate that their ancestors captured power in a similar way. The situation was highly complex and varied from state to state. The Indianised way of life, mixed up with native elements, was thus installed at the upper levels of society, and small kingdoms grew up throughout Southeast Asia at different times in different contexts. Such states

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[1] Sarkar, H.B., *Cultural Relations Between India and Southeast Asian countries,* ICCR and Motilal Banarsidas, New Delhi, 1985, p. 133.

flourished in those areas which lay on the sea-route between Indian and China, and these were already in some places a sedentary population who had emerged out of the neolithiums and were the legatees of the cultural heritage of the Austric of Austro-Asiatic races.

The reason for this migration, as we have discussed earlier, was mainly economic. The wealth of Southeast Asia, the minerals as well as fertile soil were attractions for the Indians; the merchants too broke journey and exchanged commodities on barter basis. These economic motives were tinged with a spirit of adventure.[2] Even the name given to the countries concerned is a recognition of this urge for economic gain. The names are fairly early and occur in Kautilya's Arthasastra, the Pali Niddesa, the Jatakas, the Katha-literature and hosts of other works. The names have been derived from the world of plants and minerals, such as Suvarnabhumi (The Land of Gold), Takkola (Land of Aromatic Plants), Narikeladvipa (The Island of Coconuts), Karpuradvipa (The Island of Camphor), Yavadvipa (The Island of Barley), Suvarnadvipa (The Island of Gold), and so on. Some of these names became so popular that classical authors like Pomponius Mela (A.D. 43) speak of Chryse (The Land of Gold) and Argyre (The Land of Silver). The idea of fabulous wealth available in Southeast Asia haunted the imagination of the Indians as well as Western and Arab geographers for many centuries. This has been bluntly stated by an early Chinese author in respect of the kingdom of P'an-p'an: " In the country are numerous Brahmins who came from India in search of wealth. They are in high esteem with the king."[3]

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2 *Ibid.*, p.134.

3 Text and translation in Wheately, P. The Golden Khersonese, Kuala Lumpur, 1961, p-49.

Gabriel Ferrand has written much about the Indianisation of Java that may contain a good deal of guesswork but that can be applied (with some reservations) to other countries of Southeast Asia.[4] To cite a few extracts:

The true picture must have been something like this: two or three Indian vessels sailing together eventually arrived at Java. The newcomers established relations with the chiefs of the country, earning favour with them by means of present, treatment of illnesses, and amulets. In all the countries of primitive civilisation where I have lived, from the Gulf of Aden and the east coast of Africa to China, the only effective means of peaceful penetration is the same: welcoming gifts, distribution of curative medicines and of preventive charms against all ills and dangers, real and imaginary. The stranger must be or pass for a rich man, a healer, and a magician. No one could use such procedures better than an Indian. He would undoubtedly pass himself off as of royal or princely extraction, and his host could not help but be favourably impressed.

Immigrants to this 'terra incognita', the Indians did not use interpreters. Thus they had to learn the native language which was so different from their own, thereby surmounting the first obstacle to acquiring the freedom of the city among the Mlecch'as. Next came union with the daughters of the chiefs; only then were the strangers able to use their civilising and religious influence with any chance of success. Their native wives, instructed for this purpose, became the best propaganda agents for the new ideas and faith; since they were princesses or noble daughters, if they affirmed superiority over the manners, customs, and religions inherited from the ancestors, their compatriots could scarcely contradict them.

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[4] Coedes has translated and quoted Gabriel Ferrand's work from French in his *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, *ibid.*, pp. 22-24.

The Javanese had no equivalent terms to use in transmitting these social, moral, and religious innovations. It was therefore necessary to impose Indian terminology in all these domains, terminology that is still being used in Indonesia after two thousand years.

Ferrand based this hypothetical reconstruction on his personal experience of the Islamic penetration among the Sakalava of Madagascar, R.O. Winstedt, an expert on the Indonesian world, paraphrases this passage in his work on the history of the Malays[5] and adds other parallels: "In time a few (of the Indians) married into leading Indonesian families and brought Hindu ideas of kingship, just as more than a thousand years later the Muslim Tamils married into the families of the Sultans and Bendaharas of Malacca. The coming of the Hindu appears to have been very similar to the later arrival of the Muslim from India and the Hadramant, the Brahmin and the Kshatriya taking the place to be usurped by the Sayid."

Beginning with individual or corporate enterprises, peaceful in nature, without a preconceived plan, comprising mainly of merchants, came the cultivated elements in the wake of the former, belonging to the first two castes. These elements had a large role in influencing the shaping of the civilisations of Southeast Asia, so profoundly impregnated with Indian religion and Sanskrit literature.[6] In this regard, one scholar has come forward with the hypothesis that the Brahmins, whom the merchants described as famous for their magic powers, were summoned by the native chiefs to augment their power and prestige.[7] There is a proof of this – in Funan, the first kingdom about which the Chinese give us precise information, some officials were

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5 Winstedt, Richard O., *The Malays, A Cultural History*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1961

6 Coedes, *ibid.*, p-23.

7 Van Leur, Jacob C., *Indonesian Trade and Society*, The Hague, 1975, p. 30.

Indians, as is shown by the fact that their family name was the ethnic term *Chu*[8] by which the Chinese designated people native to India.

Buddhism also had an influence in increasing maritime commerce for by abolishing caste barriers and exaggerated concern for racial purity (for the Indian converts), it removed the shackles previously placed on their maritime voyages by the fear of being polluted by the contact with barbarians. Moreover, its missionary spirit was also a positive factor. In many cases, the most ancient evidences of Indianisation in Southeast Asia are the images of Dipankara Buddha, who enjoyed great favour with the seamen frequenting the eastern islands. But most of the kingdoms founded in Southeast Asia soon adopted the Saivaite conception of royalty, based on the Brahmin-Kshatriya pairing and expressed in the cult of the royal linga. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri writes that, "...just as in classical times the Greek colonists carried with them the fore from the sacred hearth of the city, a token of their filial relation to the land they left in search of new abodes, so also the Hindu colonists carried a cult with them, the cult of Saivism in which Siva played the role of the guardian of the state, thanks to the kind offices of his chief devotee...."[9]

Nature of Influence

In the light of the distinct categories of the agents and subjects of the cultural transmission, Coedes enumerates four kinds of nature of the cultural elements transmitted from India to Southeast Asia[10]:

1. A conception of royalty characterised by Hindu or Buddhist cults;

2. Literary expression by means of the Sanskrit language;

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8 Abbreviation of T'en-chu, i.e., India, as suggested by Paul Pelliot.

9 Sastri, K.A. Nilkakanta, *South Indian Influences in the Far East*, Bombay, 1949, p. 47.

10 Quoted in Hall, *ibid.*, p. 18.

3. A mythology taken from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas* and other Sanskrit texts containing a nucleus of royal tradition and traditional genealogies of royal families of the Ganges region; and

4. The observance of the *Dharmasastras*, the sacred law of Hinduism, and in particular the *Manava Dharmasastra* or 'laws of Manu'.

The role of the Brahmins in the founding of kingdoms

The earliest records bearing on Malaysian, Indonesian and Indo-Chinese republics indicate the important role played by Indian Brahmins in the stupendous task of humanising and civilising a vast concourse of humanity living in this area. The Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas no doubt played their part well, but the dissemination of Indian culture seems to has been primarily done by the community of Indian Brahmins. Of known Brahmin clans, a branch of the Kaundinyas of North India, which exerted considerable influence in the region of Mysore in the second century A.D. took a leading part in this mission. It is a significant fact that the first and second founders of Funan bore the name of Kaundinya and the family name of the king of Bali (Po'li) was also the same, while the progenitor of the dynasty of king Mulavarman was a Kundunga, which also reminds us of the Kaundinya class of India. That this clan also played a significant role in the history of Malaya appears clearly from the fact that king Kaundinya II of Funan was a Brahmin from P'an-p'an, a Malayan state.[11] There were hundreds of Brahmins from other clans and denominations who also participated in the process of Indianising many countries of Southeast Asia.

[11] For details see Coedes, 1968; Hall; Sarkar,1985, *ibid.*

There are varying views concerning the contribution of the three principal *varnas* – the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas, to the foundation of Indian settlements in Southeast Asia. Regarding Indonesia, Dutch scholars like Berg and Moens[12] have put forward the Kshatriya-theory, which postulates that the adventurous and the knight-errants of the Hindu society were responsible for the foundation of the Hindu settlements in Southeast Asia (discussed in the previous chapter). Krom, on the other hand, demonstrated that native elements predominated both in organisation and administrative machinery of the state and he postulated the Vaisya-hypothesis. According to Krom, the process of Indianisation of Southeast Asia is a measure of peaceful penetration which originated from the community of traders and merchants who, after settlement, entered into matrimonial relations with the natives and propagated Indian culture through their good offices. Bosch[13] has challenged both these hypothesis saying that the Brahmins were the culture-bearers par excellence in the region. He says: "Again and again, in Hindu-Indonesian civilisation we meet the elements of a theoretical and scholastic character, elements which remind us of the manuscript, the code of law, the recluse's cell, the monastery, and which undoubtedly are just as incompatible an environment of warriors or traders as they are in harmony with an intellectual sphere ... ."[14]

These remarks by Bosch hold good for Champa and Kambuja as well, and is also largely true for Malaya. If the traditional account of Burma can be relied on in respect of the first phase of colonisation, the Kshatriyas played an important role in it. Still of all the Indian communities the contribution of the Brahmins in the process of Indianising Southeast Asian lands is of far-reaching character. The rulers of many of

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12 See Coedes, and Hall, *ibid.,* for a detailed analysis.

13 Hall, *ibid.*, pp. 19-25.

these places also eager for a Brahminic consecration, which involved the utterance of mystic formulas and Sanskrit mantras unintelligible to them but pregnant with magical powers, strengthened their dynasties in this way. The Brahmins who settled down in these lands and became the courtiers of such kings further consolidated these dynasties, on request or out of gratitude, by pushing their genealogies back to the gods and epic heroes of India. The Brahmins also played a leading role in the Hinduisation of Malaya taking part in various spheres of life in the different kingdoms.

The Brahmins in Southeast Asia did not always function as priests or courtiers, though these appear to be their principal job. They have sometimes founded kingdoms too. Thus the Brahmins were the chief transmitters of culture to Southeast Asia constituting the most important element in the Indian community of the region in the earliest phase of its development. The indigenous waves of the Indian settlers played a useful role in the dissemination of Indian culture in the area they settled in. this process was facilitated by the glamour of a superior culture which manifested itself in the supernatural and magical power of writing, the attractive quality of Indian merchandise, the *mantras* and charms of magical import, religious festivities and rituals of supernatural significance. These combined to awaken a sense of awe and respect in the superstitious mind of the native population who had very few of these. Their awe and wonder helped in propagation of Indian culture.

All such phenomena indicate that along with other factors about which we have discussed earlier, the supernatural or magical element also played a significant role in the introduction of Indian culture in Southeast Asia. The Kaundinya Brahmins, whom we have already referred to, showed themselves to have possessed this supernatural power and aided by other favourable circumstances, gained the

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[14] Quoted and discussed in Sarkar, H.B., *Some Contribution of India to the Ancient Civilization*

upper hand. Along with this or in the wake of these, Kaundinya Brahmins the cult of Agastya was also introduced in Southeast Asia. The worship of Siva and his chief devotee Agastya unites in a cultural and spiritual mesh the far-flung terrains of South India, Champa, Camsodia, Indonesia.[15]

Buddhism in Southeast Asia

The Buddha, a teacher of heterodox doctrines unacceptable to the Brahminical system, flourished near the end of the sixth century B.C. and in the early fifth. Buddhist writing about him, however, are, from a historian's point of view, so unreliable that it is impossible to distinguish between fact and pious fiction, between what he actually taught and what his followers believed it to have been.[16]

Whatever the facts were, it was the traditional story that took root in Southeast Asia: from being a kshatriya prince, through his renunciation and enlightenment to his death *(nirvana)*. He taught a moral code with its justification within the metaphysics of Hinduism. Thus he accepted the Hindu doctrines of *Karma* and transmigration, and Southeast Asian Buddhists interpreted these to mean that the soul migrates to another body, the matter of which is determined by the balance of merit and demerit accumulated previously, resulting in a higher rebirth or one lower than the human scale among the lower animals. The fundamental truth is that life's supreme characteristics are unreality, impermanence and misery; deliverance from it must be achieved by accepting the Four Noble Truths and following the Noble Eightfold Path. The division of Buddhist teachings into two sacred languages, Sanskrit and Pali, began during the first century B.C., the Sarvastivadins using the Sanskrit canon and the Sthaviravadins the Pali. The two sects developed divergent ideas which became

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of Indonesia and Malaysia, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1970, p.29-30.

15 Sarkar, *ibid.*, p-37.

the basis for the division into Mahayana and Hinayana. The Hinayana Theravadins, using the Pali Scriptures, lost ground in India, but held firm in Ceylon; and it was from there that the faith spread to the Southeast Asian countries now in the Theravada fold, Burma (Myanmar), Siam (Thailand), Cambodia and Laos.

The Mahayana contained much pre-Buddhist Indian thought, and accepted cults and ideas of the peoples to whom it spread, the Chinese, Tibetans, Koreans, Japanese and Vietnamese. The Sanskrit scriptures were translated into their languages. The most popular Boddhisatva (previous existential forms of Buddha) in Southeast Asia was Avalokitesvara, the Lord who looks down, who under the name of Lokesvara adoms the many towers of the Bayon temple at Angkor Thom. He shows pity on suffering humanity. In art he is shown bearing on his chignon the image of Amitabha, the Buddha of meditation. But there were others also, eg., Manjushri[17] and Padmapani.[18] At a grimmer level there was Vajrapani[19] whose cult was popular in Java and Sumatra.

In this context also, the cults of the Siva-Buddha, and the female deities of Hinduism, come to play a significant part in Southeast Asian beliefs and Practices. Buddha's and Bodhisatvas have wives who symbolise their husband's *sakti* in its active aspects. Mahayana Buddhism became deeply involved in the magic and folklore, basic to Southeast Asia, long before the coming of Indian influence.[20]

Theravada Buddhism gradually became separated as Hinayana, from Mahayana during the early centuries of the Christian era, and Ceylon, the home of the Pali canon. Traditional asserts that it was reduced to writing in Ceylon between 89

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16 Hall, *ibid.*, p-43.

17 The Bodhisatva of thought and knowledge, holding in one hand a naked sword and a book in the other.

18 The lotus-bearer.

19 The thunderbolt-bearer, the foe of evil

and 77 B.C. Before that time, however, it had been firmly established by a Sinhalese monks' council. The Theravadins regard their religion as the purest form of Buddhism. But it also has had to come to terms with Southeast Asian animism and fertility cults over the centuries. Moreover, the writings of commentators have affected its teachings, besides giving rise to sectarianism. Thus its originally simple doctrine developed in various pedantic forms.

The Introduction of the Indian Art of Writing

It is to the everlasting credit of the Brahmin migrants to Southeast Asia that they introduced the art of writing, undoubtedly, the greatest invention of humanity, to Southeast Asia. Apart from introducing India, this art of writing also enabled the people of Southeast Asia to get equipped with Indian linguistic materials to develop their own vernacular and compose many beautiful original works. Much of the cultural heritage of Southeast Asia would have been lost forever if its people had not adopted at an early stage the Indian art of writing. In fact, all the major scripts of Southeast Asia, which today look very much different from those of India, owe their common origin to the late variety of the Indian Brahmi scripts.

The oldest reference to books and archives of Southeast Asia occurs in the Chinese texts. The history of the Tsin dynasty (265-419 A.D.) mentions that Funan had archives and books and alphabets resembling those of the Hu, who used a script of Indian origin. Similarly the history of the Liang Dynasty (502-56 A.D.) tells us that a Chinese mission went to Funan in the sixth century to collect Buddhist texts and monks for China. The king of Funan sent the monk Paramartha or Gunaratna of

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[20] Hall, *ibid.*, p-46.

Uyyayini (Ujjaini) with 240 bundles of Buddhist texts to China, of which he translated 70 texts into Chinese.[21]

Although the texts of Indian writing physically existed in Southeast Asia in the early centuries of the Christian era, scholars differ regarding the original homeland of these scripts. They have variously affiliated these scripts to the central, western ad southern parts of India. It is generally admitted that the earliest specimen of the Indian art of writing in Southeast Asia is provided by the Vo-canh inscription of Funan, which has been written in the late Brahmi script.[22]

As per the palaeography of the inscriptions of maritime Southeast Asia including Java and Borneo, Punarvarman's inscriptions reveal, according to some scholars, affinity with the alphabets used by the Pallavas, the Kadambas, the western Ganges and several others who have written in the same type of the late southern variety of the Brahmi scripts or in early Telegu-Kannada.[23]

In the mainland Southeast Asia, the evolution of the palaeography in Burma and Siam was also influenced by the Indian scripts. According to D.C. Sircar, although the Sanskrit inscription of the Chandras of Arakan written in verse resemble in style the rewards of king Mulavarman of Borneo, the scripts of these records are in the late Brahmi of Eastern India. At other places in the region too, the scripts are in Brahmi of southern and western India.[24]

According to H.B. Sarkar, there is better documentation for the study of the origin of the scripts of Cambodia, which is the successor of Funan state. Indian scripts were widely adopted here but these developed on the soil and underwent similar

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21 Bagchi, P.C., *India and China,* Calcutta, 1958, p-143.
22 Sarkar, 1985, *op.cit.*, p-169.
23 *Ibid.*, p-173. Also, see Sircar, D.C., *Indian Epigraphy*, 1958, p-212.
24 Sarkar, 1985, *ibid.*, p. 170.

modifications as in different parts of India.[25] This is also reflected in the introduction of the pre-Nagari script of eastern India.

Thus, in Coedes' words: " The native languages have not only been enriched and made more flexible by India; they have above all been stabilised, thanks to he use of Indian script. The common origin of the Mon, Burmese, Thai, Khmer, Cam, Javanese and Balinese systems of writing is still recognisable in an astonishingly divergent linguistic and literary milieu, which is hard to realise at first."[26]

The Role of the Indian Dharmasastras in the Establishment of the Rule of Law

As already seen Sanskrit language and literature played a conspicuous role in the development of classical languages in Southeast Asia, particularly in Burma, Kambuja (Cambodia), Champa and Indonesia. Hundreds of Sanskrit inscriptions written according to the rules of Sanskrit rhetoric and prosody bear eloquent testimony to the richness of the legacy. The *Manusamhita* also constituted the matrix of the judicial literature of this vast region. Outside India, it was studied not only in the neighbouring Ceylon in the medieval period, but also in Kambuja, Champa, Thailand, Burma, Malays and Indonesia. This unique position of the *Manusamhita* was also recognised in the ancient period according to many of the texts.

Kambuja had quite a few inscriptions quoting *Manusamhita* describing the ideals and practices of the state's legal system. They also throw some light on the proceedings of the law-courts of the country. After a complaint was lodged in the court, the court's reciter of the *Dharmasastras* (Indian law-books) quoted Sanskrit texts relevant to the case and all legal points of the case were covered by Sanskrit

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25 *Ibid.* p. 170.

26 Coedes, *The Indianized States*, *ibid.*, pp. 254-55.

terminology, but the factual presentation of the case was made in vernacular. Native legal proceedings were thus set up in the framework of Indian legal system.[27]

In ancient Indonesia, the eighth and ninth chapters of the *Manusamhita*, which deal with civil and criminal cases, provided the matrix for its principal legal textbooks. These chapters of the *Manusamhita* still constitute, according to Leclere, the case for modern legal system of Kambuja.[28] But as in Indonesia, the law had to be modified on account of local conditions and the influence of Buddhism, which became the religion of the people in later times. The Buddhist religion, on account of its democratic character, gave the women higher status than was provided for them in the ancient Hindu laws.

The neighbouring kingdom of Champa, hemmed in by hostile neighbours in the north and the west, could not cultivate the finer elements of culture and civilisation as assiduously as Kambuja, but still it was a replica of Kambuja in these respects on a minor scale. Even though the *Dharmasastras* may not have been studied wholly be the king, they were studied at least by the Brahmin scholars of contemporary Champa.

The jurisprudence system of Burma, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaya also reflect similarly, strong and unmistakable Indian connection.

A thorough survey of the ancient jurisprudence of Southeast Asia makes it abundantly clear that the *Manusamhita* played a dominant role in the foundation of the legal system in individual states of Southeast Asia, but when a detailed examination is made on the basis of available data-literary and epigraphic-it appears that the practices of the *Manusamhita* were modified in all these places to meet the

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27 Coedes, *The Making Of South-East Asia, ibid.* p-223.

28 See Sarkar, 1985, *ibid.*, p-181.

demands of the customary laws, etc. the general picture seems to have been similar in all states of Southeast Asia as had adopted or assimilated Indian culture and ways of life, with local traits introduced here and there in varying degrees to meet the demands of the local situation.

History of Indianised Kingdoms in Southeast Asia

So far as historical evidence goes, the first signs of states/kingdoms formed in the manner as discussed in the preceding sections show that they were in existence by the end of the second century A.D. They appear in three regions: (a) that of lower Mekong and its delta, (b) north of Hue in modern Annam, and (c) the northern part of the Malay Peninsula. They probably existed elsewhere, say in Arakan and lower Burma, but the evidence is lacking. In the absence of archaeological and epigraphical material earlier than the fifth century, our sources of information for the earlier period are the place-names in the *Niddesa* and Ptolemy's *Geographica*, and the references in the Chinese dynastic annals to relations with the states of Southeast Asia.

Funan. Funan was a Hindu kingdom in present Cambodia founded, according to the Chinese records (by K'ang T'ai and Chu Ying), in the first century A.D. The Chinese account says that an Indian Brahmin, Kaundinya (Hunt'ien/Hieun T'sang) arrived in Funan from the south by sea, and married the local chieftainess, Liuyeh (Willow Leaf), after subduing her people. But Funan's earliest record is the rock-inscription of Vo-canh, a Buddhist document in Sanskrit and a south Indian script belonging to the first half of the third century.[29] About the same time Funan sent the first of many embassies to China. Funan was certainly a most important centre of

[29] Sardesai, D.R., *ibid.*, pp.20-21.

Indian rule and influence. Its capital was at Vyadhapura (near modern Cambodian capital of Pnom Penh) and it made a vast territorial expansion under its greatest ruler Fan Shih-man. Starting from a settlement on the southern tip of present Vietnam, it moved to the delta of the Mekong and extended gradually over the present Cambodia and central Vietnam, along the valley of the Menam river, and down into the Malay Peninsula. For five hundred years it was the dominant power of the Indo-Chinese peninsula and by far the most important Indianised state in Southeast Asia. It held a commanding position on the Gulf of Siam, and its ports must have had a large share in the transit trade to China.

Somewhere about A.D. 400 a second Kaundinya arrived in Funan and became its ruler; he came from a country which Chinese annals call P'an-p'an, south of Funan on the Gulf of Siam, where Indian Brahmins were influential at the royal court. These early Brahmin rulers must have introduced the Hindu cult of Siva which was certainly established in Funan in the fifth century but Buddhism was also strong there in the fifth and sixth centuries.[30]

Funan was at the height of its power in the fifth and sixth century, but its power weakened in the course of the sixth century, and supremacy on the Cambodian region was gained by the Khmer people of the state called by the Chinese, Chen-la, which centred on the high county of the middle Mekong. The Chinese sources say that Chen-la overthrew Funan some time after 539. The conquest of Funan by Chen-la as an example of the recurrent 'drive to the south' on the history of the Indo-Chinese peninsula, the tendency on the part of the peoples in the north to press down upon those in the south, causing recurrent tension and conflict between the highlands of the

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30 Coedes, *The Indianised States*, *ibid.*, pp.36-38.

middle Mekong plateau and the alluvial plains of Cambodia and between the upper and lower valley of both the Menam and Irrawady.[31]

With the conquest of Funan begins the pre-Angkor period of the Khmer kingdom, which lasted until 802. The seventh century saw the steady extension of Khmer rule over the former Cambodian territory of Funan. Funan had thus prepared the ground for the flowering of Khmer civilization, which was to be one of the most successful results of the transplanting of Indian culture to the soil of Southeast Asia. The Khmers entered into the cultural inheritance of Funan, and their rulers adopted the dynastic legend of the 'Kings of the Mountains'.

Champa. Champa, or Lin-yi in Chinese records, was the Sanskrit name of the most important kingdom of Southeast Asia, contemporaneous with Funan. It was also a Hindu kingdom. Early Chinese records refer to the rebellion in 192 A.D. of a local official, K'iu-lien, who overthrew the Chinese authority in the same year and established the independent kingdom of Lin-yi near the present city of Hue (Vietnam). This was in the declining days of the Chinese Han dynasty, whose authority had then weakened in its Vietnamese province of Tongking. Taking advantage of the situation, the new state of Champa expanded northward at the expense of Tongking. Although the Cham forces attacked and controlled portions of Annam and the Khmer Empire at various times, Champa proper included the present provinces of Quang Nam, Quang Tin, Binh Din, Nha Trang, Phan Rang and Binh Tuan.[32] The history of the relationship between Chilna and Champa was one of alternating hostility and subservience on Champa's part.

Champa came under Indian influence later than Funan, in around the middle of the fourth century A.D., when Champa absorbed the Funanese province of Panduranga (modern Phan Rang). Tall towers of kilned brick in Phan Rang, Nha Trang, Qui Nhon, Quang Tri and Da Nong in South Vietnam are surviving vestiges of the once-powerful Cham Kingdom. The first Sanskrit inscription speaking of Champa also belongs to this area and dates to the fourth century A.D. Champa's expansion southward in the areas previously controlled by Funan may have introduced the

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31 *Ibid.*, pp. 36-38.

32 Coedes, *The Indianised States*, *ibid.*, p.42-43.

y. The kings of Champa as Bhadravarman, who build the first temple of Siva. The famous Cham archaeological sites of Tra Kieu, Mison and Dong duong in the Quang Nam province of southern Vietnam indicate profound Pallava impact of the Amaravati school of art.[33] The Chams were not successful in transmitting Indian culture northward to the Vietnamese kingdom. On the other hand, they withstood for more than a thousand years the political and cultural pressures of the Vietnamese in the fifteenth century. George Coedes is of the opinion that the Indianisation of Champa lent it strength against its Sino-Vietnamese enemies.[34]

Khmer Empire. The people who supplanted the Funanese supremacy were the Khmers, ethnically related to the Mons of lower Burma. It is not certain whether they were an altogether new ethnic group or later arrivals of the same stock as the Funanese. They called themselves the descendants of their mythical ancestors, the wise hermit Kambu and the celestial nymph Mera. The kingdom was called Kambuja, from which the post-1975 name Kampuchea was derived. Their ancestral home was Southwest China or Northeast India, where from they migrated before they had any contact with the Indian and Chinese civilisations. While the Mons followed the Salween-Sittan river route into Burma, the Khmers moved eastward along the Mekong on southern Laos and the Korat Plateau on Thailand. Here the Khmers established the state of Chenla becoming a vassal of the Funanese Empire. Their new habitat was mountainous, unsuited for intensive agriculture; a drive southward towards the Mekong Delta was inevitable. By the middle of the seventh century A.D., the restive Khmers had overthrown the Funanese over lordship. The conquest did not bring major cultural changes because the Khmers had already assimilated Indian culture both from their Mon kinsemen to the west and from their Funanese superior to the south. The Khmers quickly adopted the legendary origin and religio-political base of the Funanese monarchy. The one major change they introduced in the old Funanese territories was their own language and script.[35]

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33 Refer to the works of Hall; Coedes; Sarkar, *ibid.*

34 Coedes, G., *The Making of Southeast Asia,* University of California Press, Berkeley, 1966, p-67.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 67-68.

With the conquest of Funan, the Khmers became the political successors of the Funanese, extending their authority over lower Burma, upper Malay Peninsula, central Thailand, Kampuchea and Southern Vietnam. However, they gradually split among themselves by the eighth century due to their weakness at the sea and intra-tribe rivalry. This fragmentation exposed them to military and political subjugation threats from outside particularly from two insular Southeast Asian kingdoms – the Sumantran kingdom of Srivijaya and the Sailendra rulers of Java. Nevertheless, the Sailendra attacks and their bid for power on mainland Southeast Asia acted as a catalyst to Khmer unity. The divided Khmers rallied under the leadership of Jayavarman II, who had spent some time at the Sailendra court as a hostage. He expelled the Sailendras and brought the dissident Khmer groups together in a common polity. His long reign (802-850 A.D.) helped to consolidate these early gains and lent a solid foundation to the Khmer kingdom. There were several innovations. Thus, Jayavarman shifted the focus of Khmer activity from the Mekong Delta to the region around the Toule Sap Lake in western Kampuchea. With control over the passes leading to Korat Plateau and the Menam Basin, he opened prospects for further expansion westward and northward. For the next five centuries, Angkor and its environs represented the base of Khmer power and glory.

Srivijaya of Sumatra. It was the older and more durable of the Indonesian kingdoms in insular Southeast Asia. With its river-port capital at Palembang in southeast Sumatra, it is seen as the real successor to Funan as the predominant political and commercial power in Southeast Asia. Coedes was the first to write about it in 1918.[36] Its rise as the greatest maritime power in the region from about the seventh to thirteenth centuries was a consequence of the decline of Funan and the inability of the latter's successor kingdom, Cheula, to hold together and serve the function of a trading intermediary in the extensive East-West trade.

Located half-way between the two principal maritime passages, the Malacca and the Sunda Straits, Srivijaya's Palembang port provided an excellent harbour sheltered from the fury of the Northeast and Southwest monsoons by the Sumatran

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[36] Coedes wrote about Srivijaya in a French journal in 1918, Bulletin de L'Ecole Francaise d' Extreme-Orient, XVIII(6), pp.1-36.

and Malayan mountain ranges. The fortified city of Palembang was also an early centre of Mahayana Buddhist learning. According to I'tsing, who was on his way to India for a ten-year period of study and who later spent four years again in Srivijaya on his return trip, Palembang's monasteries had more than a thousand scholarly inmates, whose study and investigations, rituals and ceremonies were "not at all different" from those in India. He recommended that his countrymen planning travel to India for higher studies in Buddhism spend one or two years in Srivijaya en route, so they might first "practise the proper rules and then proceed".[37]

By the middle of the ninth century, according to an Arab chronicler, Sulaiman, the Srivijayan Empire extended over all of Sumatra, Kedah and Western Java. Another Arab, Masudi, has also written profusely of Srivijaya.

Srivijaya's domination of the Sino-Indian trade route continued almost unchallenged for two to three centuries. Her high-handed practices of forcing the ships to use and pay for their port facilities could not have endeared them to the leaders and rulers of the region. The first major challenge, though grievously unsuccessful, came from Mataram rulers of Eastern Java in the last quarter of the tenth century. Even more consequential was the invasion from South India, in 1025 A.D. when Rajendra Chola's fleet defeated Srivijaya's. The Chola conquest included Srivijaya nad its colonial ports of Ligor, Kedha and Tamasik (Singapore) all on the Malay coast. Though the Cholas boasted the acquisition of "twelve thousand islands" in the western archipelago, in end logistical problems of political control fom distant South India seemed to have worked to Srivijaya's advantage.[38] Besides, Srivijaya acknowledged Chola suzerainty and promised good behaviour, which apparently met Chola's demands. The Chola power continued to serve as a brake on Srivijaya's excesses as evidenced by another Chola invasion in 1068, this time in response to an appeal from a Malay state for intervention in its dispute with Srivijaya.[39]

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37 Sarkar, 1981, *ibid.*, p-46.

38 For details of the Chola expedition, see Majumdar, R.C., *Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East, II, Suvarnadvipa*, Punjab Sanskrit Book Depot, Lahore, 1937, p-171; Sastri, K.A. Nilakanta, *The Cholas*, University of Madras, Madras, 1935, p-220.

39 Sastri, K.A.N., *History of Srivijaya*, Madras University Press, Madras, 1949, p-249.

The Sailendras of Sumatra. This dynasty came up in Central Java a century after the birth of Srivijaya competing with it in the East-West trade for a hundred years and thereafter losing power in Java but succeeding in mounting the Srivijayan throne itself and ruling there for several centuries. Among the several controversial theories surrounding the origin of Sailendras is the one that links them directly to the fallen ruling gamily of Funan, which lost power on mainland Southeast Asia around mid-sixth century. According to Coedes and de Casparis,[40] the Funanese descendants fled to Java where all through the two centuries of their subsequent obscurity, they continued to follow Mahayana Buddhism. In the mid-eighth century one of the leaders, Bhanu, declared himself a Sailendra, King of the Mountain, a Funanese royal title. In what must have been an attempt to retrieve their patrimony, the Sailendras raided Tongking and Champa, defeated the divided Cheulas and briefly ruled that mainland (water Cheula) and briefly ruled that mainland kingdom from insular java during the last decades of the eighth century. In the process, they became the only indigenous power in history to make a bid for supremacy over both mainland and insular Southeast Asia. The Sailendra rule over Chen-la was quickly extinguished in 802 A.D. by Jayavarman II, the founder of the Angkor monarchy. The Sailendras, however, left their mark on mainland Southeast Asia in the form of Javanese art patterns and graceful scrolls in Champa and Angkor.[41]

Though the Sailendra line was extinguished in Java in the ninth century, it continued in Srivijaya well until the fourteenth century. There, the Sailendra adopted the Srivijayan policy of giving primacy to trade and commerce to the neglect of their traditional devotion to building Buddhist monuments. At the same time, the Sanjaya dynasty launched on a feverish Hindu temple building activity around Prambanan to vie with the Buddhist monuments of nearby Borobudur.

Thus, Southeast Asia saw the establishment of numerous big and small Indianised states ruled by different dynasties influenced by Indian society and culture.

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40 Casparis, J.G. de, *Selected Inscriptions from the Seventh to the Ninth Century A.D., Praasasti Indonesia,* II, Bandung Masa Bam, 1956, pp.184-185, 204; Coedes, G., 1966; 1968, *ibid.*, p-96; pp.88-92.

41 Quaritch-Wales, H.G., *The Making of Greater India,* B. Quaritch, London, 1951, pp.150-156.

Besides the most important ones discussed above, the other prominent Indianised kingdoms were the Pyus and the Burmans in mainland Southeast Asia and Mataram, Kediri, Singhasiri, Majapahit, Langkasuka along with many others in insular Southeast Asia. It should be noted that insular Southeast Asia was far more exposed than mainland regions to influences from distant countries like India, Arabia, Persia and China, and in more recent times, Europe.

Chapter IV

Indian Cultural Influence: A Critical Study

The term 'Hinduisation' or 'Indianisation' has been generally applied by scholars to the impact of Indian culture on Southeast Asia. Coedes goes so far as to term the states which developed under its influence *les etats hindouises,* in spite of the fact that Buddhism played an important role in the movement, and Theravada Buddhism[1] ultimately became the dominant faith of Burma and Arakans, the Tai states and Cambodia. And whereas Hinduism disappeared before Islam in the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia at the end of the European Middle Ages, Buddhism continued to receive the staunch allegiance of the countries it had spread to.

The application of so extended a meaning to the word 'Hindu' is not without its risks, since in the ordinary use of the terms 'Hindu' and 'Buddhist' there is a clear distinction based upon real points of difference. In the history of the two religions in Southeast Asia, however, it is not easy to draw a clear dividing line between them, especially in the case of Tantrayana Buddhism which showed marked Hindu features, and even at times, as in the cult of Siva-Buddha in thirteenth century Java, defies exact classification. Moreover, even in states where Hinayana Buddhism prevailed, Brahmins played an important ceremonial part, especially at Court, and still do so in Burma, Siam and Cambodia, though themselves strikingly different from their counterparts in India.[2]

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1 These people today object to the term 'Hinayana' (Little Vehicle); they call their Buddhism 'Theravada', the Buddhism of the *Thavas* (Teachers).

2 Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia, ibid.*, p. 12.

An examination of the cultural elements transmitted from India to Southeast Asia – which was here done in the preceding chapter – leads us to the following inference regarding their nature: (1) a conception of royalty characterized by Hindu or Buddhist cults, (2) literary expression by means of the Sanskrit language, (3) a mythology taken from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas* and other Sanskrit texts containing a nucleus of royal tradition and the traditional genealogies of royal families of the Ganges region, and (4) the observance of the *Dharmasastras*, the sacred law of Hinduism, and in particular the *Manava Dharmasastra* or 'laws of Manu.'[3] It is thus clear that this transmission process had something to do with rulers and courts, not peoples; the Indian transmitters were court functionaries, not missionaries. More often than not it was a case of an ambitious ruler, anxious to copy the grander style of the Indian courts, employing Brahmins to consecrate him as a god-king in accordance with the ideas and rituals of the Indian classics. It was essential, when forcing other rulers into a state of vassalage, to have consecration of this sort whereby the worship was established of a linga as the king's sacred personality and he himself was identified with Siva.[4]

As we have already discussed, the Brahmins from India were at the forefront in the process of socio-cultural transmission of Indian aspects to Southeast Asia, scholars like Coedes, Hall, Cady, Sarkar, Moens, Krom, Bosch, Majumdar and others have worked extensively on the role of the Brahmins in influencing the Southeast Asian civilizations. According to Sarkar (1990),[5] the Brahmins in Southeast Asia did not always function as priests or couriers, though these appear to be their principal job. They have sometimes founded kingdoms. A revolt of Funan was organised by a

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3 Hall, D.G.E., *A History of Southeast Asia*, Macmillan, London, 1955, p. 19.

4 Coedes, G., *The Indianised States of Southeast Asia*, East-West Center Press, Honolulu, 1968, p. 36.

Brahmin from P'an-p'an in the late fourth century A.D. In P'an-p'an, according to Chinese annals, there were "numerous Brahmins who came from India in search of wealth. They are in high favour with the king."[6] Many of them obviously became naturalised citizens of the country of their adoption. In Tun-Sun, an important state on the eastern coast of Malaya, we find, for instance, many Brahmins at the royal Court. The T'ai-p'ing yu Lan, which was compiled between A.D. 977 and 983 quotes from an earlier work call Nan-Shih: "There are 500 families of Hu from India, two Fo-t'u and more than a thousand Indian Brahmins. The people of Tun-Sun practise their doctrine and give them their daughters in marriage; consequently many of the Brahmins do not go away. They do nothing but study the sacred canon, bathe themselves with scent and flowers, and practice piety ceaselessly day and night."[7] This Malayan state was already an important one in the sixth century A.D. as the History of the Liang Dynasty (502-556 A.D.) states: "To its market people come from East and west, and it is visited daily by more than 10000 men."[8] There was a huge congregation of Brahmins in the court of Ch'ih-'tu, where "several hundred Brahmins sit in rows facing each other on the eastern and western sides." These details leave a strong presumption in favour of the idea that Indian settlements in various places of Southeast Asia, partook of the nature of *kampong klings*, i.e., settlements of Indian functional groups in particular localities. This was the general pattern in other Indianised parts of Southeast Asia.[9]

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5 Hall, *ibid.*, p. 31.

6 Here we find an explicit motive stated for the coming of the Indians specially Brahmins. This statement clearly indicates why countries got such names as *Suvarnadvipa, Suvarnabhumi,* etc.

7 Text and translation in Wheately, *The Golden Khersonese..., ibid.*, p. 17.

8 Groenereldt, *Notes*, The Hague, date unspecific, p. 119.

9 Sarkar, 1970, *ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

As per Sarkar (1985)[10], the arrival of persons belonging to the priestly class, who were adept in the magico-ritualistic rites, specially impressed the native people through the utterance of their mantras and writings. They were wooed to become royal pedigrees from solar and lunar dynasties of India or from sages linked to them. Traces of this phenomenon are noticeable in inscriptions also. In the Mi-son inscription, it has been stated that "Kaundinya, the greatest of the Brahmins, planted a javelin which he had received from Asvatthaman, the son of Drona", to mark of his future capital". There are other such inscriptions with Indian references. In the environment of make-belief and mythological genealogies, the Brahmins performed Indian rituals to consecrate Indian and Indianised princes, installed in a sombre way divine images, recast the omens in the Indian fashion and helped the prices to set up a court in the desired Indian way. The Brahmins did not stop with that – neither in India nor Southeast Asia. They propagated the theory and practice of the deification of kings. Manu had already ordained that the king is a "a great deity in human form."

Thus, the propagators of Indian culture in Southeast Asia, including the Brahmins, the Kshatriya, the Vaisyas, and other functional groups and classes imparted a way of life laid down by a specific philosophical and religious doctrine that led to its being adopted en bloc by the native chiefs who were attracted by it. The adoption of the Indian way of life brought about the adoption of Hinduism. Under Indian influence, native chiefs did not have a ready-made administration forced upon them, but were merely presented with a technique of administration which could be adopted to varying conditions in countries overseas.[11]

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10 Sarkar, 1970, *ibid.*, p. 138.
11 Coedes, 1966, *ibid.*, p. 52.

In order to understand how it was that Indian culture spread with such ease and such rapidity in Indo-China and throughout Southeast Asia in general, it must be remembered that it contained within it many pre-Aryan elements and many survivals of a basic culture common to all the monsoon area of Asia. The Indo-Chinese do not seem to have reacted towards Indian influence as if they were being confronted with an alien culture, and they 'may not always have been aware of changing their religion when adopting that of India'.[12]

Regarding the origins of the Indians who left for Southeast Asia, and examination of the sources at our disposal (Indian sources concerning navigation, accounts of Chinese and Mediterranean travellers and geographers, and topographic, palaeographic, and archaeological evidence) show that the south of India, and in particular the region of Kanchipuram, played a preponderant part in the Indianisation of Indochina; besides, it also indicates that all the other regions of India, including the Deccan, the Ganges plains, and even North West India and the Iranian frontier, contributed in varying degrees towards the spread of Indian culture.

In addition to the great maritime ports of India – Tamralipti (Tamluk), Kamara, Poduke (Pondicherry) and Sopatura on the east coast, and Bharukacha (Broach), Surparaka, and Muziri (Cranganore) on the west – which are known to have had relations with Indochina and Indonesia, it must be remembered that there were also various centres of Indian culture external to India proper which acted as relay stations between it and countries overseas. Centres of this kind existed in the Malaya Peninsula, and we have already referred to numerous Indians settled there who had married native wires.

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12 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

Ramifications for the Regional Polity in Southeast Asia

The political outcome of the spread of Indian influence in Indo-China was that a number of states on the Indian pattern were founded[13], the chief of which were:

Champa, on the east coast of the peninsula, between the mountain spur of Hoanh-son and the Mekong delta; Funan, in the Mekong delta, later succeeded by the kingdom of Kambuja, which included the basin of the Great Lake as well as the Mekong Delta in its territory; Dvaravati, in the southern part of the Menam Valley; Shrikshetra, in the lower valley of the Irrawady.[14]

Though the history of the origin of these kingdoms is ambiguous, one may assume that either the Indians imposed their form of political organization on an indigenous society, or an indigenous society that had been affected by Indian cultural influence created a political organization on the Indian pattern. Chinese accounts and epigraphic material both to the latter hypothesis as being the more likely one.[15] In that case, either of the following may have happened. Either an Indian became the ruler of an indigenous society, or a native chief may have called upon the help of a Brahmin in order to set up for himself a monarchy of the Indian type. In the first case, it would have been that the Indian would have contracted a marriage with a woman of the country, preferably a daughter of the local chief, in order to establish his prestige and secure his succession. A marriage of this kind, as we have seen earlier, took place at the founding of the kingdom of Funan. However, the alternative procedure may have

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13 For a discussion on the history of some of the important Indianised states of Southeast Asia, refer to chapter 3 of this Dissertation.

14 Coedes, 1966, *ibid.*, p. 53

15 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

been the manner in which the other Indian-type kingdoms of Indo-China were founded, since Indonesia suppliers many instances of this kind.[16]

Upon the establishment of an Indianised kingdom, several local groups, each with its own tutelary deity or god of the soil, were brought together under the authority of a single ruler, who may have been either an Indian or an Indianised native. Usually this was accompanied by the inauguration of a cult devoted to an India god closely associated with the person of the king, and symbolizing the unity of the kingdom, the place of worship being a natural or an artificial mountain. This custom, found in conjunction with the founding of a new kingdom or dynasty, is well attested for all the Indianised kingdoms of Indo-China. It reconciled the native custom of worshipping supernatural beings on high places with the Indian conception of kingship, and provided some sort of national god, closely associated with the monarchy, for the peoples brought under a single ruler. It is a typical example of the way Indian culture, as it spread through Indochina, was able to appropriate and assimilate foreign cults and beliefs, and one which illustrates how Indian and native elements each played a part in forming the early Indo-Chinese civilization, each reacting upon the other.

In this regard, there are two opposing views according to Coedes.[17] The sociological standpoint, which relies primarily on ethnological data and folk traditions and does not delve into the Indian sources, maintain that the indigenous cultures retained their own characteristic features after contact with Indian civilization. The Indianist view, stressing mainly on archaeological and epigraphic evidence, contrarily, sees the early civilizations of Indochina and Indonesia as branches

16 *Ibid.*
17 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

springing directly from the main trunk of the Indian civilization. In other words, the sociologists declare that these early civilizations were the results of changes brought about in local cultures by having Indian culture grafted on them, whereas the Indianists see them as resulting from the adaptation of Indian culture to new conditions overseas. The former envisage the process as one of development of the indigenous cultures in response to an Indian 'stimulus', and regard the fundamental nature of each indigenous group – its 'local genius' – as having been the determinative factor in its particular kind of response. This viewpoint has been fiercely attacked,[18] and its opponents are of the opinion that India supplied much more than a graft, maintaining that it was the whole plant that was exported, and that according to the nature of the ground where it flourished, the same plant bore fruits of varying flavour.

The syncretism typical of Indian thought is what chiefly characterized Brahmanism and enabled it, despite its lack of centralized organization and an action programme, to give spiritual unity to India; and it was this, together with the tolerance of Saivism, that enabled Indian culture to assimilate, as we have seen, the most diverse foreign elements when it was transplanted overseas.

Now, according to O.W. Wolters, a Southeast Asian construction of Hindu devotionalism – organised around cults in honour of Siva and Vishnu and inspired by the conviction that an individual could be personal effort, including ascetic practices under a *guru's* instruction, achieve a close relationship with the god of his affection (*bhakti*) – contributed in two ways to the political authority in many parts of the region. Firstly, a chief's superior spiritual property came to be identified as the

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[18] Wolters, O. W., *Early Indonesian Commerce*, Ithaca, New York, 1967, p. 15.

equivalent of the Sanskrit term *atman*, or the innate divine spirit, the ruler could therefore be seen as having a superior *atman,* which, under a *guru's* guidance, enable him effortlessly to establish the closest relationship in his generation with Siva, the Hindu god mentioned most frequently in the early inscriptions. Siva was the patron of ascetics as well as the source of fertilising energy, later rulers in the region are known to have practised ascetism, though, in the early stages of Southeast Asian 'Hinduism', one can suppose that epigraphic references to a ruler's ascetic prowess signified little more than an acknowledgement of his spiritual prowess by means of the conventions of Sanskrit. The other consequence of the Southeast Asian construction of Hindu devotionalism has a close bearing on the habitual pattern of intra-regional relations in the succeeding centuries. Siva was also the sovereign diety who created the universe and was 'the king of the gods'. Thus, the ruler's close relationship with Siva meant that, when the partook of Siva's *sakti,* he participated in sovereign attributes of cosmological proportions, and his supporters could come to realise that obedience to their leaders was a gesture of homage to a sovereign who partook of divinity and therefore offered them the means of establishing their own relationship with divinity. 'Kingship', and not large territorially defined 'Kingdoms', was the reality that emerged from the 'Hinduising process'. Moreover, sustained efforts started being made to bring relatively distant sub-regions under the influence of particular rulers.[19]

Indianisation and Intra-Regional Relations

The infusion of kingship by divinity was bound to contradict the assumption that all rulers are equal. Each ruler was seen in his own country as enjoying a unique claim to universal sovereignty, derived from a single and indivisible divine authority.

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[19] Wolters, *ibid.*, p-8.

The map of Southeast Asia which evolved out of the ancient networks of small settlements was a patchwork of often overlapping *mandalas*, or 'circles of kings', in each of which one kind, identified with divine and universal authority and defined as the conqueror, claimed personal hegemony over the others, who in theory were bound to be his obedient allies and vassals. In practice, the *mandala,* a Sanskrit term used in Indian manuals on statecraft, represented a particular and often unstable political situation in a vaguely definable geographical area without fixed boundaries and where smaller centres tended to look in all directions for security. Sometimes, for example, a *mandala* would only comprise a group of states on the island of Java, but a *mandala* could also be geographically extensive and comprise peoples whose descendants live today in separate nation-states. The Malaya rulers of Srivijaya exercised some kind of authority in Sumatra and the Malaya Peninsula from the seventh to at least eleventh century. The Angkorian kings at intervals during the eleventh and twelfth centuries had similar authority in the Chao Phraya basin and the Malaya Peninsula and also in parts of what is today Southern Vietnam. The *mandala* of the Thai state of Ayudhya[20] was, to some extent, the same *mandala* that the Khmer rulers had once claimed to control but with the overlord in a new centre. The Javanese *mandala* of Majapahit in the fourteenth century comprised Java, much of Sumatra, and other Indonesian islands. Indeed, Majapahit's poet, Prapansa, claimed that his ruler 'protected' most of mainland Southeast Asia. Every *mandala* contained several local rulers, some of whom would repudiate their vassal status when the opportunity arose and try to build up new networks of allies and vassals. Only a *mandala* overload would receive tribute-bearing envoys from vassals; he himself would send out officials who represented his own superior status.

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[20] Wolters, O.W., "Ayudhya and the Rearward Part of the World," *Journal of Royal Asiatic*

The style of *mandala* management meant that vassal rulers close to the capital as well as in distant places were handled with equal courtesy provided that they assisted the ruler in warfare and did not show signs of seeking 'protection' elsewhere. The overlord probably often sent out travelling inspectors to the fringes of the *mandala*, offered marriage alliances, or built temples as reminders of his presence. The sanction behind obedience was partly the conviction that to serve a ruler to earn religious merit and partly the ruler's reputation for being able to pounce ubiquitously and unexpectedly when trouble broke out. The religious rites performed in an overlord's capital and other forms of religious activity in the fields of art and literature provided additional signs that people could read as confirmation that government was in the hands of one who was destined to be a prince among men in his generation.

One particular religious aspect of this system of government was that the rulers participated in Siva's authority and therefore in the authority of the god who was also the *guru* of the universe. The rulers were expected for this reason to protect all religious cults and encourage religious zeal. They were educative influences, teaching their peoples the means to spiritual well being.[21]

The Indian Epics in Indo-China

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata have had a great influence over the life and literature of the Indians. It is only natural that the influence of the two great epics should be equally dominant in the colonies established by the Indians. The evidence of such influence is furnished by the Indo-Javanese literature that may be regarded as almost a creation of the two epics. But although the part played by the Indian epics in

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Society, parts 3 and 4, 1968, pp.166-178.

the evolution of the art, literature and civilisation of Java and Bali is better known and consequently widely recognised,[22] there are at least two other colonial kingdoms in Southeast Asia, viz., Kambuja (Cambodia) and Champa (Annam) where the great epics played an equally important role.

Neither Kambuja nor Champa developed a local literature like Java, and so we cannot trace the direct influence of the Indian epics on the literature of these kingdoms. But we possess abundant evidence to prove that both the epics were widely read and held in the highest esteem, and their various episodes were highly popular.

The most striking testimony is furnished by an inscription of Champa, found at the site of the ancient capital of the kingdom known as Champapura (now called Tra-kieu). This inscription records the construction of a temple and the installation of an image of Valmiki by king Prakasadharma whose reign covered the period from 656-687 A.D.[23] There are a few other direct references to the study of the epics in other parts of Indo-China.

Apart from these, we get indirect evidence thereof in the frequent allusions to both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in the numerous Sanskrit inscriptions in Cambodia. Besides, the bas-reliefs of Angkor Vat, the most famous temple of Cambodia, illustrate a large number of scenes from both the epics. Prominent among these is the battlefield of Kurukshetra, depicting both Krisna and Arjuna in the front. Among the episodes from the *Ramayana* may be mentioned the pursuit of Maricha by Rama, his alliance with Sugriva, fight between Bali and Sugriva, meeting between

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21 For an elaborate discussion on the *mandala* pattern of intra-regional relations in Southeast Asia, refer to Wolters, *ibid.*, pp. 9-36.

22 For an extensive study, see Majumdar, R.C., *Suvarnadvipa,* Part II, Bk. V, Ch. IV; Bk. VI; and Sarkar, H.B., *Indian Influences on the Literature of Java and Bali,* Chs. VII-XIII.

Hanuman and Sita at Lanka, the battlefield of Lanka, return of Rama by the air vehicle Puspaka, etc. Other temples in Cambodia also contain similar illustrations.[24]

A careful consideration of all these points reveals to us the great popularity which the two epics enjoyed in these far off Indianised states. We have no evidence of an official cult of Valmiki in Cambodia as we find in Champa, but such a things is not unlikely a stone altar has been found in Cambodia containing the words *Om Jaiminaye Svaha* engraved on its four faces. This shows the deification of sage Jaimini, and affords an interesting parallel to the cult of Valmiki in Champa.

The influence of the *Ramayana* in Champa may also be judged from the fact that the modern Annamite versions of the Rama legend localise the events in Annam itself. We also have Malaya versions of the Rama legend – Hikayat Sri Rama – in which the events are described as having taken place in Malaya peninsula. The modern Malayan literature also contains a number of works based on *Mahabharata.* These facts are sufficient to indicate the great role played by the two Indian epics on the ancient Indian kingdoms in Indo-China.

Religion and Art and Architecture

The dominant religion of Indianised Southeast Asia was the Puranic form of Hinduism, consisting of the worship of three principal deities, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, and a number of minor gods and demi-gods associated with them. Of these, Saivism occupied the most important position and Vaisnavism came next. The worship of Brahma was current, but not very popular, as in India. Hundreds of temples were erected in honour of these gods, and literally thousands of images of

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[23] See Majumdar, R.C., *India and Southeast Asia,* B.K. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1979, p. 175.

gods still lie scattered over the whole area. Siva is represented both as a human being as well as in the *linga* form, and other Saiva gods like Durga in various forms, Ganesa, Kartikeya and Nandin are represented by numerous images in stone and bronze.

The images of different *avataras* of Vishnu, the goddess Lakshmi and even Garuda are also found in hundreds. Brahma's images are fewer in number but his four faces crown the numerous towers of the temple of Bangon. There are also images of goddess Saraswati.

The Surya or Sun god occupied a prominent position, and he was often identified with Siva. We also find the images of all eight Dikpalas or guardian deities like Yama, Varuna, Indra, Agni, Kubera, etc. Numerous other gods and goddesses are also represented, and the truth of the following observation by Crawford[25] about a century ago in respect of Java has been established by recent researches: "Genuine Hindu images in brass (bronze) and stone exist throughout Java in such variety that I imagine there is hardly a personage of the Hindu mythology, of whom it is usual to make representations, that there is not a statue of."

The old religions texts found in Java and the actual form of worship now in vogue in the island of Bali leave no doubt that the essential rituals and ceremonies, popular mythology and cults, and the important philosophical and theological concepts of Hinduism were fully known to these people. Even today the *Padandas* or priests of Bali perform the ceremonies and recite the *Mantras* which are familiar to every orthodox Hindu all over India.

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24 See Majumdar, 1979, *ibid.*, p. 176.
25 Quoted in Majumdar, 1979, *ibid.*, p. 41.

Buddhism was also prevalent though to a far lesser extent in Southeast Asia. The *Hinayana* form was popular towards the close of the seventh century A.D., but was practically ousted by the *Mahayana* form in the next century. Later the Tantrik form came into prominence as in Eastern India. Here again we find the entire Buddhist pantheon represented by their images, and important *Mahayana* texts expounding the essential features of the religion both in Sanskrit and Javanese languages.

Malaysia became an important centre of Buddhist culture and learned Buddhist teachers like Atisa Dipankara came from India to study the religious texts from the High Priest of Suvarnadvipa who was acknowledged as the highest authority in the Buddhist world. Although sectarianism was an important factor, there was always a conscious effort to establish an underlying unity between the different religious doctrines and religious sects. Sometimes Siva, Vishnu and Buddha were all regarded as identical. The sublime height to which this spirit of syncretism is best illustrated by the following lines occurring in an Indo-Javanese text:

> "*As a man puts on clothes of different colours, but still remains one and the same, so is He, the creator, one and the same although He appears in different garbs to different men or different sects. Again, if there are a thousand suns reflected in them; but if they would only look up, they would see only one sun whose images they are. So only one God pervades all creatures though we mistake Him for many.*"[26]

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[26] Quoted in Majumdar, 1979, *ibid.*, p. 42.

Language and Literature

The most important evidence for the prevalence of Sanskrit language and literature is furnished by inscriptions. Only a few Sanskrit inscriptions have been found in Malaya Peninsula, Java, Borneo and other islands, but Cambodia and Annam have yielded hundreds of them. More than seventy Sanskrit inscriptions have been found in Annam, and about three hundred in Cambodia. Many of these inscriptions are fairly long and there are quite a few which contain more than hundred verses, some even going upto 300. The authors of these compositions show high proficiency in Sanskrit and an intimate knowledge of classical works in Indian Sanskrit literature. References to famous Indian poets, writers, and scholars also occur in these inscriptions. A study of these hardly leaves any doubt that the scholars in these colonies were in constant touch with their motherland. There are several references to learned Brahmins being brought from India to these kingdoms, and people going to India to study various subjects under great scholars. In one such case there is a mention of a Brahmin scholar from Kambuja who became the royal priest learnt the scriptures from Sankaracharya.[27] In fact, the general composition of these inscriptions is such that it would be difficult to distinguish them from their Indian prototype.

Regarding literature, there is a rich store of materials in Java. The study of Indian Sanskrit literature led to the growth of an Indo-Javanese literature, which forms one of the most characteristic features of Indianisation in that island. This literature, so far as it grew before the end of Hindu supremacy, was marked by several important characteristics. Its poetry followed the rules of Sanskrit metre, its subject matter was derived mainly from Indian literature, and it had a strong predilection for

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[27] Majumdar, 1979, *ibid.*, p-43.

using Sanskrit words and quoting Sanskrit verses. The most important work in this literature was the prose translation of the *Mahabharata* epic which closely followed the original epic but was more condensed. The next important work was the *Ramayana* which was not a translation of the great epic though its subject matter agrees quite well with the Sanskrit original with some variations. The most important of these variations was the omission of all reference to the banishment and death of Sita. But that this episode of Sanskrit *Ramayana* was known in Java is proved by the representation of this story in the sculptured panels of Lara Jouggrang temple.[28]

Several other famous works of Indo-Javanese literature deal with well-known Indian themes. There are various works dealing with Puranic mythology and cosmology, moral lessons and historical incidents in addition to texts dealing with grammar, lexicon, metre, medicine, and erotica: all based on Indian models. In short, we find here a replica of a wide range of Indian literature in foreign language of which it would be difficult to find a parallel example except in the influence of classical literature on that of modern Europe.[29]

Coming to artistic activities in the Indianised kingdom of Southeast Asia, we have, fortunately, a large number of monuments in Java, Cambodia and Annam, belonging to the Hindu period, which are in a fair state of preservation. A study of these would leave no doubts that like language and literature, the sculpture and architecture of these kingdoms were based on Indian models and originally inspired by ideals and technique of Indian art, though in course of time it was developed on independent line without losing the essential Indian characteristics. The classical art of the Gupta period was the source from which art traditions were derived, and at a

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28 *Ibid.*

29 *Ibid.*, p-44.

later period, medieval sculptures of India, both of North and South, also exercised their influence. The origin of the aesthetic conception of the sculptures and their forms as well as of the general plan of the temples may be traced to the images and temples of the Gupta period. But the Indian settlers/colonists (R.C. Majumdar) sometimes surpassed even their new country in boldness of conception, massive grandeur and execution of details. In no other sphere did the genius of the Indians shine more brilliantly and leave a more permanent memorial to the high degree of civilisation than they attained in their land of adoption. There is also a sure means of estimating the influence of Indian elements on the progress and development of civilization in the Southeast Asian kingdoms. For with the decay of Hindu influence there was a corresponding decay in the art and architecture, and the final collapse of the Hindu power proved a death blow to all artistic activities. Referring to the Muslim conquest of Java, Fergusson remarks: "there occurred what was perhaps the least expected event in all this strange eventful history. It is as if the masons had thrown away their tools and the chisels had dropped from the hands of the carvers. From that time forward no building was erected in Java, and no images carved that is worth even a passing notice."[30]

Fergusson pays a high tribute to the Indians in Southeast Asia regarding their brilliant contribution: "For nearly nine centuries foreign colonists had persevered in adorning the island with edifices almost unrivalled elsewhere of their class; but at the end of that time, as happened so often in India, their blood had become diluted, their race impure, their energy effete and as if at the touch of a magician's wand they

[30] Quoted in Majumdar, 1979, *ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

disappear. The inartistic native races resumed their sway, and art vanished from the land, never probably again to reappear."[31]

What Fergusson has said about art applies more or less to other aspects of civilization. It also goes a great way towards demolishing the hypothesis that the Indian civilization in Southeast Asia was not to be attributed to Indians settled there but merely to the adoption of Hindu culture by the indigenous people.

The Hindu Society in Southeast Asia

The Hindu culture flourished in Southeast Asia till the end of the fifteenth century A.D. when it gave way to the Europeans and Islam. But it has survived in quite a few parts of the region, like Bali, in one form or other, even to this day.

The social organisation evolved by the Indian 'Colonists' in these new homes can only be dimly perceived. But enough remains to show that definite and deliberate attempts were made to introduce the Hindu social fabric, though they did not meet with as complete a success as in the case of religion.

The fundamental basis of the Hindu society, and one that distinguishes it from all other known societies is the system of caste. That this was introduced in Java is clear from the occurrence of the word *chaturvarna* and frequent reference to the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Sudras. It will, however, be too much to assume that this caste system was the same as prevalent in Hindu society in India, and it is not clear if the caste system there meant anything more than a theoretical recognition of the division of the people into four grades. But then, it should be remembered that the same was also the case in at least many parts of India in earlier times, and that the

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[31] *Ibid.*

influence of Buddhism and Tantrik religion obliterated the distinctions of caste to a considerable degree in later periods. It is, therefore, difficult to draw a sharp line of distinction between the caste system in parts of Southeast Asia and that in India.

According to R.C. Majumdar,[32] this view is strengthened by the fact that the Indian caste system, such, for instance, as is described in *Manu Samhita,* prevails in its essential features, even today among the Balinese, the only people who have retained the old Hindu religion and customs. In order to convey an idea of the caste system after its transplantation in the distant colonies, one can draw a picture of the system as it prevails today among the Balinese of Bali and Lombok.[33]

These people are divided into four castes; Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vesya (Vaisya) and Sudra. The first three castes are 'twice-born' (*dvijati*) while the last are *ekajati* (once-born).

Marriage among different castes is prevalent, but while a man can indulge in hypergamy, a woman cannot. The union between a woman and a man of lower caste is punishable by death. The children of mixed marriages belong to the caste of the father, though they differ in rank and status according to their mother's caste.

The Brahmins are divided into two broad classes in accordance with whom they worship, Siva or Buddha. The former is again divided into five groups, originating mainly from the inter-caste marriages. To the Brahmin caste belong the *Padandas* or priests. The *Padandas* of the highest rank observe strict *Brahmacharya* (celibacy) and the *Padandas* generally, are expected to be monogamous. But in

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32 *Ibid.*, p-110.

33 Studied by Majumdar, *ibid.*

practice they have more than one wife, even from a lower caste. The Brahmins are usually styled *Ida* (male) and *Idayu* (female).

The Kshatriyas are also subdivided into five classes. Some, but not all, of the royal families in Bali belong to this caste. Their usual title is *Deva* for the man and *Desak* (Sanskrit *dasi*?) for the woman.

Among the third caste, the Vaisyas, the *Aria* (*Arya*?) forms the chief group to which belong the royal families in Bali who are not Kshatriyas. Their title is *Gusti* for the male and *Gusti-ayu* for the female. The *Vargi* and *Salit* form the other two Vaisya groups.

The Sudras, known generally *Kaulas* are not despised as impure or untouchable. Impurity, according to the Balinese conception, is the consequence of certain acts, such as, using water in which a dead body has been washed, slavery through the legal process, attempt to commit suicide refusing to become a *sati* after making an affirmative declaration, etc. The duration of impurity varies according to circumstances. Sometimes men of higher castes are degraded to the rank of a Sudra.

The different castes are not tied down to specific occupations, and men of all castes follow agriculture. The Sudras, in addition to agriculture, also follow other arts and crafts.

There is another characteristic feature of the traditional Indian caste system in Bali – the privileges enjoyed in law courts by the higher caste. Here, again, for the same offence the law lays down punishment in inverse ratio to the superiority of the caste of the offender.

In terms of structural superiority, the castes held a relative position, similar to that in India, the ruling princes, be they of Kshatriya or Vaisya origin, were regarded as superior to their Brahmin subjects. This is due to the divine ruler theory.

Two other social institutions in Bali may be referred to in connection with the caste system: *sati* and slavery. Sati was forbidden in the case of the Sudras, and in late periods came to be confined only to the royal families. There were two kinds of self-immolation. In one case the wife first killed herself with a *kris* (sword) and then here body was placed on her husband's funeral pyre; in the other case the wife jumped into the funeral pyre. Sometimes even the slaves and concubines of the dead also perished with him. Coming to slavery, the slaves formed a distinct class in the society. Slavery may be due to one of the following circumstances: birth, non-payment of debt or fines, imprisonment in war, or poverty. Although severely punished for crimes or attempts to escape, the lot of a slave was on the whole tolerable.

Besides the above, the Indian influence could also be discerned in other aspects of the native life and society including the rites of passage, marriage forms and rituals, entertainment, position of women, dress usages, music, and other social practices. Thus we say that the ramifications of the Indian influence in Southeast Asia were profound and lasting in nature.

Urban Generation in the Indianised Territories

As we have seen, with Indianisation of Southeast Asia came the concept of divine kingship, a political device especially attractive to village chieftains in situations in which the egalitarian solidarity of tribal society was proving incapable of extending authority to validate the power required for the institutionalisation of supra-village rule. Dysfunctional situations of this art could have arisen within tribal

societies for a variety of reasons: when, for instance, foreign traders dealing with Southeast Asian villages as corporate entities through the agency of their chiefs brought expansion and diversification of the habituated means and goals of such chiefs; or, alternatively, when an improvement in agricultural technology, by differentiating in the productivity and hence in the value, of land, both encouraged the emergence of social stratification and possibly, by stimulating competition for a scarce resource, nourished the rise of militarism. Whenever such a sequence of events took place, it would have led to a situation in which a chieftain was likely to seek to validate his newly acquired power on the only pattern of adequate flexibility and authority known to him, namely an Indian political model structured about the institution of divine kingship. It is this stage of the acculturation process that seems to be reflected in the well-known instances of Sanskritisation of the styles, in successive generations of apparently indigenous dynasties.

The maintenance of a state appropriate to kingship required the ministrations of increasing numbers of craftsmen and artisans, the most skilled of whom were often accommodated within the royal house. It also presupposed the labour of a peasantry who contributed the surplus produce of their fields as a tax in kind for the support of the court, and a band of armed retainers who acted as household guards, organized the peasantry as a militia in the skirmishes inseparable from emergent kingship, and generally enforced the authority of the ruler. Concomitantly there developed material defences such as walls and palisades encircling the royal residence. In short, there had evolved the city-state, the *nagara*, focused on a new landscape feature, the ceremonial city, which was the outcome of a series of social and political transformations that replaced the tribal chieftain by a divine king, gerontocracy or patriarchalism by patrimonial domain, consensus by hereditary charismatic authority, shaman by

Brahmin, tribesman as warrior by a kshatriya, and tribesman as cultivator by a peasant, at the same time as occupational specialization hardened into something approaching *jati* (caste), age-sets were transmuted into *asrama*, the tribal meeting was formalized as an assembly on the model of the *sabha*, and custom broadened into law within the framework of the *Dharmasastras.* Concurrently the gift was transposed into tribute or tax, and the old economic reciprocity that matched with segmentary distance[34] was encompassed within a framework of redistributive exchange. These changes were reflected morphologically in the conversion of the chief's hut into a palace, the spirit house into a temple, the spirit-stone into the *linga* that was to become the palladium of the state and the boundary spirits into the *Lokpalas* presiding over the cardinal directions. In other words, the village community had become the city-state, the whole process signifying a transformation from culture to civilization.[35]

On the mainland of Southeast Asia these early ceremonial cities were restricted almost exclusively to the lowland tracts, mainly – from west to east – the Pyu country of central and upper Burma, the coastal plains of Arakan, the Mon lands around the lower courses of Irrawady and Chao Phraya rivers, the proto-Khmer territories in the middle and lower Mekong valley, and the coastal plains of east-central Vietnam. Among the Indianised region of continental Southeast Asia, it is in the lower Mekong valley that the transformation from folk to urban society is best documented.[36]

The reconstitution of a folk community as an urban society was the most momentous and pervasive transformation that a traditional people could undergo. It

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34 Sahlins, M.D., *Tribesman,* Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1968, p. 84.

35 Wheatley, P., "Urban Genesis in Mainland Southeast Asia," in R.B. Smith and W. Watson, ed., *Early South East Asia: Essays in Archaeology, History and Historical Geography,* Oxford University Press, New York, 1979, pp. 295-99.

was a metamorphosis that, howsoever initiated, ultimately involved society in its totality that restructured all its functional sub-systems afforded opportunities for the concentration of power, wealth and prestige and provided a basis for the evolution of an urban-oriented Great Tradition in Southeast Asia, thanks to the all encompassing Indian influence.

Decline of the Indian Influence in Southeast Asia

The world that had come into being in the Indo-Chinese peninsula and other parts of Southeast Asia at the beginning of the Christian era with the introduction of Indian cultural influence in the native societies that were then in existence in Indochina, started coming to a propitious end with the thirteenth century. According to Coedes, in the second half of the thirteenth century the kingdoms that had been Indianised since the first centuries of the Christian era no longer had the resistance to withstand a major shock, or even survive a minor disturbance of the foundations upon which their civilization rested. The shock administered by the Mongols was their undoing. As soon as Kublai became the Grand Khan in 1260, and even before he had completed the conquest of China, he sought to obtain the vassalage of those countries that had been neighbours of the former Sung Empire. The Mongols, therefore, started their persistent and repeated attacks and invasions on the Cham, Vietnamese, Burmese (Pagan), Khmer and other Southeast Asian kingdoms. An assignment of the tumultuous events in Southeast Asia of the 13th century and their consequences for the Indo-Chinese peninsula shows that they brought about a decline of the Indianised kingdoms and at the same time the growth, at their expense, of a number of petty principalities and of one or two kingdoms all ruled over by the T'ais.

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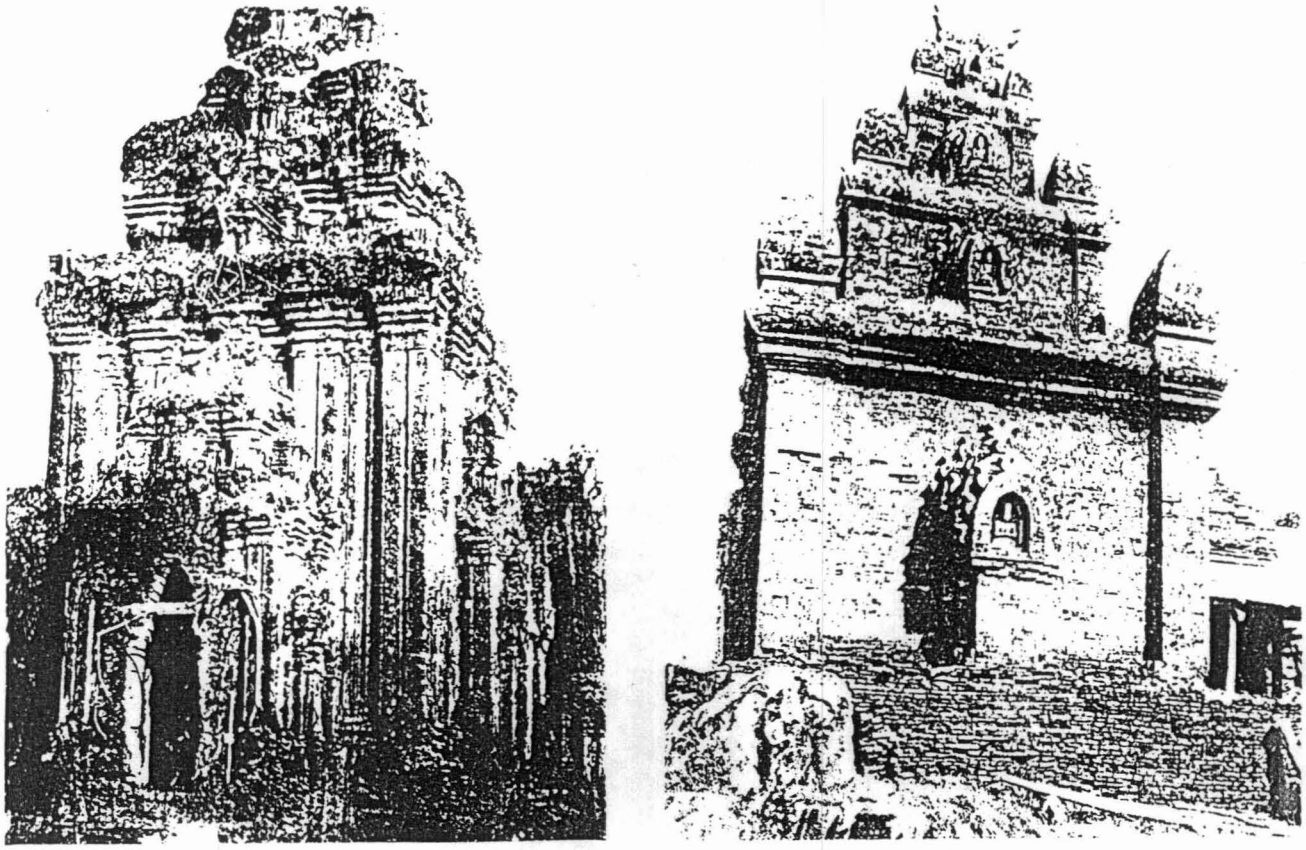
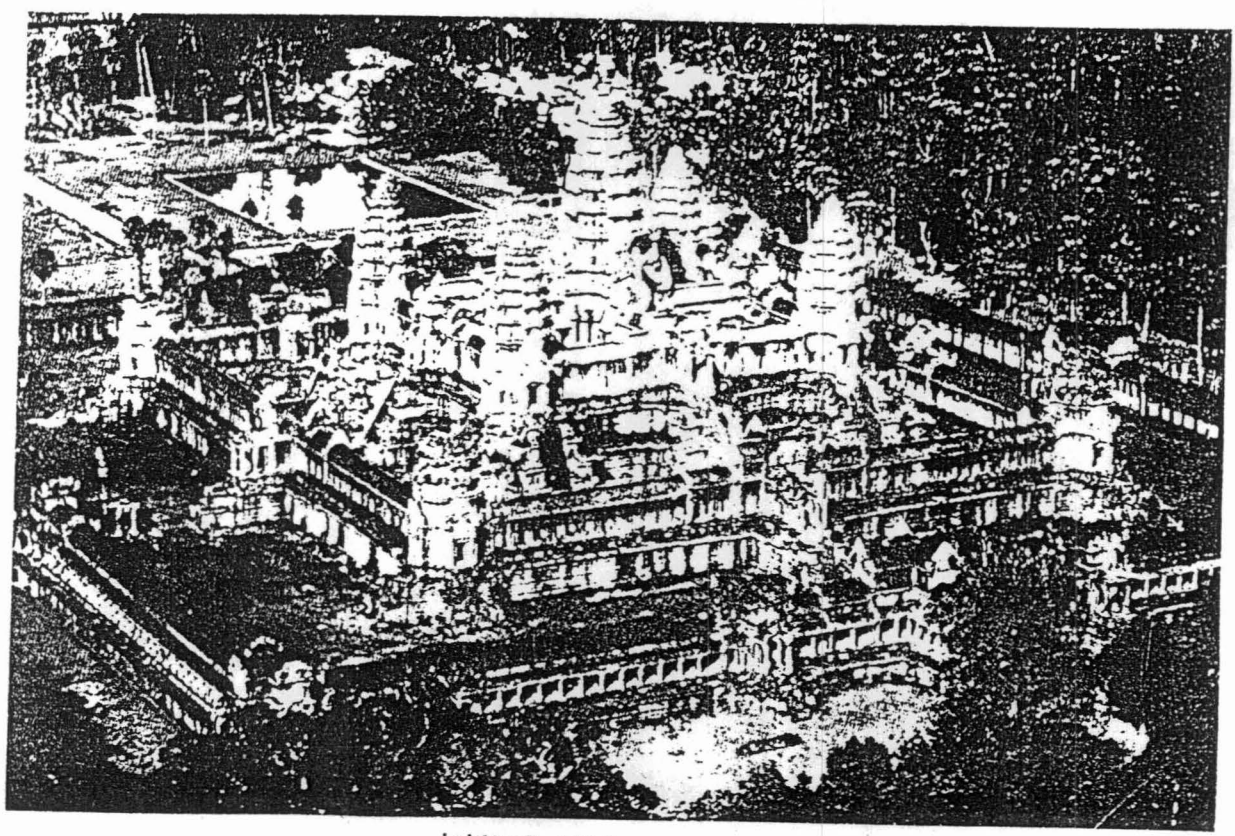
[36] *Ibid.*

The ramifications of the Indian cultural influence in Southeast Asia were, thus, as this chapter has endeavoured to show, multifaceted, all-encompassing and enduring. Even after the demise of the Indian kingdoms the culture of Southeast Asia still retain, to this day, many vestiges of the heydays of glorious India-Southeast Asia relations. The Indianised kingdoms of Southeast Asia are now a golden phase in the history of the region and they went a long way in imparting identify and foundation to the people of the area.

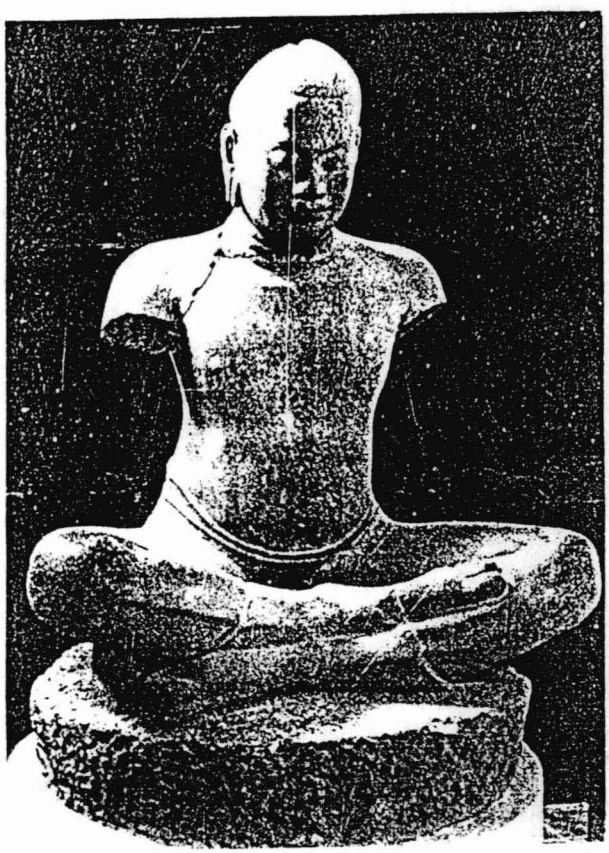


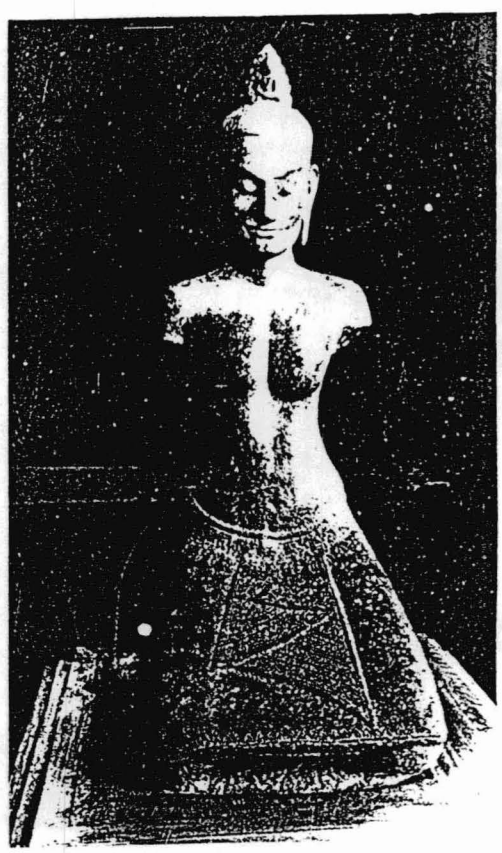
ARCHITECTURE OF CHAMPA: *Left:* The great tower of My-son (10th century). *Right:* The temple at Po Romé (17th century).



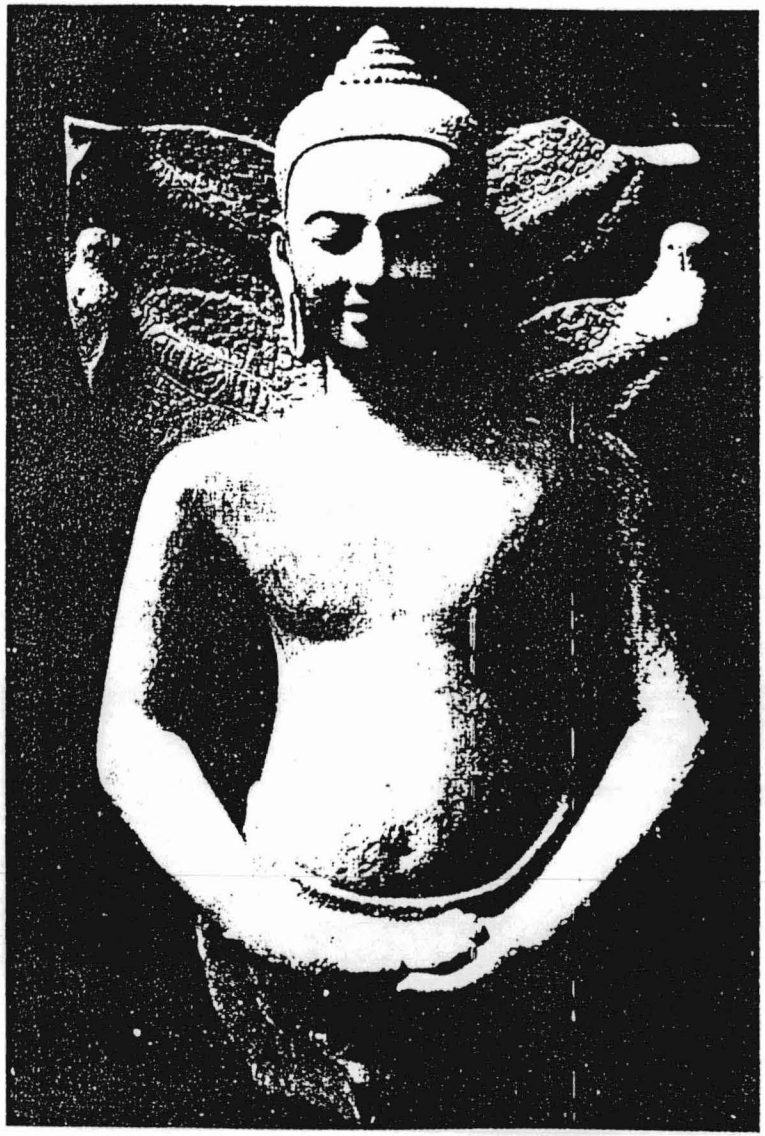
ANGKOR VAT

KHMER SCULPTURE: *Left:* Statue of Vishnu, pre-Angkor style (6th century). *Right:* Statue of Vishnu,. Angkor period (middle of 11th century).



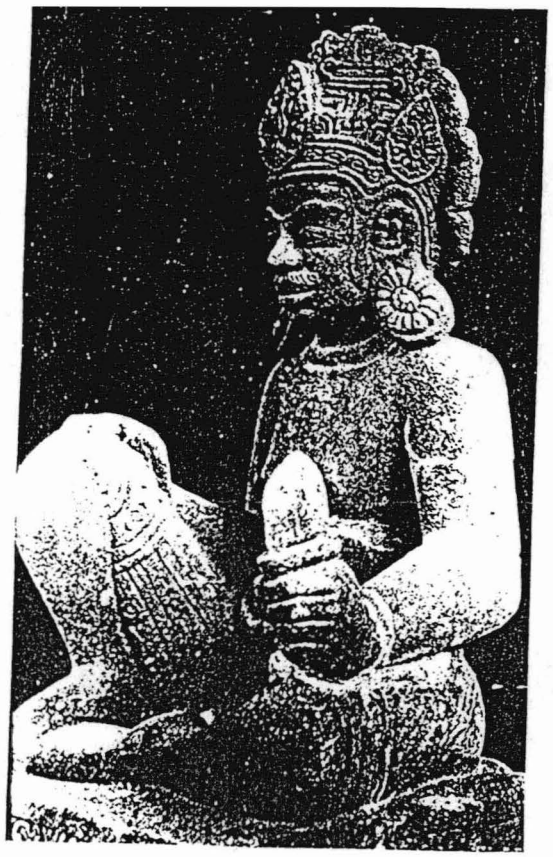


KHMER SCULPTURE: *Left:* Statue of Jayavarman VII (end of 12th century). *Right:* A statue which is thought to be of the first wife of Jayavarman VII.

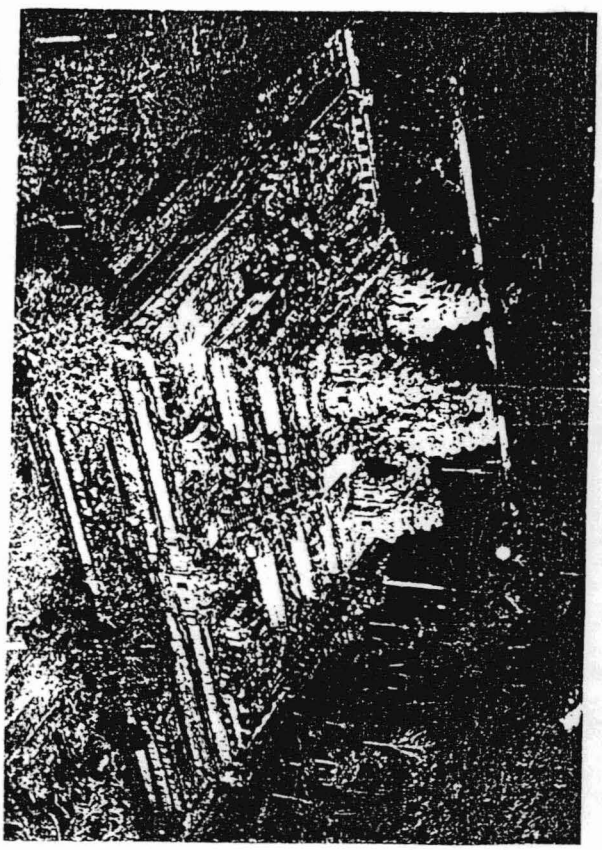


THE BUDDHA WITH SNAKE BACKGROUND TO HEAD, ANGKOR

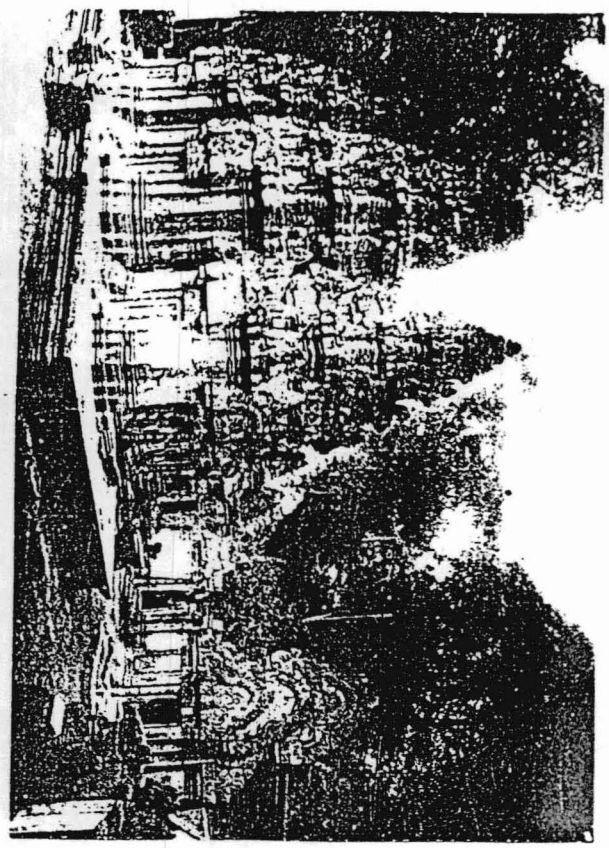
TEN-ARMED BODHISATTAVA, ANGKOR



SCULPTURE OF CHAMPA: *Left:* Statue of Shiva, Dong-düöng style (end of 11th century). *Right:* A dancer carved on a pedestal at Tra-Kiêu (10th century).



The pyramid-temple of Ta Keo (end of 10th-beginning of 11th century).



The temple of Banteay Srei (968).

KHMER ARCHITECTURE.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

"To know my country in truth one has to travel to that age when she realized her soul, and thus transcended her physical boundaries; when she revealed her being in a radiant magnanimity which illuminated the eastern horizon making her recognized as their own by those in alien shores who were awakened to a great surprise of life..."

– Rabindranath Tagore, in the Foreword to the first issue of the *Journal of the Greater India Society*

"... without interruption, all peoples come from other countries, of all sorts, so Jambudvipa (India), Kamboja, China, Tavana (Annam), also Champa, Karnataka (in south India) and so on, Goda (Ganda) and Syanglea (Siam), that are their places of origin, taking their way in ships, joining merchants, crowded. Bhiksus (Buddhist monks) and *Vipras* (Brahmins) are the principal ones who present themselves..."

– a passage from the *Nagarakratagame*, composed by the poet Prapancha, 1365.[1]

"In the ancient past, people of different walks of life – princes, priests, merchants, artists and scholars – have travelled from India to Southeast Asia and were welcomed by the rulers and the ruled alike. The result was the spread of Indian cultural forms throughout Southeast Asia – theories of kingship and administration, religion and philosophy, language and literature, art and architecture, and dance and drama. But it was in the sphere of religion that the impact of Indian influence was more striking."

– Prof. A.L. Chetty, a prominent scholar on Southeast Asia

The excerpts quoted above give small but vivid images of the role played by India in influencing Southeast Asian culture and civilisation through the twin processes of transmission and assimilation. The foregoing pages provide clues to ample historical evidence for the spread of Indian culture into Southeast Asia as do the above three representative glimpses. Even after the advent of Western colonial

[1] These lines indicate how merchants and persons belonging to spiritual order created an international milieu in the royal court of Majapahit in the greatest days of glory.

rule in the region, Indian culture still flourished there. We saw in the preceding chapters how each of the states that arose in Indochina and in its vicinity developed civilisation of its own. Significantly, in most parts of the peninsula these civilisations were of Indian parentage. Only Vietnam came under Chinese cultural influence from the very outset, and borrowed so many cultural traits from China that even after achieving political independence it still remained an offshoot of Chinese civilisation. In spite of the southward expansion of the Vietnamese they could not become influenced by the Indianised culture of the peoples who came under their domination – as could have been expected. Instead, the already sinicised Vietnamese destroyed rather than assimilated cultures different from theirs. However, they do have certain cultural traits that seem to be of indigenous, non-Chinese origin. For instance, the *dinh*, or temple of the village tutelary deity which serves as a meeting place for the functionaries who look after the affairs of the district is always built on piles - though sometimes rudimentary – in the manner of the dwellings of Southeast Asian peoples. Further, in the legislation of the Le period provision is made for co-ownership of belongings between spouses; and there are many indications in Vietnamese customary law of the woman's role in the household, although that is not mentioned in the code of Gia-Long which is modelled on Chinese Legislation. But repeated contacts with China, the temporary reconquest of the country by the Ming at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and the tendency to imitate the court of Peking at the beginning of the nineteenth century, have all contributed towards keeping Vietnam within the Chinese cultural zone. As regards the other Indo-Chinese states, their civilisations differ widely from each other, and each seems to have an entirely individual character; yet they all owe so much to India.

The glorious history of cultural contact between India and Southeast Asia made some Indian scholars like R.C. Majumdar to float such terms as 'Greater India', 'Farther India' and 'Hindu colonies in the Far East'. Though such terms have caused resent among the Southeast Asians, they have nevertheless acknowledged the Indian cultural contribution. Besides the linkages in human environment there are many things common between India and Southeast Asia. The similarities in the physical environment encompass geological formations, climate, soils and biotic life. Of much relevance are the similarities in climatic conditions between India and Southeast Asia on account of their being part of the tropical monsoon belt. Monsoonal rhythm has imposed similarities in the ways of life, especially agricultural economy. According to P. Munirathnam Reddy, "The nature and characteristics of soils as well as vegetation types and composition point out a greater degree of semblance between these two regions. In a logical sense, affinities based on cultural history could have become possible on account of the linkage having their roots in natural history. Even the pre-historic trading ties between these regions seem to have largely been governed by the rhythm of monsoon winds. The halting places, where the sailors waited for change of winds, had subsequently become the entrepots/market places and eventually the centres of exchange of ideas or the zones of confluence." Thus, it was due to the natural similarities, initially, that facilitated the spread of Indian culture into Southeast Asia. It was therefore, that A. L. Kroeber, the renowned cultural anthropologist, termed this entire region as one cultural zone or culture area, or in other words, "Indian Southeast Ethnic Enclaves."

It has been observed by Coedes that the Indians were never fully conscious of the great activities of their forbears in large parts of Asia. However, as the results of modern researches done during the second half of the nineteenth century

and the beginning of the twentieth began to trickle in, the Indian scholars naturally took a justifiable pride in the matter, while British scholars neglected this chapter of Indian history. As early inscriptions of Southeast Asia were found to be couched in Sanskrit and written in the late Brahmi scripts, and wherever monuments were discovered they were found to contain sculptures or reliefs connected with Indian religion and sacred texts, it was easy of the earlier generation of scholars to think of this phase of Indo-Southeast Asian contact as a chapter of Indo-Aryan expansion of culture, which had started at a remote past in the north-west corner of the sub-continent.

The earlier Indian scholars have no doubt occasionally used the term "colony" in respect of ancient Southeast Asian countries, but always in the best sense of the term, signifying a cultural colony, as pointed out by Coedes. Even R.C. Majumdar never implied any political domination or exploitation in respect of these states in his numerous publications. His Greater India Society was thus intended to familiarise the people of India with the contribution of their forbears to the history and culture of Southeast Asia. After independence, both the Society and its *Journal* ultimately became defunct. The term 'Greater India', though sanctioned by ancient and medieval usage, is no longer in vogue in India or elsewhere and has been replaced by the expression "Indianised States". This usage emphasises the indigenous matrix of the Southeast Asian culture. F.D.K. Bosch, while making a study of the comparative relations between Indian influences and original Indonesian ingredients in older Indonesian culture has concurred with the indigenous cultural substratum viewpoint in the region. The Austric matrix of the major races of Southeast Asia and its islands ensures that the foundation was truly laid on autochthonous basis, in spite of intrusions of Mongoloid strains at later periods of history, but that its superstructure

was constructed with Indian material. R.C. Majumdar and other notable historians of the earlier genre share this view.

However, there has been difference of opinion among scholars, Indian as well as foreign, regarding the architects of this superstructure. Krom, Bosch, Coedes and some others, who had devoted much attention to the objective study of Indo-Southeast Asian relations, held the Indians mainly responsible for the introduction of the Indian culture in this area. But some scholars have postulated that Southeast Asian people were mainly responsible for the introduction of Indian culture in this region. Coedes, on the basis of the most latest researches in the field, stated that people of Indian origin from different walks of the life and different provinces – Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and others – were in some way or other connected with the main process of Indianisation of Southeast Asia. Moreover, according to Coedes, "Native chiefs who wanted to increase their prestige and consolidate their power called in Brahmins in order to make use of magical powers, the fame of which had been spread abroad by merchants; and that it was these Brahmins who introduced Indian religious rites." Thus emerged the Brahminisation theory of Indian influence in Southeast Asia. Alternatively, other theories were also brought in circulation that stressed on the Kshatriya and Vaisya origin of Indianisation.

At the dawn of Southeast Asian history the major elements of the population ordered in terms of tribal organisation, were bonded labours or slaves, as well as free but exploited peasantry, the early receivers of the Indian culture could have only been the tribal chieftains, their immediate entourage and the landed aristocracy. In view of the limited size of such tribal principalities, the receivers of the Indian culture in Southeast Asia must have been small; they must have served as pivotal points for the

relay of Indian culture to the remoter areas. Since the autochthonous population of Southeast Asia were, according to the general body of historians, animistic, it is reasonable to assume that the natives did not go to Indian initially, of their own accord, to be converted to the religious systems, rites and rituals, etc.; scriptures, the art of writing, religious architecture, calendar and a host of other things followed suit. The early traditional history of Burma and the foundation of Funan by the Brahmin Kaundinya offer typical cases.

There are only a few references about Southeast Asian persons visiting India prior to A.D. 700, and in every case only the elite were involved. In so far as India is concerned, the fact that the Indo-Aryan cultural drift in the time-scale is from west to east and north to south, and not vice versa, may allow us to view the introduction of that culture to Southeast Asia as a continuation of that mighty phenomenon from the west: the impact of that culture is still operative in the eastern parts of India. It is not therefore surprising that early Chinese texts speak of the Malaya state of P'an-p'an where "numerous Brahmins come from India in search of wealth" and that "the people all learn the Brahminical writings". We are further told that in the kingdom of Tun-sun "there are five hundred families of *hu* from *India*, two *fo-t'u* and more than a thousand *Brahmins.* The people of Tun-sun practise their doctrine and give them their daughter in marriage; consequently many of the Brahmins do not go away..." These native women were one of the most potent agencies for the spread of Indian culture and acceleration of the process of acculturation. In a nutshell, Coedes has shown that no single yardstick can be used to measure the method or identify the agency for the spread of Indian culture in Southeast Asia.

India, having experienced cultural development since the second millennium B.C., began to play the role of a cultural centre from the later half of the first millennium B.C. transmitting its culture to the neighbouring areas. Indian cultural expansion through trade routes to Central Asia, East Asia and Southeast Asia could be noticed ever since the reign of the Magadhan Maurya Emperor Asoka. From the beginning of the Christian era, the waves of Indian cultural expansion mainly into the Southeast Asian region – furthered by the campaigns of the Guptas, the Pallavas, and the Cholas – were responsible for the foundation of Indianised kingdoms in Southeast Asia like Champa, Funan, Kambuja, Sailendra and Srivijaya to mention a few. Thus, the formation of the early Indianised states in Southeast Asia during the first millennium of the Christian era laid such a strong foundation that helped Indian culture to survive even after the decline and downfall of these pre-modern states, following initially, the Mongol onslaught and then the arrival of Europeans into Southeast Asia. The survival of Indian cultural patterns in Southeast Asia had induced a sort of chauvinism among some scholars in India who propounded the Greater India concept and termed these early kingdoms as the 'Hindu Colonies in the Far East'. The process of Indianisation was accomplished, in fact, not by any means of physical conquest, but by intellectual conquest through peaceful penetration. This peaceful transmission of Indian culture was carried out by traders, Brahmin priests, Buddhist monks, sailors and Kshatriya adventurers all along the maritime trade routes, as discussed in the foregoing chapters.

The arrival of the Indians in Southeast Asia cannot be compared to that of the Europeans in America, for in this part of the world the newcomers were not strangers discovering new lands. With the passage of time the sporadic influx of traders and immigrants became steady flow that resulted in the founding of Indian kingdoms

practising the arts, customs, and religions of Indian and using Sanskrit as their sacred language. The Indians in Southeast Asia were not confronted by uncultured people but, on the contrary, by people endowed with a civilisation that had traits in common with the pre-Aryan Indian civilisation. The speed and ease with which the Aryanised Indians propagated their culture is undoubtedly explained in part by the fact that, in the customs and beliefs of these immigrants, the natives discovered, under an Indian screen, a base common to all of monsoon Asia. Thus it was neither a question of a contact between strangers nor of a first contact.

According to Coedes, the term "Indianisation must be understood essentially as the expansion of an organised culture that was founded upon the Indian conception of royalty, was characterised by Hindu or Buddhist cults, the mythology of the *Puranas*, and the observance of the *Dharmasastras*, and expressed itself in Sanskrit language. It is for this reason that we sometimes speak of "Sanskritisation" instead of Indianisation. Coedes further says that the Indian civilisation of Southeast Asia was the civilisation of an elite and not that of the whole population, whose beliefs and way of life are still not sufficiently known.

The Indian influence in Indo-China and other parts of Southeast Asia was deepest in those areas where it operated most continuously, and where there was a strong centralised government run by an oligarchy of princes and dignitaries who, whether laymen or clerics, were impregnated with Indian culture, and who by means of an administrative system directly under the central government were able to exercise control over the provinces and even down to village level.

As a result of the historical consequences involved, the most significant effect of the spread of Indian cultural influence in Indochina was the rise of monarchies that

ruled over vast territories where hitherto the social group had not extended beyond the village or the tribe. Several contributory factors contributed to the breaking down of barriers between self-contained groups and the welding of such groups into a more or less centralised organisation. Firstly, public works such as drainage, irrigation, and the construction of highways could not be carried out at the local level and required the existence of a central government for the allocation of talks. Secondly, indigenous peoples who were accustomed to look upon their chief as the embodiment of the god of the soil, and were thus prepared to accept him as their spiritual leader, were readily persuaded to recognise the spiritual authority of a king who, as per the Indian conception of kingship, was the earthly equivalent of the king of the gods and a mediator between earth and heaven. Moreover, indigenous social groups, each with its own particular form of customary law, found in Indian law, with its concept of *dharma*, a general framework with in which their own institutions could be included in a way that did not necessitate uniformity being imposed upon them, still that overrode particularism.

Also, there were similarities between the Indian castes and age grades and occupational groups or grades found among the Southeast Asian social organisation. Hence, the natives who came under Indian influence, unlike the Chinese subjects, were never forced to conform to norms imposed upon them, but needed only to allow themselves to be penetrated by a civilisation which, with its pre-Aryan substratum, was at root little different from their own culture and which provided them with a general framework within which their own particular variety of culture could be integrated without losing its own individual characteristics. Thus Indian civilisation showed a marked tendency to become differentiated on being transplanted overseas, yet retaining a basic cultural unity through the use of Sanskrit as a common language.

The conception of divine kingship as imbibed from India was adopted by the Indo-Chinese peoples who came within the sphere of Indian culture and found very fertile soil there in which to flourish. The Angkorian Khmer civilisation, ancient Cambodia, Burma and many other kingdoms embraced the Indian practice.

On being converted to monarchy on the Indian pattern from their original tribal society the Indianised kingdoms were able to develop and to extend their influence over adjacent territories by following the Indian principles of ruling. They applied the theory of universal monarchy and formed a kind of federation under a *chakravartin* or *sarvabhauma* sovereign.

The oligarchy of high officials below the king who held all the important posts was recruited from members of the royal family and members of several great families holding hereditary office. In the earlier chapters of this Dissertation we have seen that some posts in the different kingdoms of Cambodia were held by Brahmins who had either come from India and settled there, or were indigenes who had been to India.

The epigraphic and literary evidence shows that the Indianised countries of ancient Indochina had a knowledge of Indian law. Despite the fact that India never exercised any suzerainty over these countries, it provided them with 'the concepts, the methods, and the terminology which formed the necessary apparatus for the creation of a legal system that could be applied to already existing institutions ... Local customary law found [in Indian legal works] a model on which to pattern itself and a means whereby it could be improved.' According to Coedes, though it seems that any knowledge or deep understanding of the Hindu and Buddhist dogmas was confined to the circles of a small elite, the ritual and the outward manifestations of the Indian

religions comprised the most lasting and firmly established element in the process of Indianisation. Further, the original animistic beliefs of the masses, their ancestral rites, and the worship of local gods and deities were easily integrated within an Indian framework, especially in the case of Saivism. The gods of the Hindu and Buddhist pantheons could be worshipped alongside indigenous gods without difficulty or even merged with them, without the natives realising that they were worshipping alien or strange gods.

As relations between India and Southeast Asia were continuous during the ten centuries following the initial spread of Indian cultural influence, the parallel development of Hinduism took place in India and overseas. Though the Saivite cults predominated at first, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries Vaishnavism came into favour overseas simultaneously as it flourished in India. As regards Buddhism, all the main sects – Theravada, Mahayana, Tantrism, and Sinhalese reform – played their part in Indochina and elsewhere. The history of religion in Indianised parts of Southeast Asia reveals features which though originating in India and occurring there too, flourish freely in the conducive environment of the region.

An important feature of Indian religions in Southeast Asia – also typical of India – was the tolerance they showed towards each other, often amounting to syncretism. The Hindu and Buddhist cults mostly coexisted peacefully in the region.

Though there are doubts as to whether Indian culture ever reached the lower strata of the native society during the Hindu period, as per Coedes, in the Buddhist states of Indochina the entire population came under Buddhist influence, Sinhalese Buddhism being the last but deepest cultural influence in Indochina. Thus, ever since the fourteenth century the Burmese, the Siamese, the Cambodians, and the Laotians

have shared the fundamental ideas of Indian thought, and they continue to belong to the Indian cultural zone.

Yet another cultural contribution of India to the region were the philosophy and scientific doctrines. As per the information given out by the Sanskrit epigraphy and inscriptions in Cambodia and Champa, their authors as well as other members of the cultural elite were acquainted with the great Indian philosophical systems and scientific disciplines like medicines, astronomy, mathematics, etc.

As could be discerned in the course of going through this Dissertation, Sanskrit was the primary vehicle for the spread of Indian ideas overseas, and it is almost the sole language used in epigraphs, apart from the local vernaculars. As the inscriptions show, at least the cultural elite were well acquainted with Sanskrit language and literature. Even today, Sanskrit and Pali remain the chief sources of enrichment. Besides abstract terms relating to religion and philosophy, words concerning material culture and even grammatical particles were borrowed from Sanskrit. Moreover, the use of Indian script enabled a permanent record to be made of the vernacular languages.

In addition to the above contributions of Indian culture and civilisation to Southeast Asia, the region also drew heavily from Indian art and architecture forms and styles, music, dance and drama, and literature. Most of the classical ballets have themes taken from the Indian epics – the Ramayana and the Mahabharata leading the inspirations – or based on legends which sometimes seem to be an Indian version of a local folk-tale translated into Buddhist terms.

All of the above references are only the most obvious features indicative of the deep influence India has had on Southeast Asia and Indo-China in particular, such

indications provide ample reasons to maintain that the Indianised civilisations of the region are simply overseas extensions of Indian civilisation. It is true that great changes occurred when Sinhalese Buddhism replaced both Hinduism with its accompanying social system, and the earlier forms of Buddhism. However, it cannot be denied that any Indian would not but feel overawed by the numerous similarities between this part of the subcontinent and the Southeast Asian land and people.

Thus, we have seen that the spread of Indian culture into Southeast Asia was through a process of acculturation free from aggrandisement of any form unlike the Chinese way, Southeast Asian peoples, though belonging mostly to the Mongoloid stock of southern Chinese origin became culturally closer to Indian. They became so responsive as to imbibe the Indian cultural elements that got well adapted to the native environments through the continuous process of localisation and survived the onslaught of Western colonial domination. The Indian inheritance in Southeast Asia cannot be seen as unthinking and indiscriminate repetition of Indian forms and hence are not mere copies of India. What India gave is to be seen more as an inspiration to adapt their own cultures so as to absorb, develop and build upon the Indian concepts.

Now, when India as well as the modern states of Southeast have left their colonial past behind and are endeavouring to create modern, developed societies based on modern political and scientific principles, it is the onus of the leaders and people of the two regions to draw from their glorious past of harmony, co-operation and togetherness. Though India's Look East Policy could be seen as a belated step, it is a step in the right direction. And with similar responses coming in gradually from her Southeast Asian counterparts, there are increasingly enhanced chances of embarking on measures for inter-regional co-operation in the areas of science and

technology, communication, security, education and so on both bilaterally and multilaterally. This will put both the parties in a win-win situation. Thus, the shared heritage of India and Southeast Asia is going to provide the much needed inspiration and boost up towards renewing the vital contacts and friendship that once symbolised the relationship between the two during the hallowed, golden days of history. The groundwork has long been laid, the only need is to build up anew the edifice of mutually fructuous relationship.

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