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EARLY INTERACTIONS BETWEEN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Nalanda-Sriwijaya Series

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1. *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia*, edited by Hermann Kulke, K. Kesavapany and Vijay Sakhuja
2. *Early Interactions between South and Southeast Asia: Reflections on Cross-Cultural Exchange*, edited by Pierre-Yves Manguin, A. Mani and Geoff Wade

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Early Interactions between South and Southeast Asia

Reflections on Cross-Cultural Exchange

Edited by

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Foreword

In late 2006, the National Library Board (NLB), in the person of Mrs Pushpa Latha Devi Naidu, approached ISEAS with a proposal for a 'Conference on Early Indian Influences in Southeast Asia'. The conference was to be held in conjunction with an exhibition that NLB was organising. Professors Mani and Ramasamy were asked to coordinate the conference with funding contributions from the NLB, Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), Asia Research Institute (ARI), and the Chola Mandalam Group in Tamil Nadu. ISEAS on its part provided the logistical support and coordination for the conference with additional funding support. It is important to note the help that Professors Hermann Kulke and Pierre-Yves Manguin, visiting scholars at ARI rendered to the conceptualisation of the conference. A total of 52 regional and international experts presented papers on various aspects of early Indian Influence in Southeast Asia at the three-day conference from 21 to 23 November 2007. The themes of the conference included 'naval expeditions of the Cholas', 'archaeological and inscriptional evidence of early Indian influence', 'ancient and medieval commercial activities' and 'regional cultures and localization'.

The papers are being published as two separate volumes under the auspices of the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre at ISEAS. Hermann Kulke, K. Kesavapany and Vijay Sakhuja edited the volume on *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia*, while Pierre-Yves Manguin, A. Mani and Geoff Wade edited this volume on *Early Interactions between South and Southeast Asia: Reflections on Cross-Cultural Exchange*. The papers in both volumes present the reflections of scholars on this important historical period of Southeast Asia and its relations with South Asia.

I wish to thank all the co-sponsors of the project, namely the Directors of NLB, ISAS and ARI for their generous support. I also wish to thank Mr Subbiah of the Chola Mandalam Group in Tamil Nadu for the interest he showed by his active participation in the three-day conference. Finally I

extend my appreciation to Professor Manguin, Professor Mani and Dr Wade for their editorial contributions in successfully completing the editing of this large volume.

K. KESAVAPANY
Director
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Preface

This volume brings together twenty-three papers contributed by twenty-seven authors who have carried out research on the interactions between Southeast Asia and South Asia in the period between 500 BCE and CE 1500. Though there has been much debate on the nature of these interactions, the volume begins with an introduction to the question of whether Southeast Asia was 'Indianised' before 'Indianisation'. As recent archaeological findings have pushed back the period of 'Indianisation' prior to the Common Era, the introductory paper provides an overview to the rest of the volume.

Beyond the introductory chapter by Manguin, the remaining chapters of the volume are divided into two large sections. The ten papers in Part I relate to the new archaeological evidence from South Asia and Southeast Asia. The papers draw on archaeological evidence that has been unearthed on both sides of the Bay of Bengal in recent years. Part II, consisting of thirteen papers, addresses the issue of localisation of South Asian cultures in Southeast Asia.

While more research remains to be done in this area of interactions across the Bay of Bengal, we hope that this volume is able to bring together the ongoing research and reflections in this area of study. We extend our thanks for the cooperation of all the contributors to the volume and at the same time we wish to thank Ms. Betty Tan, who helped coordinate the correspondence with all the authors. Ms Kay Lyons created the excellent index.

PIERRE-YVES MANGUIN, A. MANI AND GEOFF WADE
Editors

Introduction

Pierre-Yves Manguin

Southeast Asia is today among the most exciting areas for research in historical archaeology.

HENRY T. WRIGHT (1998: 343)

The present book is the final product of a conference convened in Singapore in November 2007. The title given to this conference was ‘Early Indian Influences in Southeast Asia’, a concept with a ‘well-established pedigree’, which ‘has rightly left an indelible mark on the field of Southeast Asian studies’ (in the words of Daud Ali in his essay for the present volume). Organisers first sent invitations to a broad community, encouraging papers on the Chola expeditions to Southeast Asia. The many positive answers – too numerous for financial and practical reasons – were filtered down to accommodate some fifty participants, and their presentations were then divided into panels and plenary sessions. Presentations that were related to the Chola expeditions and their context were gathered into one panel, and subsequently published in a separate volume (*Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia*, edited by H. Kulke, K. Kesavapany and Vijay Sakhujā). The other, much larger group of papers was reorganised for publication in the present book, which is the result of a further selection, needed to reduce its size as well as to give it more coherence. As a broad rule, the editors retained only those papers which presented recent data and innovative or renewed approaches. Archaeology *lato sensu* ended up occupying a large proportion of the book. For reasons explained below, the discipline has thrived in the past years, and its place in this volume is a reflection of its present-day situation in Southeast Asian studies.

Chapters presenting and discussing relevant empirical data, mainly derived from recent excavation programmes in both South and Southeast Asia were regrouped in Part I of the book. Some papers on art and architecture, because they presented, rather than empirical data, more of an investigation into the processes at work for the transmission of Indian culture to Southeast Asia, were regrouped with textual studies and history of religions into Part II of this book.

This introduction is no place to discuss all the fine points of the long-standing, rich debate on the Indianisation of Southeast Asia. Others have done so more than once over the past century, from Bosch and Cœdès for the last truly orientalist generation, to Mus, Mabbett, de Casparis, and Wolters for the following generations of historians with a more open view of the dynamics of ancient Southeast Asian societies. More recently, Hermann Kulke and Sheldon Pollock have brought new light to the subject as, in spite of their different approaches, they share an invaluable experience acquired while researching cultures on both sides of the Bay of Bengal, all of them peripheral in regard of the sources of Indianity and Sanskritisation in northern India.¹

'Indianisation' has never been a standardised paradigm; definitions have evolved with the passage of time and as the concept became entwined in multiple historicities, each one with its own different cultural background. The case of the historical narratives popularised by the scholars of the Greater India Society is one prominent example of such competing historicities. Their narratives were widely held in the 1930s, with all their underlying political claims; and such views keep re-emerging to this day in India, where we have, as elsewhere, a classical debate between histories and identities that remain nationally, or regionally focused and a truly trans-cultural, holistic historiography (as suggested in Selvakumar's essay and which the various chapters in this volume will no doubt reinforce).

Considering the fact that the initial study of the Indianisation process, for broad chronological reasons, fell within the realm of the first specialists of ancient Southeast Asia, most of them trained Indologists, the debate was for long kept in the hands of philologists (mostly epigraphers) and historians of art and architecture. Archaeologists dealing with the historical periods (many of them architects by training) restricted their endeavours to the study of monumental remains, most of them religious buildings, rarely venturing into urban or settlement excavations, and when doing so, paying little attention to those parts of the archaeological assemblages that would have taught them more mundane aspects of Southeast Asian societies. As inscriptions and stone or brick temples and associated statues only appeared in Southeast Asia after the first few centuries of the Common Era, the erudite quest of these scholars,

therefore, left us with no information on the transition between what they perceived as simple, ‘uncivilised’ societies, best studied by prehistorians, and those ‘Indianised’, newly ‘civilised’ people who produced remains worthy of their attention. R.C. Majumdar, the most vocal promoter of the Greater India Society paradigm summed up these views in unambiguous terms: ‘The Hindu colonists brought with them the whole framework of their culture and civilisation and this was transplanted in its entirety among the people who had not yet emerged from their primitive barbarism.’² As late as 1968, however, George Cœdès put it in gentler but unambiguous terms in the last edition of his otherwise remarkable synthesis of the achievements of the orientalist school: ‘In most cases, we pass without transition from the late Neolithic to the first Indian remains (...). So we can say, without great exaggeration that the people of Further India were still in the middle of a late Neolithic civilisation when the Brahmano-Buddhist culture of India came into contact with them.’³ With no transition, quiescent, passive societies entangled in a prehistoric morass would then have found themselves enlightened by the imposition of a great civilisation from overseas. This was of course a current paradigm of colonial times, when greater civilisations were said to be there to help lesser ones in their path to progress. The Greater India enlightenment paradigm and the corollary ‘colonisation’ of Southeast Asia, whether cultural or even military and migratory as then often claimed against all evidence, was largely a transposition into an imagined past of a contemporary state of affairs.

After the crucial papers by Harry Benda and John Smal – both published in the early 1960s – significantly, in the Singapore-based *Journal of Southeast Asian History* – two generations of historians, with a variety of approaches, have worked hard at ‘decolonising’ Southeast Asian history.⁴ Scholars of various origins and schools have since then contributed to the production of an autonomous history for this region of the world that earlier on had carried such unpromising names as Further India, Greater India, East Indies, Indo-China or Indonesia before it became known as Southeast Asia. This shift in historiographic trends also affected those scholars interested in the period during which the first complex polities of our region appeared on the world scene, producing a generation of ‘autonomist’ historians and archaeologists. A variety of rationalisations were produced in between the two opposite trends, the Orientalist tradition (best illustrated in Georges Cœdès’ seminal work), and the ‘indigenists’ with a more anthropological approach (the ‘sociologists’, as they were still termed by Cœdès and his peers until the 1960s).⁵

Art historians and epigraphers did succeed in reappraising and redefining the process of Indianisation to better fit the new paradigms and allow more room for Southeast Asian agency in the process. However, the scarcity of

additional iconographic or written source material, the all too frequent uncoupling between this material and the original archaeological sites, and the mere fact that such data did not appear in Southeast Asia before the third or fourth century CE, made it difficult for these scholars to build up a radically new paradigm.

Social scientists who wanted to reappraise those centuries during which Southeast Asian societies entered the world economic scene were thus confronted with a millennium-long historiographic no-man's land. On the one hand, Southeast Asian societies that thrived between the fifth century BCE and the fifth century CE were for long treated, at best, as prehistoric communities that were increasingly complex, but remained cut off from economic transformations and developments in world economy happening elsewhere in Asia. On the other hand, we had the far more sophisticated polities who had adopted and adapted – or 'localised' to use Oliver Wolters' handy concept⁶ – a set of cultural values imported from India: political and religious ideologies, a broad spectrum of architectural and iconographic agendas, together with a distinguished language, Sanskrit, and scripts soon adapted to transcribe their own languages. In the still currently accepted meaning of the term, these Southeast Asian polities, starting around the third or fourth century CE, had then become 'Indianised'. In the absence of written sources and monuments, philology and art history were unable to fill in the gap between these two opposed phases of Southeast Asian history. Much of the research carried out in the past few decades, however, as shown in the chapters of Part I of this book, has been focused on this historiographic gap, which for convenience sake most historians now designate as the proto-history of Southeast Asia. It is now perceived as a millennium-long phase of exchange between the two shores of the Bay of Bengal leading, among other processes, to the Indianisation of those parts of the region that straddled the main routes of exchange between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

WAS SOUTHEAST ASIA INDIANISED BEFORE INDIANISATION?

The bridging of this gap is very much the result of archaeological research. In Southeast Asia like in other parts of the world, modern archaeological techniques, with controlled, stratigraphic excavations, were by and large developed by prehistorians and for prehistorians. For periods when written sources were available, archaeological excavations were for long considered superfluous, or redundant, and excavation techniques remained crude. With few exceptions (Mortimer Wheeler's pioneering work in India should be mentioned here), only religious monuments were explored, cleared and eventually restored, their statues sent to museums, and their inscriptions to

epigraphers. In other areas of the world where written sources were available, historical archaeology has similarly come of age only recently, with excavations now used on a par with textual studies, and no longer as a mere producer of data and illustrations for the historians, in terms of temples, statues, and inscriptions. The recent, troubled history of much of Southeast Asia only allowed the deployment of large-scale, systematic fieldwork and the adoption of new methodologies after the 1980s (some areas in the region remain, even today, out of reach for archaeologists). Despite this relatively late start, recent archaeological research in the transition period that leads from late prehistory to early history, with its resolutely inter-disciplinary approach, is inducing a significant heuristic revolution in the assessment of the history of Early Southeast Asia.⁷ It has also created a renewed knowledge basis for this fertile proto-historic period upon which we can reassess the trans-cultural, mutual processes that took place within complex sets of networks, in terms of chronology, of directionality, of quality and of intensity, within what Sunil Gupta rightly names the 'Bay of Bengal Interaction Sphere'.⁸

Ian Glover, following his excavation in the 1980s on the late prehistoric site of Ban Don Ta Phet, in West Central Thailand, pioneered this new line of enquiry. The results obtained by the excavators were the first to reveal early contacts with India, much earlier than the Indianisation period as it was then still envisioned. Ian Glover drew out the first conclusions from these finds in his programmatic booklet *Early Trade between India and Southeast Asia: A Link in the Development of a World Trading System* in 1989. The archaeology of proto-historical and early historical sites in Southeast Asia has, since then, flourished, finally bringing to light sites that provide a more comprehensive view of the societies under study during the crucial, formative millennium (approximately fifth century BCE to fifth century CE). New sets of data gathered from older burial sites and from early urban or proto-urban settlements allowed archaeologists to scrutinize ancient Southeast Asian societies not only through the limited prisms of their religious or political activities, and through the monumental buildings these produced, but also through their more mundane conducts: daily life, settlement patterns, and economic activities (production and exchange). The western façade of Southeast Asia being situated at the crossroads between the two massive economic blocs of India and China, exchange and organised trade have by necessity been major components of local economies. Much has been written since then on the role of trade in the development of complex polities in early Southeast Asia.⁹ Recent archaeological excavation programmes have devoted much research to artefacts that suggest long distance exchange of goods, to the technologies used to produce them and, as a corollary, to the agency of artisans proficient in such techniques.

Contributions published in this book (by Lam Thi My Dzung, Glover with

Bellina, Bouvet, Boonyarit Chaisuwan, and Manguin with Agustijanto) offer much detail on some relevant archaeological sites and artefacts from Thailand, Vietnam or Indonesia, starting roughly in the fifth or fourth centuries BCE. Other contributions reveal new sites or reconsider sites and exchange patterns based on excavations and surveys carried out in India (Rajan, Selvakumar, and Sundaresh with Gaur); the first two take into consideration technological influences in the ceramic or shipbuilding domains that would have travelled East to West – a novel approach in Indian archaeology. Research work carried out in the field of nautical archaeology in Southeast Asia, referred to by Selvakumar, did not find its way into this book for lack of space. The prominence of Southeast Asian shipbuilding techniques (as documented in local sites and now growingly in India and in the Maldives, as well as in the early spread of Austronesian nautical vocabulary in many Indian Ocean languages) and the large size of first millennium CE seagoing ships built in Southeast Asia (as revealed by recent archaeological finds), also raise the question of the identity of the agents of maritime exchange and trade across the Bay of Bengal. Whatever the role of Indian ships and shippers (not confirmed as yet by nautical archaeology), it is by now clear that their Southeast Asian counterparts must have also held an outstanding position during this formative period.¹⁰

Other proto-historic sites recently excavated in Southeast Asia have not been presented in the chapters of this book. Research at those sites does, however, confirm or qualify the arguments developed in these pages. The pioneering work on the Northern Bali coastal sites of Pacung and Sembiran should be mentioned here, as this was the first to reveal exchange with India in the form of ceramics found during systematic excavations of local burials. It is also the site situated furthest East, along the maritime route leading to Eastern Indonesia and its spices and aromatic woods, thus confirming the role of trade in the dispersal of Indian material culture.¹¹ Funan sites (referred to by Lê Thi Liên and Anna Ślaczka in this book only for their Hindu imagery and consecration rituals) have also been thoroughly investigated in recent years, in both Cambodia (Angkor Borei) and Vietnam (Oc Eo).¹² Angkor Borei shows signs of early occupation by a complex society before developing, early in the first millennium CE, into a large urban, Indianised site, possibly a capital of Funan. Oc Eo appears to have been occupied only at the turn of the first millennium; the people there not only soon adopted some Indian material culture for daily use (new pottery styles, tiles), they also almost immediately (second-third century CE) show clear signs of having developed what must have been a pioneering urban pattern, no doubt after contact with India and its culture. Other recently discovered third-fourth century CE coastal sites in South Sumatra, downstream from Palembang where the capital of Srivijaya was to be founded three centuries later, appear to have

been in contact with other similar sites of Southeast Asia, and to present distinct proto-urban patterns.¹³

All such Southeast Asian proto-historic sites, as revealed by the archaeological work carried out in the past years, therefore show signs of having been occupied by societies of growing complexity in terms of indigenous settlement patterns and practising distinctly local burial rituals (of the kind observed in much of Southeast Asia). All such sites, however, also bring proof that, in their earlier phases, exchange and possibly trade networks linked, directly or indirectly, most of these people together, and with peoples further north in the South China Sea and further West in the Indian Ocean. Sites such as Khao Sam Kaeo and Phu Khao Thong (in Peninsular Thailand) turned out to be importing from India and locally producing, in remarkable quantities, glass and precious stone beads as early as the fourth century BCE, no doubt for growing Southeast Asian markets.¹⁴ Textiles and both imported Indian or locally produced ‘Indianised’ pottery bring to light the role of artisans and of technological transfers from India to Southeast Asia.¹⁵

These pioneering contributions on artefacts that are considered as ‘markers’ of exchange activities point up the need for more studies on the dissemination of technical knowledge. We should not limit ourselves to the study of the transmission of intangible concepts and cultural behaviours. It will take a few more years for all this ongoing work to produce enough results and bring analyses to fruition. What is at stake here is not only the material aspects of this artefact production (their study, however, provides the foundations for further interpretations): the social environment of the voyaging objects also needs to be considered, and the hesitant relationship between the inherited and the assigned meaning of objects, their reinterpretations according to local systems of values, and the subsequent creating of new meanings in a new economic and social context. This also introduces into the historical scene the creators of these objects, the artisans. They constitute a social group whose share in the Indianisation process has been much neglected, since older narratives only considered the Indian trilogy of Brahmins, warriors, and the merchant class. Artisans now appear prominently in recent archaeological discourse on protohistoric sites, and we can no longer neglect their agency.¹⁶

It is, therefore, only after centuries of intense contact that peoples active at such sites became progressively ‘Indianised’, as conceived within the earlier Indianisation paradigm. They did this in diverse ways, following different chronologies, depending on geographical situation, on the relative importance of growing political systems, and on the intensity of their involvement in trading networks.

On the basis of the chapters grouped in the first part of this book (and of comparable articles published elsewhere), it is necessary to conclude that by the time Indian-inspired temples, statues and epigraphy appeared in Southeast

Asia, sometime between the third and the fifth century CE, the relationship between Southeast Asian and Indian societies had already come a very long way. We are now far removed from the tenets of the Greater India Society and the imagined vision of a sudden imposition of Indian culture, as a *deus ex machina*. In other words, one is entitled to raise the question as to whether Southeast Asia was Indianised before ‘Indianisation?’

It all depends of course on what is meant by ‘Indianisation’. Some will prefer to use this term in its literal sense, now including both phases of the process under the same designation. Others, as I personally do, if only for convenience sake, will prefer to keep employing the term ‘Indianisation’ for the second phase of cultural exchange between South and Southeast Asia, as used until now: that is, to denote the profound socio-political modifications brought about by the adoption, at least by the ruling elites, of state concepts, broad based, universalist religions and their props (temples and statues), and writing in Sanskrit (the language of power, as demonstrated by Pollock).¹⁷ The preceding period, would then only be considered as a contact and exchange phase with South Asia, allowing for a variety of comparable but variable processes to be seen at play, depending on the place or the social background of the agents, as well as other factors, before a clear acceleration of cross-cultural exchange brings about a remarkable uniformity into the process, between the fourth-fifth and the seventh-eighth centuries CE.

DRIFT, EXCHANGE OR TRADE?

Proponents of the trade-generated model of state formation in littoral Southeast Asia have always been keen on identifying trade networks and trade goods linking China or India to Southeast Asia, and the agents at work in such commercial processes. For many years, after work by historians such as Oliver Wolters (1967) and Jan Wisseman Christie (1990, 1992, 1995) and that of the archaeologist Ian Glover (1989) one has been aware that there was a distinct possibility that exchange between the shores of the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea was one crucial component of the process of state generation for late prehistoric to early historical times.¹⁸ One may disagree with Glover’s views of the early developments of global, ‘world’ economies but he did nevertheless raise the question we are now squarely confronted with, which is the scope of long-distance exchange in those littoral societies that were then growing in complexity.¹⁹ As made obvious in the chapters of this book, we may eliminate the possibility of a simple ‘drift’ to Southeast Asia of rare goods, resulting from occasional overseas contacts. The technological transfers and movement of artisans in the glass and stone bead industry – to take the best-documented example from late prehistory – can only be explained in broader economic terms: only the emergence in

Southeast Asia of new markets for such artefacts can explain the systematic appearance in archaeological context of evidence for early mass production. Data on other identified items of material culture is far more questionable, at least in economic terms. Research on exchange of ceramic technologies and productions between the two sides of the Bay of Bengal is still in progress and it may be too soon to draw conclusions (see, in this volume, Phaedra Bouvet's essay on Indian wares in Southeast Asia and remarks in Rajan's and Selvakumar's essays about possible technological transfers of ceramic decoration from Southeast Asia to India). The term 'trade' is often used to qualify the circulation of Indian ceramic wares in the Indian Ocean, as evidenced by their usage in Southeast Asian proto-historic sites. However, one may argue that the very small amount of 'rouletted wares' brought to light in such sites cannot offer proof of systematic, organised exchange that would qualify as trade (less common Indian ceramic wares often appear as a single shard on a given site): all in all, this best-known family of wares, frequently used as a marker for such exchange patterns by archaeologists since it was first noticed in the 1960s, must have produced in all Southeast Asian sites, for some four centuries of exchange activities, enough whole dishes to set tables for only five dozen people, hardly a major 'trade' item.²⁰

This remark provides a good illustration of the difficulties encountered when using the small amount of data presently available to historians, and the resulting ambiguities in the usage of terms such as 'trade' or 'exchange' to explain the circulation of sets of material culture. The fact that we have no data at all on prices of such goods in Southeast Asian harbours during proto-historic times does not facilitate sound reasoning on such matters. The figures quoted above do show that, if Indian ceramic wares had any strictly economic value, it could only have been within a 'prestige goods' paradigm, a somehow overworked concept. The exchange of such ceramic wares could hardly have generated enough economic surpluses, in a nascent market economy, to be seriously taken into account. Other artefacts such as high tin content bronze bowls would fare even worse in such accounts. On the other hand, gold, tin, textiles and spices are goods that may be assumed to have been traded in much larger, or more valuable quantities and thus to have driven exchanges between South and Southeast Asia. This, however, is inferred on the basis of textual sources exceedingly poor on economic data (only isolated archaeological data are available on textiles or spices, some as yet unverified). Spices, textiles and gold are artefacts extremely difficult to document in archaeological contexts: precious metals were immediately melted; while organic materials only survived over centuries by accident. Tin, one major production of Southeast Asia in later times, may well have been exported in our period: it is not, however, documented in archaeological sites as a trade good (only in alloys of manufactured objects). These trade goods

are, therefore, either conspicuously absent from all relevant archaeological sites or preserved there in such small quantities that one can only speculate about their economic value. Such inescapable gaps leave little room for sound analysis by economic historians.

Archaeology, until recently, had not been too good at producing evidence on the agents of the exchanges that accompanied the developments witnessed in Indian and Southeast Asian sites. Artisans, as we have seen, have become one significant element in the equation; in the early historical period of Southeast Asian history, we have proof that religious networks, Buddhist or Vaishnavite, were also active factors of change, through the agency of merchants, adventurers or itinerant religious entrepreneurs.²¹ When, in the 680s, the South Sumatran inscriptions written in Malay produce a first vernacular representation of the newly-founded Srivijaya polity, merchants and shipmasters figure among the props of the polity: the former carry a Sanskrit name (*vanyaga*), the latter a Malay name (*puhawang*).²² This would seem to indicate a sharing of roles: to the Indians the itinerant merchant role, to the Malays the agency for ship ownership and entrepreneurship (the latter would receive confirmation from the fact that large, locally-built ships have been found in Southeast Asian waters). This is one flimsy indication of an exchange organisation, with specialised agents, hence of the existence of institutionalised trade.

The question of the impact of trade and trade-related economic development on South and Southeast Asian societies may be tackled from another angle. If comparisons are made with India in the few centuries preceding the Common Era, we have so far no evidence in Southeast Asia for a hierarchy of settlements crowned with urban centres that should normally be associated with organised trade networks (in other words, we have no comparable developments to those taking place at the same time in India).²³ Is this because we have not yet found these early urban sites? There are so far only flimsy indications of proto-urban settlements in the Thai-Malay peninsula or in South Sumatra, as noted above. This does not mean that others are not there waiting to be brought to light by archaeologists. After all, it is only in recent times that later, much larger and more conspicuous urban settlements like the Srivijaya capital at Palembang or the Funan cities of Oc Eo, Go Thap or Angkor Borei have been clearly revealed by archaeologists.

CULTURAL ASYMMETRIES?

One more necessary question regarding the relationship between India and Southeast Asia in the period under consideration needs to be raised in this introduction. I have alluded to the shifts in historiographic trends during the past decades among historians of Southeast Asia, between the Indo-centric

and the autonomist or ‘indigenist’ traditions. The latter group always felt uncomfortable with the obvious – not to say inescapable – asymmetry of overall exchanges between India and Southeast Asia. Historians who were educated during the coming of age of what is now a Southeast Asian identity (among which I count myself), worked as Southeast-Asianists within the tenets set up by ‘indigenists’, and were always confronted with this previously over-emphasised and potentially threatening asymmetry. However, trying to leave aside the historical circumstances in which this generation carried out research in and on Southeast Asia, it is useful to consider that such cultural asymmetries are more than common in world history and have more than once resulted in controversial narratives. Asymmetrical exchange of ideas and of goods between Mediterranean Europe and Western Asia accompanied profound socio-cultural transformations, linked to patterns of interaction between societies during the Greek, the Roman and the Byzantine periods. Historians of Southeast Asia should keep in mind the fact that increasingly complex societies in the Atlantic façade and the north of Europe, contemporary to those of Southeast Asia’s proto-history, were then undergoing comparable transformations, and adapting to a modernity introduced from distant Mediterranean shores (admittedly under military pressure, which is not obviously the case in Southeast Asia). It is no surprise then to be witness to the adoption in Southeast Asia of a broad set of cultural traits, comprising religious and administrative practices, monumental buildings and art forms, and even new forms of finer tableware. After all, no historian – as far as I know – has ever contested the asymmetry of the process when Chinese stoneware and porcelain, in the early ninth century CE, ruthlessly and forever eliminated a whole variety of local pottery forms previously in daily usage in the urban sites of the Southeast Asian region, no doubt a change in production patterns that permanently affected Southeast Asian village level economies.

In the field of material culture, new research, as mentioned above, has given some scope to Southeast Asian contributions, as in nautical or ceramic technologies. When immaterial exchange is considered, useful concepts such as ‘lasting relationship’ (de Casparis), ‘localisation’ (Wolters), or even Goethe’s ‘elective affinities’ (Kulke), to name only a few, have been called upon over the years to tone down the earlier paradigms. Southeast Asian societies have regained in the process an entrepreneurial role in the adoption and adaptation of Indian concepts and constructions to pre-existing social and economic patterns, from scripts and learned languages to literary genres and motifs, from religious texts and discourses to associated art and architectural forms, and to state and urbanisation models.

The recent publication of Indologist Sheldon Pollock’s *magnum opus* on Sanskrit, culture, and power in pre-modern India (2006) has prompted three authors to reflect on some of his arguments in this book, which allows

itself extensive forays into Indianised cultures of Southeast Asia and argues for strong continuities in the cultural and social development of South and Southeast Asia. Johannes Bronkhorst and Daud Ali question the relevance of some of Pollock's analyses and confront them with Southeast Asian inscriptional sources. Julie Romain, for her part, writes about one aspect of Pollock's 'Sanskrit cosmopolis' that was neglected in his book, bringing to the fore plausible connections between the spread of Indian literary texts and the architectural culture in Java.

Recent researches in the history of religions, based on a much improved knowledge of texts, contest the often assumed mono-directionality of cultural movement: Peter Skilling, in this volume, raises 'the possibility of cross-cultural and trans-regional exchange, of dialogue, or of interaction' and complains that Buddhist studies in Southeast Asia lag behind, remaining under the shadow of outdated theories of 'Indianisation', when 'early categories in the field of Indian (as well as Tibetan and East Asian) Buddhism have since been, refined, revised, or rejected'.

Most of the papers in the second part of this book deal, in one way or another, with the 'localising' process, in a variety of domains. In the light of progress in South and Southeast Asian field and textual studies, art historians re-consider analyses advanced by previous generations, to modify and improve them (Robert Brown, Julie Romain), and always to better understand the borrowing processes at work and the usage that was locally made of the newly adopted intellectual and artistic constructs. By making use of computer-driven methodologies, Martin Polkinghorne, after confirming earlier, structural approaches, shows how his fine-grained analysis brings to the fore individual artists and discrete workshops. Two other papers in the second part of this volume (by Le Thi Lien and Anna Ślącza) have in common the approach confronting Southeast Asian archaeological data and Indian texts, whether these describe religious pantheons or temple consecration rituals: they show the difficulties encountered when bridging the divide between (Indian) texts and (Southeast Asian) terrain, between canon and practice.

One single essay by Kyaw Minn Htin presents us with new inscriptional data from the neglected Buddhist surroundings of Arakan in Myanmar. Had the Singapore conference been convened a couple of years later, epigraphy, now also thriving anew in Southeast Asian studies, would no doubt have been better represented in this volume.

Some societies of the western façade of Southeast Asia underwent major transformations at the turn of the second millennium, driven by the growing impact of Tamil merchants of Chola times. Edwards McKinnon, Daniel Perret with Heddy Surachman, and John Guy, in papers bridging the first and second parts of this book, consider changes in trade patterns, the building

of the only true (if short-lived) pre-modern Indian settlements in Southeast Asia, and interactions, in North Sumatra, with societies that had not been Indianised in earlier phases of exchange with South Asia.

To complete this impressionistic overview of 'Indian influences in Southeast Asia', one author ventures into the rarely-visited field of musicology (Arsenio Nicolas). Anthropologist Boreth Ly follows the process into the second millennium, showing how a recent globalism shapes notions of ritual authority among itinerant Tamil Nadu 'Brahmins', whose practices legitimate the political scene of modern nations, even when this is done under the guise of an Angkorian ancestry. In the same vein, Sachchidanand Sahai demonstrates how, on the basis of the classic Indian *Ramayana*, Laotian writers, story-tellers and painters use the legend to produce their own social space, and express the cultural ethos of Buddhist communities along the Mekong, even after the fall of the monarchy and the installation of a Communist regime.

* * *

This book does not provide, by far, a full review of progress made in the past decades, or of all pending questions regarding early cultural exchange between South and Southeast Asia. Because of the initial unfocused scope of the conference, the choice of papers kept for final publication remains, by force, impressionist. Any expectations on exhaustivity regarding the Sisyphean task of reappraising the Indianisation of Southeast Asia would have anyway been downright unrealistic. The editors' more modest ambition was to take stock of the results of two to three decades of intensive archaeological research in the region carried out in parallel, or in combination with renewed approaches of textual sources and of art history.

Almost twenty years after Ian Glover raised the question of the linkage – therefore of the relevance – of Southeast Asian exchange patterns into a world economy, it appears that considerable progress has been made. However, do we have enough data to confirm that the overall economic activities in which India was involved were substantial enough to generate significant surpluses (in strictly economic terms), to help generate state formation and urbanisation in Southeast Asia? Can we now better measure the relative impact of exchange of material goods or intangible concepts on Southeast Asian societies of protohistoric and early-historic times? We have a better comprehension today of the agents of these processes; but can we precisely define the relative share of Southeast Asian and Indian participants in this newly redefined long-term process? The answers to such questions, unfortunately, remain elusive. In the absence of indigenous written sources for most of this period, archaeological excavation programmes bear most of the burden. There will always be too few of these considering the immensity of the task at hand; and field archaeology,

moreover, despite remarkable methodological progress, is far from being able to answer all pending questions. In the face of such difficulties, many hypotheses will therefore remain within the realm of speculation.

More than anything else, the present volume shows that to improve our understanding of the trans-cultural process referred to as Indianisation, we need to get specialists of both India and Southeast Asia to work together, to confront in an inter-disciplinary state of mind the experience acquired in each other's field of study, the methodologies, and the models. In other words, there is a need for a truly trans-cultural historiography. To conclude this Introduction, and to make this point even more obvious, let me harness the help of two prominent authors who have made similar remarks in very recent times. Sheldon Pollock justly remarked (2006: 16): '... in the first millennium, it makes hardly more sense to distinguish between South and Southeast Asia than between north India and south India. (...) Everywhere similar processes of cosmopolitan transculturation were under way, with the source and target of change always shifting, since there was no single point of production for cosmopolitan culture.' Hiram Woodward (2007), when discussing esoteric Buddhism as practiced in Sumatra and Java, and its possible influence upon subsequent developments in India, thought 'a good argument can be made for treating Indonesia and India as an integral unit well into the ninth century'.

NOTES

1. Bosch 1961; Coédès 1968, chap. II *sq.*; Mus 1975; Mabbett 1977; Casparis 1983; Wolters 1999; Kulke 1990; Pollock 1996, 2006. These references are only the more prominent in a long list of works dealing with Indianisation in a way or another, by the same authors or by a large array of other scholars. Possibly the best summary of Southeast Asian historiography will be found in John Legge's introduction to the first volume of the *Cambridge History of Southeast Asia* (Legge 1992).
2. Majumdar 1941.
3. Coédès 1968: 7-8. Coédès' views on the Indianisation process were in essence left unchanged after the 1948 edition of his *Etats hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie* (the first edition was published in 1944 under a different title). The 1968 English edition, the last one to appear, is a very slightly revised translation of the last French edition (1964), approved by the author.
4. Smail 1961, Benda 1962.
5. On this debate between Orientalists and 'sociologists', which started in the 1930s within the *Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* (EFEO), see Manguin 2006. See also the article by the anthropologist Bernard Formoso (2006), for an analysis of conflicting approaches in the Western perceptions of Southeast Asia.
6. Wolters 1999 (1st edn. 1982), where he discusses at length his 'localisation' concept.
7. A first attempt by archaeologists Peter Bellwood and Ian Glover at producing a textbook encompassing this crucial period (*Southeast Asia: From Prehistory to*

History) came only in 2004 (Bellwood and Glover 2004). On the new approaches in historical archaeology, as practised in Southeast Asia, see also Stark and Allen 1998, Stark 1998, Wright 1998 and the other papers collected by these editors in the same issue of the *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*.

8. Gupta 2005.
9. See among many other studies Christie 1990, 1992, 1995, Manguin 1991, 2004.
10. Manguin 1996.
11. Ardika 2003; Ardika and Bellwood 1991, 1993.
12. Stark 1998, 2004; Stark and Bong Sovath 2001; Bourdonneau 2003; Manguin and Vo Si Khai 2000; Manguin 2004: 289-93, 2009.
13. Soeroso 1998, Tri Marhaeni 2002, Manguin 2004: 286-87.
14. See the chapters by Boonyarit Chaisuwan and Glover with Bellina in this book, and, in more detail, some of their recent contributions published elsewhere: Boonyarit Chaisuwan and Rarai Naiyawat 2009, Bellina-Pryce and Praon Silapanth 2006; see also Pryce, Bellina-Pryce and Bennett 2006, Lankton, Dussubieux and Gratuze 2006.
15. On Indian and 'Indianised' pottery, see Bouvet 2006, her chapter in this book, and the chapter by Manguin and Agustijanto, also in this book. On textiles, see Judith Cameron (2007).
16. Bérénice Bellina's pioneering dissertation on stone ornaments found in archaeological sites on both sides of the Bay of Bengal and on related technological transfers led her to significant conclusions on the role of artisans in the transmission of Indian culture to Southeast Asia (Bellina 2006).
17. One should also take into consideration the analogy with a later process of major cross-cultural exchange in Southeast Asia: 'Islamisation' of parts of Southeast Asia became effective, starting in the thirteenth century, only after centuries of post-Hijrah (and earlier) exchange with the Middle East.
18. See also Manguin 1991 for a study of the relationship between trade and political power in the myths of Southeast Asian coastal polities.
19. 'World history' is an active – and much discussed – school of thought (publishing mainly in the *Journal of World History*). Among other considerations, it reflects on the early, pre-modern 'globalisation' of economies. The results of the past years of archaeological work on proto-historic Southeast Asia is only now finding its way into publications of 'world historians': see, for instance, Beaujard 2006; and Beaujard, Berger and Norel 2009. Lockard attempts to link early Southeast Asia to world systems, but still bases his study on outdated paradigms about Indianisation (Lockard 2007, 2009). For an earlier, distanced reflection on 'world history' and the study of Asian economies, see Zurndorfer 1998.
20. Less than 3,000 shards (as counted in 2007), hence some 60 dishes only, counting fine and coarse 'rouletted' wares together; far less still if only fine paste, true 'rouletted' wares are taken into consideration. As a basis for comparison, the same number of shards of Chinese export wares, bridging four centuries of Srivijaya trade, were found in one single sector in Palembang, in only one month of excavations by the present author.
21. On Buddhism and trade, see the major work by Himanshu Ray (1989); on the role of Vaishnava networks, see Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998.
22. One thorough analysis of political representations in Malay inscriptions is that of Kulke 1993. On a recent, critical view of Kulke's and others' hermeneutic approach, see Zakharov 2007, 2009. On the role of the 'overseas' merchants, see Manguin 1991.

23. On the relationship between urban development in India and trade patterns, see Ray 1997.

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