ARCHAEOLOGY AND ART HISTORY OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

An introductory resource guide

Hélène Njoto & Noel Hidalgo Tan



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An introductory resource guide

Acknowledgement

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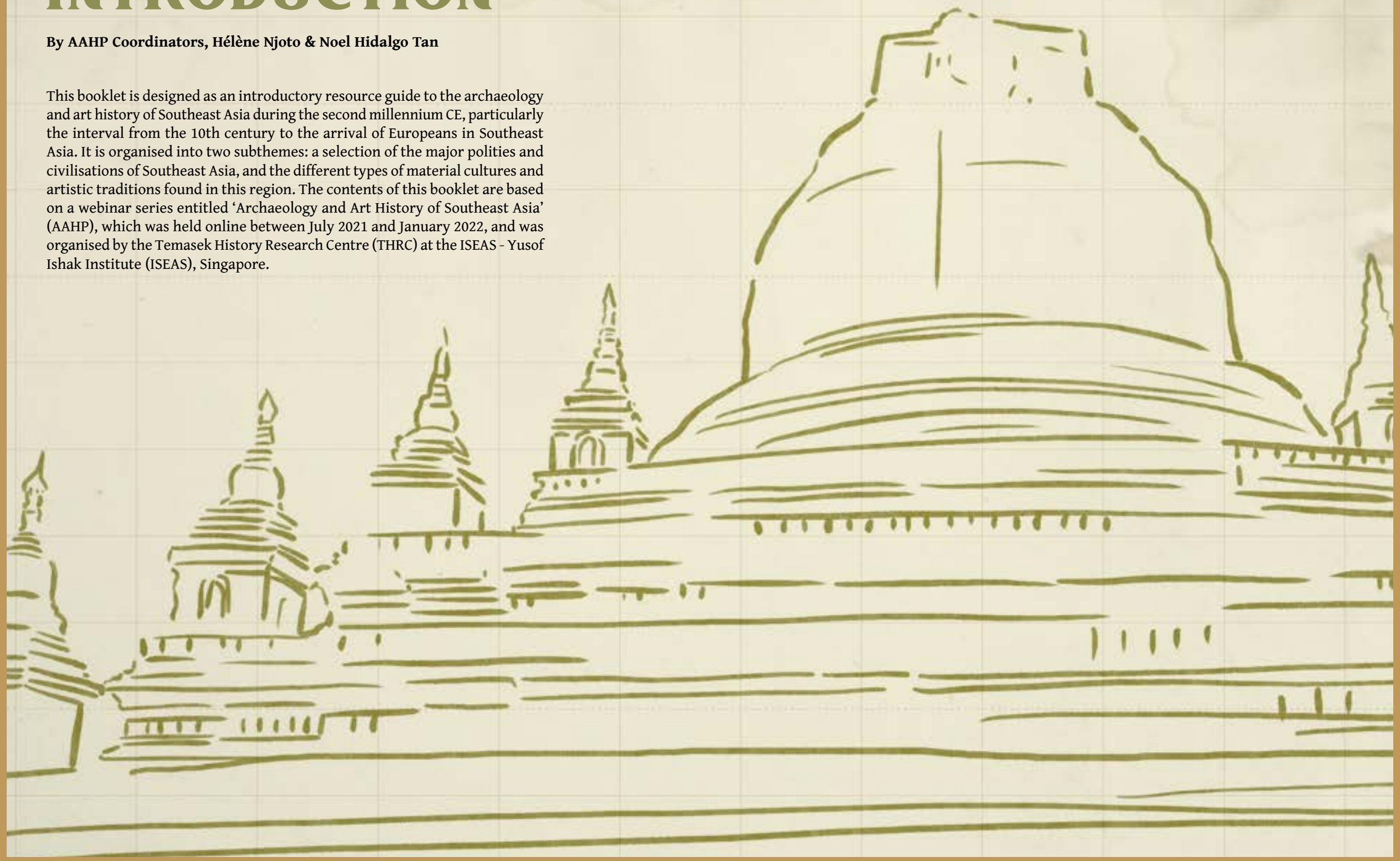
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INTRODUCTION

By AAHP Coordinators, Hélène Njoto & Noel Hidalgo Tan

This booklet is designed as an introductory resource guide to the archaeology and art history of Southeast Asia during the second millennium CE, particularly the interval from the 10th century to the arrival of Europeans in Southeast Asia. It is organised into two subthemes: a selection of the major polities and civilisations of Southeast Asia, and the different types of material cultures and artistic traditions found in this region. The contents of this booklet are based on a webinar series entitled 'Archaeology and Art History of Southeast Asia' (AAHP), which was held online between July 2021 and January 2022, and was organised by the Temasek History Research Centre (THRC) at the ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute (ISEAS), Singapore.



Southeast Asia at the start of the second millennium

The second millennium CE saw the emergence of empires and states across Southeast Asia. This development was characterised by a greater ability to marshal and control resources over large areas, engagement in large scale warfare, the emergence of state-sponsored religions, and the presence of a complex bureaucracy and infrastructure, which in turn supported a hierarchy of elites and dynastic rulers. Many states initially adopted Indic religions from around the 3rd and 4th centuries CE onwards (particularly the worship of Vishnu or Shiva), allowing rulers to assume divine power and claim legitimacy of rule. But these beliefs also merged with local traditions of worshipping nature spirits. In later periods these animist traditions would also accommodate other belief systems such as Buddhism, Islam and Christianity.

Another important aspect of these new civilisations was the development and expansion of trade networks within the region and also further afield, including India, China, and the Middle East. In many cases, trade was driven by the need to obtain resins, precious wood, tin, gold, and spices, all of which were highly valued in both commercial and ritual practices across Asia. Merchant networks also facilitated the exchange of ideas and religions, such as Islam and the Indic cults that would play a profound role in political life.

Whether introduced by traders or by missionaries, the adoption of Indic religions created a demand for ritual specialists and temple architecture in Southeast Asia. Built with stone and brick, such construction projects would have necessitated the presence of a hierarchical society with the technological capacity to generate a food surplus and execute complex communal projects or further enhancing polities prestige.

A key way scholars of the Southeast Asian region have sought to understand the political structure of these ancient states has involved examining the intersection of personal prowess and divinity. Past rulers adopted Indic names, titles, and archetypes of statehood, the most famous of which was the idea of the Devarāja in Angkor, where the king was considered a god-king, or king of the gods (Ch. 2). Insofar as the king was the ruler of the universe, this relationship could also describe the extent of control a ruler or a state can exert over other rulers and populations. As can be seen in the examples of Ayutthaya and the Malacca Sultanate (Chs. 6, 8), rulers were only able to exert direct control over a limited physical distance. Consequently, they relied on a network of subordinate rulers who each in turn exerted influence over other leaders. This dependence meant that even if there was a ruler over the whole region, there was a distinct boundary between his or her domain and that which the vassal rulers controlled. More importantly, these boundaries could be changed not only through warfare and conquest, but also through alliances or perceived acts of weakness. This dynamism reflected the need to use both military and religious means in order to claim the right to rule.

Southeast Asian material cultures

With the emergence of these states and expanding trade networks across Southeast Asia came more foreign communities, novel religious and ideological currents, and new technological knowledge. For many centuries, Southeast Asia was considered by most scholars a passive recipient of foreign knowledge. Since the 1980s, however, studies in history and archaeology have shown not only how new knowledge from South Asia had circulated much earlier than the first Orientalists thought—namely before the 5th century CE—but also demonstrated how such transfers were bidirectional in nature. In short, Southeast Asian societies had played an active role as agents of knowledge transmission.

Recent scholarship on shipbuilding techniques has shown that technology travelled not only from west to east but also from east to west. The study of glass and precious stone beads is another example that highlights the agency of Southeast Asian makers in the proto-historical period. Recent studies in Peninsular Thailand have demonstrated how these objects were imported and locally produced for a growing resident market as early as the 4th century BCE. Ceramic studies—combined with the archaeology of burial sites—is another example of the heuristic value of multidisciplinary scholarship. Pottery studies have also revealed evidence of sophisticated local know-how and mass production techniques from an early period, with goods such as Vietnamese and Thai pottery exported far beyond the region.

Architecture—and mainly monumental architecture, such as the iconic Angkor, Bagan, Borobudur, Prambanan, and even Dieng temples—naturally received great attention from scholars. However, here again, although Indian knowledge can be identified, these structures are uniquely Khmer, Burmese, and Javanese in style, testifying to the importance of early local agency (Ch. 10).

Sculpted reliefs play a very important role in our historical understanding of Southeast



Fig. 1.1 Wat Si Sanphet was built on the original palace site of Ayutthaya. The temple was established in the 15th century during the reign of King Borommatrailokkanat, whose reformation of the bureaucracy enabled the kingdom to maintain tributary relationships with several degrees of influence. (Photo: Noel Hidalgo Tan)

Asian societies and their material cultures (Ch. 11), especially where local populations did not produce as many textual sources as did other parts of the world, such as India and China. Many aspects of elite and everyday life are represented in these reliefs. These include scenes of protocol, furniture, dances, music, military technology, agriculture, trade goods, and even types of ships in use at the time. Thanks to these reliefs, art historians have also been able to acquire astonishingly precise knowledge of ancient textile motifs, trends, techniques, and high-end trade (Ch. 12).



Fig. 1.2 Mandalay palace, Myanmar. (Photo: Hélène Njoto, 2018)

Used from the Neolithic period onwards, bronze is another medium that, when sculpted, harbours much information about agency and technologies (Ch. 13). Although bronze workers in Southeast Asia found inspiration from abroad in their depictions of canonical figures from the Hindu and Buddhist periods, they also developed their own unique Southeast Asian styles. Some of these original styles seem to have been exported to South Asia as well.

The question of agency in Islamic art and architecture is also fascinating. What is most striking about the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia is that unlike Indic culture—which arrived with religious monuments from South Asia, such as Hindu and Buddhist statuary and temples—Islamic beliefs came almost bare-handed through commerce by Chinese/Sinitic, South Asian, and Middle Eastern merchants. Southeast Asian populations were left free to design Islamic décor, build mosques, write, and illustrate manuscripts on their own terms, using pre-existing local knowledge (Chs. 14, 15). Southeast Asia's unique creativity is further highlighted in two domains: manuscript seals and illuminations. Illuminations used for divination and magic practices show a fascinating blend of Islamic and local beliefs, spiritual knowledge, and imagery (Ch. 16).

This booklet is intended as an introductory resource for students and is not meant to be exhaustive. It summarises a webinar series given by a new generation of scholars who are either from Southeast Asia or are based in Southeast Asia. They include well-established academics and promising early career scholars. Due to constraints, not all empires, polities, and types of material culture could be covered. Any omission should not be regarded as an indication of unimportance,



Fig. 1.3 Depiction of musicians on the walls of Angkor Wat. Elsewhere the reliefs portray scenes from religious stories and historical events. (Photo: Noel Hidalgo Tan)

and we encourage you to use this booklet as a starting point for delving deeper into the subject matter.

This booklet emphasises questions of political organisation, material production, and artistic creativity in the region, with their interconnection through religion, trade alliances, and war. It is hoped that this resource will provide students, school teachers, and the greater public with an introduction to the rich and diverse cultural histories of Southeast Asia.

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ANGKOR

By Noel Hidalgo Tan,
With materials provided by Heng Piphal

The Khmer Empire known as Angkor was founded in 802 CE by King Jayavarman II, who declared himself a devarāja ('god-king' or even 'king of the gods'). He established a series of capitals around the location of present-day Siem Reap. Over the next six centuries the kingdom expanded across what is now known as Cambodia, and parts of neighbouring Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. Today, Angkor is known for its many temple complexes, sculptures and other architectural features.

Temples

The apogee of temple construction took place during the reigns of two kings, Suryavarman II (ca. 1113–50 CE) and Jayavarman VII (1181–1218 CE). Suryavarman II is associated with Angkor's most famous temple, Angkor Wat, which combined the features of a stepped pyramid with tiered galleries. Angkor Wat is also unusual among the Angkorian temples as it was oriented westwards, and is thought to have been dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu, instead of the more commonly venerated Shiva (Fig. 2.1).



Fig. 2.1 Angkor Wat is the most famous of the Angkor monuments, built during the reign of Suryavarman II (1113–50 CE), likely as a temple to Vishnu. Around the 16th century, the temple was converted into a Buddhist temple. It remains an important spiritual place for the Khmer people today. (Photo: Noel Hidalgo Tan)

THE 'LOST CITY' THAT WAS NEVER LOST.



Fig. 2.2 In 2017, an archaeological team from Cambodia (APSARA) and Singapore (ISEAS) made a startling discovery at Tonle Snguot, finding an almost-intact statue of a guardian deity. Tonle Snguot is a late 12th-century temple built as a hospital during the reign of Jayavarman VII (1181-1218 CE). (Photo: Foo Shu Tieng, courtesy of ISEAS)

Following a brief invasion by the Chams from the area known today as Vietnam, King Jayavarman VII rose to prominence by defeating the invaders and consolidating his power in Angkor. During his 37-year reign, Jayavarman VII oversaw a large-scale temple construction programme, which included the complex of Angkor Thom and the Bayon, the temples of Ta Prohm and Preah Khan that were dedicated to his parents, as well as a series of 102 hospitals which were built along the major roads and reservoirs of the empire (Fig. 2.2). During his reign, Jayavarman VII also became a Mahayana Buddhist. Consequently, many of his temples were a departure from the dominant Shaivist religion, which ultimately returned after his death.

Bustling metropolis

Angkor derives its name from the Sanskrit word for 'city'. Recent research suggests that the empire's population reached between 500,000 and 900,000 people. Of this total, 76,000–150,000 were supported by the urban core. Inscriptions, bas-reliefs, and archaeological data suggest that Angkor was a bustling metropolis, one where walled temple complexes were filled with avenues, reservoirs, and habitation spaces. An extensive road system—both inside and outside of the walled enclosures—connected the urban centre of Angkor to provincial centres in areas known today as Thailand, Laos, and other parts of Cambodia (Fig. 2.3). State-run education in the form of religious schools, healthcare in the form of hospitals, and various religious festivals all spurred the mass movement of people to and from these population centres. Most important of all was a complex water management system consisting of moats, ponds, and reservoirs. This system was designed to store water over the rainy season and distribute it during drier months to support large-scale agricultural enterprises and facilitate transport.

The ‘lost city’ that was never lost

There is a common misconception that Angkor became a lost city that was eventually rediscovered in the jungles of Cambodia. The accounts of 19th-century French explorers such as Henri Mouhot—widely credited for introducing Angkor to the West—were accompanied by illustrations of temple ruins encased by jungle, effectively romanticising the idea of a forgotten kingdom. The truth is that Angkor was never lost. Even when it ceased to be the capital in the middle of the 15th century, people continued to live in the area, albeit on a much smaller scale. Indeed, Portuguese, Japanese, and Thai accounts from the 15th–18th centuries indicate that the former capital of the Khmer Empire was never forgotten.

While the capital has since moved to Phnom Penh, the legacy of Angkor in Siem Reap continues to live in the present day. Angkor Wat is a national symbol represented on the Cambodian flag, and the Angkor Archaeological Park—covering most of Angkor’s ruins in the Siem Reap area—is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Fig. 2.3 The Buddhist sanctuary of Phimai is in present-day Nakhon Ratchasima province in Thailand. It is connected to Angkor via an ancient road that is still in use today. It was built in the late 11th or 12th century, in the same classical style as Angkor Wat. (Photo: Noel Hidalgo Tan)

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BAGAN

By Ye Myat Lwin

The ancient capital of Bagan is located on the eastern bank of the Irrawaddy River, in the central dry zone of Myanmar. It is the most significant archaeological site of Myanmar because it harbours over 3,000 Buddhist monuments. It is believed that Bagan was founded in the 9th century CE, reaching its peak of power between the 11th and 13th centuries.



Fig. 3.1 Depiction of Paduma Jātaka at the 11th-century West Phet Leik Temple. (Photo: Ye Myat Lwin)

Architecture: temples and stupas

Stupas are the most commonly found monuments in Bagan, and come in several types: bulbous, tall-cylindrical, bell-shaped, and relic-casket. The bulbous and tall-cylindrical types are the earliest kinds that are directly linked to the earlier Pyu stupa architecture of Sri Ksetra. The prototypes of Bagan stupas are exemplified by three surviving stupas of Sri Ksetra, namely, Baw Baw Gyi, Phayama, and Phayagyi.

Bagan temples are usually decorated with murals inside and stucco outside. The earliest types are temples with simple brick halls or brick cells topped by a stupa. Bagan temples acted not only as sanctuaries but also as image exhibition halls. Earlier temples such as Phet Leik display the tales of the former lives of the Buddha (Jātakas) on terracotta plates (Fig. 3.1). Later temples display Buddhist stories and cosmology in mural paintings and glazed plaques. The latter also developed as multi-storied temples (Fig. 3.2). Bagan temples were mostly Buddhist and belonged to both the Mahayana and Theravada traditions. Nonetheless, temples to Vishnu and Brahma remain in existence.

Mural paintings

There are 485 temples with surviving mural paintings across Bagan. Murals usually depict the Buddha, Buddhist deities, Buddhist cosmology, the Jātakas, and other Buddhist stories. The primary colours used are red, green, yellow, black, and white with blue being noticeably absent. The style of these murals is similar to that of Himalayan art, possibly because both are derivative of eastern Bengal traditions. However, unlike Himalayan tradition, fierce forms of Buddhist deities are rarely found in Bagan art.

Iconography

Four different styles of Buddha images were developed during the Bagan period. The first is the Gupta-style Buddha images of the Pyu period, but only one such Buddha image has been found, namely in Kyauk-za-ga-gyi Temple, which belongs to the early Bagan period. The second type of Buddha image is the Pyu-style Buddha, which belongs to the late Pyu period or pre-Bagan period. Iconographically, these Buddha images show influences from southeast Bengal, Sri Lanka, and early Pyu. In the 11th century CE, Bagan Buddha images were heavily influenced by Pala styles, and differed significantly from the earlier Pyu style. The fourth style emerged in the late 12th century and 13th century, when a more localised sensibility was focused on perspective rather than ratio.

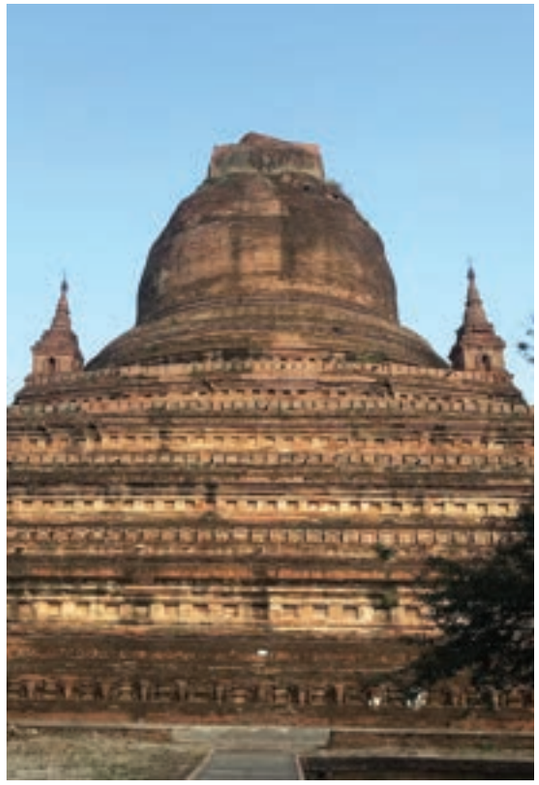


Fig. 3.2 Saytanagyi (Sitsanagyi) Stupa, Bagan, dated to the mid-13th century. The stupa has four terraces and the plinth is decorated with the heads of elephants. (Photo: Ye Myat Lwin)



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MRAUK-U

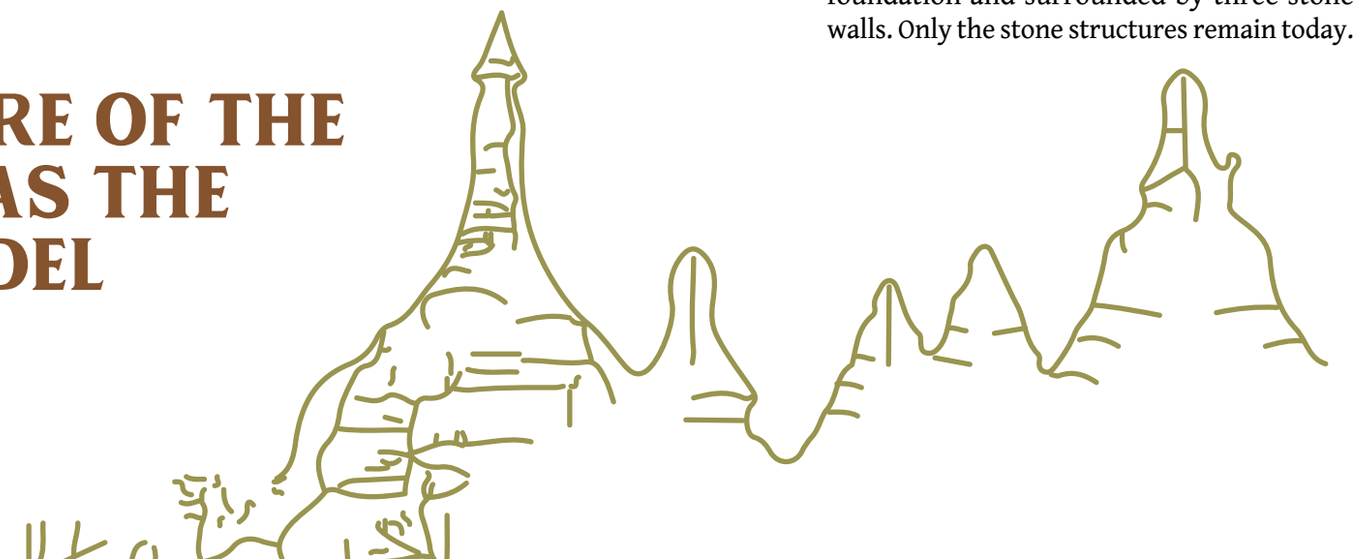
By Ye Myat Lwin



Fig. 4.1 Myanmar (Burma), Rakhine state, the archaeological site of Mrauk-U Thaung, capital of the ancient Rakhine kingdom from the 15th to the 18th century called "city of gold", the Koe-thaung temple or sanctuary of the 90,000 statues of buddha, built between 1554 and 1556 by King Min Dikkha. (Photo: Barberon-ana / Only France via AFP)

Mrauk-U was the last capital city of the Kingdom of Mrauk-U, the westernmost kingdom of Southeast Asia that lasted from 1430–1784 CE. It is located in a region known as Arakan, in the valleys of the Kaladan and Laymro Rivers, on the eastern shore of the Bay of Bengal. Arakan was first mentioned in the 2nd century as Argyre in Ptolemy's *Geography*, appearing again as Argentia (the Latinised version of Argyre) in early medieval maps. Later accounts used the term Aracan or Arakan.

AT THE CENTRE OF THE KINGDOM WAS THE PALACE CITADEL



Architecture

Mrauk-U features significant archaeological remains that not only comprise religious monuments, but also traces of urban architecture and hydraulic infrastructure. At the centre of the kingdom was the palace citadel which was built with wood on a stone foundation and surrounded by three stone walls. Only the stone structures remain today.

Religious monuments in Mrauk-U are usually stone structures (Fig. 4.1). The Buddhist stupas are different from those of other regions of Myanmar, in that the former were inspired by stone artefacts of the Wethali period. This period was itself named after a city that declined 400 years earlier in the vicinity of what was to become Mrauk-U. It is assumed that Wethali art and architectural styles were revived in the early Mrauk-U period. Looking even further back in time, archaeological evidence shows that Wethali's stupa architecture resembles that of Odisha along the western shore of the Bay of Bengal.

Over three hundred temples or temple complexes still survive in Mrauk-U. Shait-thaung, Koe-thaung, and Htot-kant-Theim are significant temples in Mrauk-U, with massive and complex structures. Temples in Mrauk-U are usually decorated with stone carvings and

stone reliefs. Stone reliefs of Buddha images, Jātaka stories and Buddhist cosmology are typically displayed on interior walls (Fig. 4.2). Buddhist cosmology is depicted by showing the life scenes and creatures of the different realms (*loka*) (Fig. 4.3). Where they depict the human world (*manussaloka*), scenes of activities and daily life in the city are also shown.

Mrauk-U's fortifications were developed around its natural settings, integrating the surrounding mountains, lakes, and waterways with the city's stone and earthen walls, moats, gates, water gates, and drainage sluices. These structures—especially water gates, sluices, and moats—were not only created for defence but also for the prevention of disasters such as flooding. Moats in Mrauk-U were manmade water or mud lakes, which were different from typical moats of other cities in ancient Myanmar. Lakes were also used as water storage for agriculture.

Fig. 4.2 Depiction of warriors in Mahabodhi Shwe Gu, a temple built in 1470 CE, under the patronage of King Ba Saw Phru. It is one of the earliest examples of decorated temples in Mrauk-U, and it is the prototype of later larger decorated temples such as Shait-thaung Temple and Htot-kant-Theim. The temple has an octagonal shape and its walls depict Jātakas and Buddhist cosmologies.
(Photo: Ye Myat Lwin)



Iconography

As in architecture, the iconography of Mrauk-U reflects the influence of the Wethali period. Parallels can be clearly seen in the Abhisekamuni Buddha image of the Mrauk-U period. Similar images were found from the Wethali period, when Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism were practised. However, in Arakan there is no evidence of the practice of Mahayana Buddhism. Present-day Arakanese believe that the Abhisekamuni were traditionally used for royal coronations. As such, it appears that the Arakanese replicated the iconography of the earlier Wethali period, but not its Mahayanist Buddhist practices.

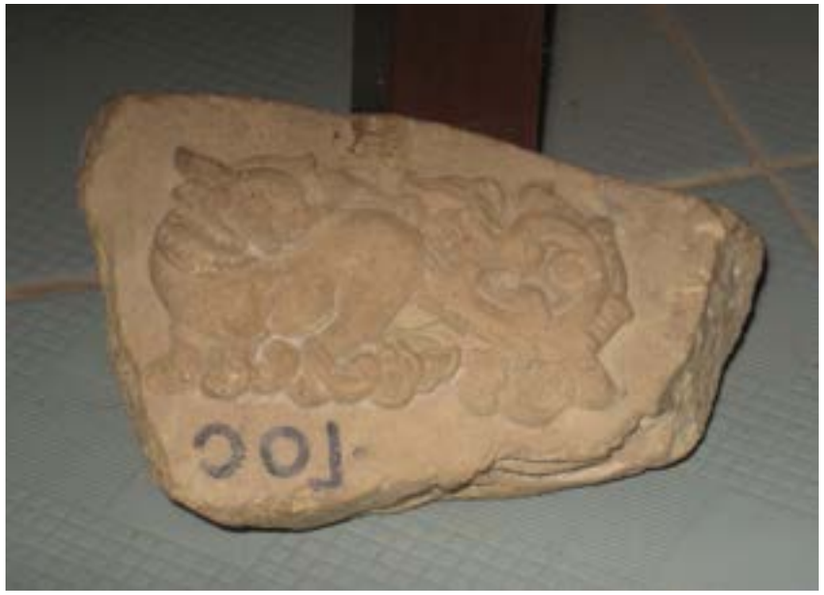


Fig. 4.3 Vyāla image from Zigri gate, Mrauk-U, now in the Mrauk-U Museum. The Vyāla is a popular motif of a mythical creature in Hindu-Buddhist art, consisting of a composite leonine creature with the powerful body parts of multiple animals. The vyāla is also known as *yali/yazhi* in South Indian art, and Vidala in Odishan art. It is also associated with the *kochasri/kojasi* of Thai art and Gajasimha of Khmer art.
(Photo: Thein Tun Aung)

COSMOPOLITANISM IN ANCIENT MRAUK-U

Language and writing

Mrauk-U and the Kingdom of Arakan were multiethnic and multicultural. Early Mrauk-U kings issued coins with their titles in Arakanese, Persian, and Bengali. Apart from Arakanese names, they also held Pali and Persian titles. Persian was the lingua franca of the Indian subcontinent at that time, and the Arakanese court used Persian to communicate with the Mughal Empire and with Europeans to build trade and diplomatic relationships. Bengali literature also developed under the court of Arakan. At its peak, Arakan expanded its territory from Chittagong in India to Pegu (Bago region in Myanmar).

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CHAPTER 5

ĐẠI VIỆT

By Noel Hidalgo Tan,
With materials provided by Do Truong Giang (Alex Giang)

The Vietnamese kingdom of Đại Việt, or the Great Viet, began in the 10th century CE in the Red River Valley of what is today known as northern Vietnam. An invasion from the neighbouring Southern Han state left the region in turmoil as local warlords fought to claim supremacy. By the second half of the 10th century, a capital was established in Hoa Lu (present-day Ninh Binh province). In 1009, this capital moved to present-day Hanoi and was named Thăng Long by Lý Thái Tổ, the first emperor of the Lý Dynasty. For the next nine centuries, Đại Việt would be ruled by eight dynasties, expanding along the coast to eventually absorb the Chams in the south, while successfully repelling invasions from China in the north.

Fig. 5.1 The Đoan Môn gate of the Thăng Long Imperial Citadel, one of the few remaining structures of the royal compound dating to the Lê Dynasty period (1533–1789 CE). (Photo: Noel Hidalgo Tan)





Fig. 5.2 Architectural remains from the Thăng Long Imperial Citadel at the 18 Hoang Dieu Archaeological Site in Hanoi. (Photo: Noel Hidalgo Tan)

Thăng Long Citadel

The name Thăng Long means 'Ascending Dragon'. The capital was named after a vision of a golden dragon, which was said to have appeared on the royal boat during the transfer of capitals. The imperial citadel was built on the remains of a 7th-century Chinese fortress, and served as the seat of power for the Lý (1009–1225 CE), Trần (1226–1440 CE), and Lê sở (1428–1527 CE) dynasties (Fig. 5.1). Thăng Long remained the capital until 1802, when Emperor Gia Long of the Nguyen Dynasty moved the capital to Huế, on the central coast of Vietnam. Archaeological investigations have uncovered numerous architectural artefacts from the Lý, Trần, and Lê dynastic periods, including bricks, roof tiles, and decorative ceramics (Fig. 5.2). Many of these discoveries can now be seen at an archaeological museum at the National Assembly Building of Vietnam (Fig. 5.3). Today, the remnants of the imperial citadel are a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

INTRODUCTION OF CHINESE INFLUENCES AND MOTIFS INTO VIETNAMESE CERAMIC WARES



Expansion

Vietnam's natural geographical barriers—the Annamite Range to the west and the South China Sea to the east—kept Đại Việt's focus on China in the north and the Cham kingdoms in the south. By the 15th century, Đại Việt under the Lê Dynasty was able to conquer the northern Cham territories and retain the remaining Cham territories as vassals. Đại Việt also saw occasional conflicts with Yuan and Ming China. Despite this historic antagonism with China, Đại Việt's royal administration and statecraft drew on classical Chinese education, Confucianism, and Chinese political structures.

Ceramics centre

Between the 13th and 18th centuries, Vietnam was an important producer and exporter of ceramics. The excavations from the Thăng Long Citadel indicate that ceramics—particularly those used by the imperial palace—were produced locally from as early as the Lý Dynasty period. Other ceramic production centres also started to appear in the Red River Valley, including the Thiên Trường kiln, in the area of present-day Nam Dinh province. The brief occupation of Đại Việt by Ming China in the 15th century led to the introduction of Chinese influences and motifs into Vietnamese ceramic wares, most notably the development of the Vietnamese blue and white wares. Ceramic exports from Vietnam increased sharply during the 15th and 16th centuries due to a slowdown in Chinese porcelain production during the early Ming Dynasty period. Vietnamese ceramics were traded widely, appearing in archaeological contexts across Southeast Asia and as far west as Turkey.



Fig. 5.3 Lý Dynasty (11th–12th century CE) waterspout in the shape of a lion head, made from terracotta with green glaze. On display at the National Assembly Building of Vietnam. (Photo: Noel Hidalgo Tan)

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AYUTTHAYA

By Phacharaporn Phanomvan

The Kingdom of Ayutthaya emerged as a dynastic urban centre in 1350. While there are varying accounts of the origin of its first king, Ramathibodi I (U-Thong), it is clear that he was descended from political unions between several regional dynastic houses that ruled the Lower Chao Phraya Delta before the 14th century. Archaeological traces of urban infrastructures, material art, and various historical chronicles point to four regional power clans: Suphannaphum-Preak Si Racha in the Tha Cheen River System, Ayodhaya Si Ram Thepnakhon-Lavo in the Chao Phraya-Lopburi Basin, Nakhon Si Thammarat-Singora in the Isthmian Peninsula, and Sukhothai-Nakhon Chum in the Yom-Wang Basin. These clans had connections with polities like Lanna in the Ping River Basin, Chiang Saen-Souvanna Khom Kham in the Upper Mekong River area, Nan-Phayao kingdoms in the Nan River Basin, and Langkasuka in Pattani. Ramathibodi I was a descendent of Ayodhaya Si Ram Thepnakhon-Lavo and thus had connections to Chiang Saen and the powerful Suphannaphum clan in Tha Cheen.

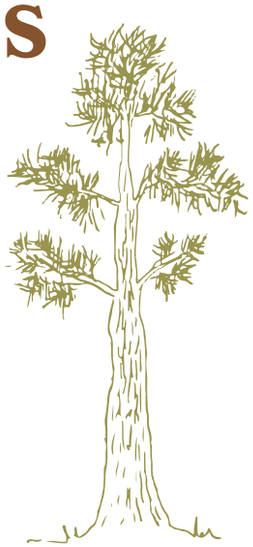
Organisation

Early Ayutthayan governance, urban design, and technological foundations were taken from the collective legacies of these early states. Ayutthaya's political organisation relied on decentralised leagues of cities, whose leaders were kin to the early Ayutthayan kings. The position of kings and princes who ruled Ayutthaya's cities was claimed through bilateral descent; that is, through both matrilineal and patrilineal power. Cities located within two days travel distance to Ayutthaya—*Muang Na Daan*—were directly governed by members of the Ayutthayan



Fig. 6.1 Chedi Wat Thong Bo near Bang Pa-in district, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province, built by the Mon community during late Ayutthayan period. The architecture combines different artistic elements including Mon, Lanna, and Ayutthaya. (Photo: Phacharaporn Phanomvan)

VARIOUS HISTORICAL CHRONICLES POINT TO FOUR REGIONAL POWER CLANS



aristocracy. Outside the capital, territories were classified into three tiers: Inner Administrative Cities *(Muang Look Luang)*, Outer Administrative Cities *(Hua Muang Chan Nok)*, and Tributary Polities. Outer Administrative Cities were governed by appointed bureaucrats who were often direct descendants of the local nobility. Early on, Ayutthaya often did not directly intervene in the administration of its tributary states, instead only demanding annual tribute, their involvement in ceremonies, and their participation in strategic wars. Direct Ayutthayan intervention in tributary polity governance began with a war of succession between two factions of the Sukhothai aristocracy after 1438. This conflict led to the annexation of Sukhothai, accomplished by placing a noble of Sukhothai who married the Ayutthayan king on the throne of Sukhothai.

Height of power

By the 15th century, the Ayutthaya territories expanded to annex the neighbouring kingdoms of Sukhothai and Lanna, and the boundaries of the outer administrative areas consequently shifted. This enlargement triggered a bureaucratic reformation under Borommatrailokkanat in 1458, who abolished the *Muang Look Luang* system and replaced appointed princes with bureaucratically selected governors to prevent dynastic feuds endemic to Tai polities. He also established two

additional ministries that became precursors to the modern-day Ministries of Interior and Defense. Although Ayutthaya's kings drew power from the legacies of annexed territories and clans, they maintained their lineage by appointing queens to the inner palace from powerful urban clans: Thao Indrasurendra (Suphannaphum), Thao Si Chulalak (Sukhothai), Thao Indradevi (Si Thammarat), and Thao Si Sudachan (Lavo-Ayodhaya). The principal queen was selected from one of these various households. Tensions between the Suphannaphum, Sukhothai, and Lavo-Ayodhaya lineages would continue until 1630, when a member of the nobility, Prasat Thong (Sanphet V) usurped the throne, ending direct heredity between the clans. As a result, the positions of cardinal queens were demoted to that of consorts. Despite contending and shifting power centres, Ayutthaya lasted under the reign of thirty-three kings, over five dynasties.



Fig. 6.2 Wat Koh Kaew Sutharam (1657) is a large temple complex in Phetchaburi that dates back to the time when it was Ayutthaya's key administrative city. The temple's murals were added in 1734 during the reign of King Borommakot. Many Ayutthayans fled to Phetchaburi after the seizure by Ava, making Phetchaburi a hub for preserving Ayutthaya culture and heritage. (Photo: Phacharaporn Phanomvan)

Cosmopolitanism

Ayutthaya was an extremely cosmopolitan society. By the 16th century, many foreigners had established a significant presence in Ayutthaya, leading to intermarriage between communities. In response, Sanphet III (Ekathotsarot) issued a decree preventing Tai and Mon women from marrying foreigners that 'do not follow Buddhism'. The list included 'English, Dutch, Javanese and Malayans' but did not address Japanese, Vietnamese Christians, or Persians. Ramathibodi III (Narai) amended the law in 1663 to exclude Tai, Mon, and Lao women from marrying Europeans in general. Regardless of the harsh laws governing inter-marriage, the Ayutthayan state recognised the mixed heritage of its citizens, and mixed heritage individuals made up a large proportion of the capital and key cities.

By the 17th century, the kingdom already had permanent settlements for foreigners such as the Armenians, Mons, Laos, Chams, Malayu, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, and the Persians. Ayutthayan identity was synonymous with participation in state affairs. As a result, many foreigners served the Ayutthayan court and held prominent positions in the bureaucracy. Ayutthaya's cosmopolitanism was also reflected in its various industries, which were usually based in ethnocultural districts; for example, the textile production guild from Pattani and iron producers from Laos.

Immigrants and merchants from Persia, South Asia, and China—and later on, Europe—brought new craftsmanship techniques and clothing to the kingdom. Islamic influences can be seen in Ayutthaya's architecture and art, as well as its culinary traditions. Likewise, Ayutthaya's technology and legacies influenced art and culture outside Thailand, such as rice wine in Ryukyu and the Siamoise textile in France. Ayutthaya's cities also played a prominent role through their urban landscape networks, transforming regional culture, technology, language, and tradition, especially in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia. Despite the defeat of Ayutthaya in 1767 by Ava (now in Myanmar), the practices of Ayutthaya's culture and craftsmen persisted through refugees and residents in Ayutthayan cities outside the capital. Ayutthaya's arts, traditions, and even language are still very much alive in cities outside of the former kingdom, such as in Ang Thong, Phetchaburi (Figs. 6.2 and 6.3), Samut Sakhon, Samut Songkram, Chonburi, Chaiya, old Prapadaeng (present-day Klong Toei district in Bangkok), Pathum Thani, Nakhon Sawan, and Phitsanulok. These urban centres had been part of Ayutthaya's Inner and Outer Administrative Cities. Today, Ayutthaya's influence can also be felt in Thai literature and textbooks, the performing arts, craftsmanship, food, and laws. The Ayutthayan-Thai dialect still exists in Central Thailand, particularly in Ang Thong, Phetchaburi, Suphanburi, and the northern stretches of the Isthmian Peninsula.



Fig. 6.3 Murals inside Wat Koh Kaew Sutharam depicting different cultural groups as divine beings (*devas*). A French *deva* is portrayed carrying a tray of madeleines as an offering. (Photo: Phacharaporn Phanomvan)

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MALUKU:
THE SPICE ISLANDS

By Shinatria Adhityatama



Fig. 7.1 Fort Amsterdam on Hila, Ambon. It was first built by the Portuguese led by Francisco Serrao in 1512 and was used as a trading lodge. Then after the Dutch took control of the island of Ambon in 1605, they took over the trading lodge and turned it into a stronghold. (Photo: Shinatria Adhityatama)

The Spice Islands (Maluku, or the Moluccas) are a group of islands in Eastern Indonesia between Celebes and Papua. They include the islands of Halmahera, Seram, Buru, Ambon, Ternate, Tidore, and the Aru and Kei island groups. Seram Island is the largest of the cluster, while Ambon Island is the most populated. This area is known for having once been the largest global producer of mace, nutmeg, and cloves. Chinese silks and ceramics, Indian cotton, Arabian coffee, and African ivory were imported in exchange for these spices.

Spices had been available in Europe in the Middle Ages, but prices were high because spices had to be transported across land and sea by many local traders and ships mainly through ports in Java and the Malay world who played an intermediary role as trade agents. By the time the spices arrived in European markets, they fetched far more than their original prices in the Spice Islands.

Spices in the Old World

The distribution of clove and nutmeg commodities can illustrate the extent of the ancient spice trade and Maluku's relations with the outside world. The Roman author Pliny the Elder (75 CE) mentions garyophyllon, a plant thought to grow in India's sacred forests and suspected to be identified as the clove.

CHINESE SILKS AND CERAMICS, INDIAN COTTON, ARABIAN COFFEE, AND AFRICAN IVORY WERE IMPORTED IN EXCHANGE FOR THESE SPICES



However, long before the Romans, the people of Mesopotamia appeared to be already fond of cloves. This has been suggested by a few scholars based on a possible discovery of a jar filled with cloves in the kitchen of a merchant's house dating back to 1700 BCE at Terqa, Middle Euphrates, Syria; one of the sites of Mesopotamian civilisation. It should be emphasised that at this point in human history, the world's clove supply was only produced in the Spice Islands.

The kingdoms of spice

In Southeast Asia, the Spice Islands were the point of origin for the shipping lanes that connected plantations and businesses to markets. In the second millennium CE, the main spice-producing islands were Ternate, Tidore, and the Banda Islands. In addition, there were four main trade centres and kingdoms in Maluku: Jailolo, Ternate, Hitu, and Tidore. International traders came across the seas to trade with these wealthy islands. Tidore oversaw several ports in East Halmahera, the Raja Ampat Islands, and West Papua; Ternate oversaw ports in the Banggai Islands and the eastern coast to the north of Sulawesi; and Jailolo managed the ports on the west coast of Halmahera Island. Meanwhile, the Hitu Kingdom functioned as a trading port manager for spice commodities from various plantations in Maluku and facilitated traders who came to Maluku (Hitu) to trade. The suzerainty of Ternate, Tidore, Jailolo, and Hitu stretched all the way from Maluku to Papua eastwards.



Fig. 7.2 Ceramic finds from the settlement site of Tomu, Hitu, Ambon. Most of the ceramics found were imported from China and Southeast Asia. It is believed that such ceramics were used as a medium of exchange in the spice trade. (Photo: Shinatria Adhityatama)



Fig. 7.3 Traditional boats 'kalulis' from Kei Island. (Photo: Shinatria Adhityatama)

INTERNATIONAL TRADERS CAME ACROSS THE SEAS TO TRADE WITH THESE WEALTHY ISLANDS



The European ages of discovery and conquest

The spices of the Maluku Islands stimulated the development of world history and cartography. With better maps, 15th- and 16th-century European ocean explorers sought maritime routes to these islands. In their competition to reach these islands, they made advances in cartography, geography, astronomy, surveying, art, and other endeavours. In the early 1500s, the Portuguese became the first Europeans to sail to Indonesia, later joined by the Spanish and the Dutch.

In 1601, the Dutch, supported by local rulers, defeated the Iberians in a battle in Indonesian waters despite being heavily outnumbered. By 1670, the Dutch East India Company was the world's richest corporation due to their monopoly on the spice trade. The Company managed to pay its shareholders an annual dividend while employing its standing army and navy to secure its monopoly. Blood was spilled over spices, as a war between nations and the massacre of the local population was carried out to control the spice trade.

Europeans tended to build infrastructure with the sole purpose of exporting spices from Indonesia, including constructions such as forts, warehouses, and ports. European forts in the Spice Islands were built between the 16th and 18th centuries. Most of the forts in the Spice Islands were built by the Portuguese, and were later reused by the Dutch after the latter built a quasi-monopoly of the spice trade. For example, the Portuguese built the first colonial fort in Maluku Islands in 1522. It was known as São João Batista (in Portuguese), Ciudad del Rosario (Spanish), and Gammalamma (Ternate and Dutch), but better known by locals as Kastella/Kastela (the castle). A ruin today, Fort Kastela is still located on the southwest coast of Ternate.



Fig. 7.4 The Kedaton of the Sultanate of Ternate was built on November 24, 1813 by Sultan Muhammad Ali, and the Kedaton was handed over to the government to be used as a museum in 1977. (Photo: BPCB Ternate)

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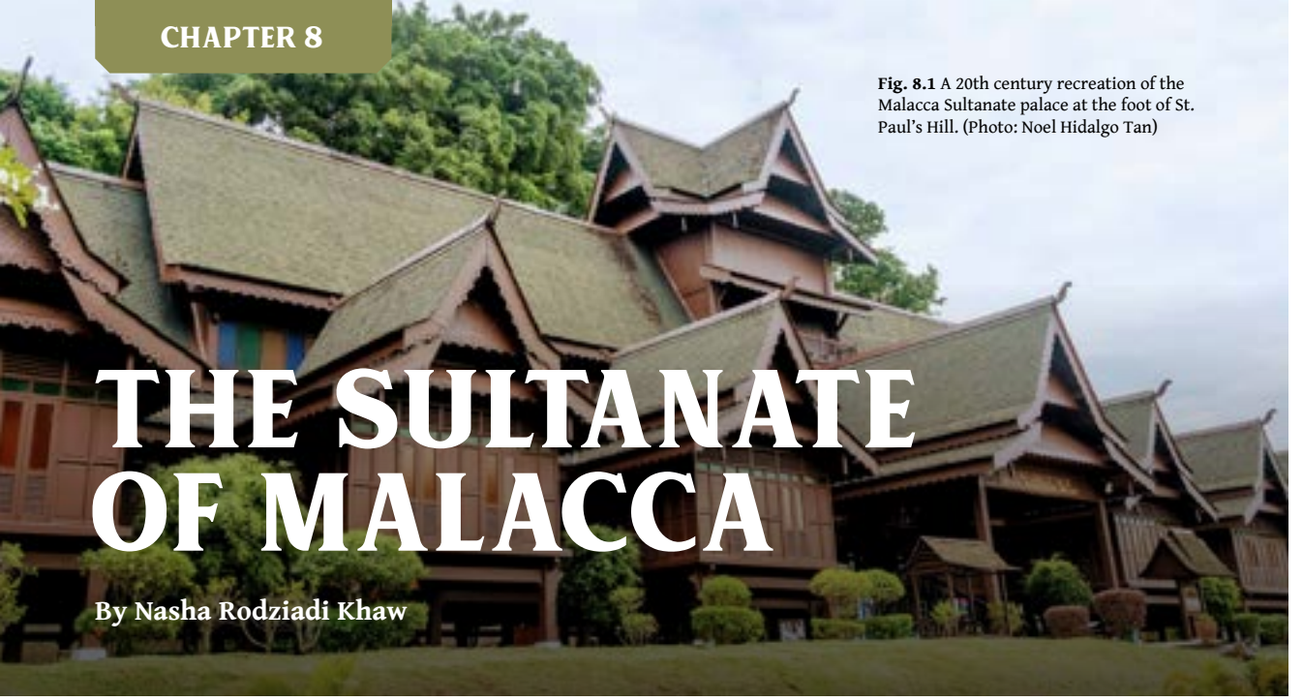


Fig. 8.1 A 20th century recreation of the Malacca Sultanate palace at the foot of St. Paul's Hill. (Photo: Noel Hidalgo Tan)

THE SULTANATE OF MALACCA

By Nasha Rodziadi Khaw

The Sultanate of Malacca was one of the many maritime polities that thrived in Island Southeast Asia. During its glory, it existed as a collection of various coastal polities, with its centre situated at the tributary of the Malacca River (Fig. 8.2). The territorial, economic, and political power of Malacca gradually expanded from 1400 CE until its eventual demise in 1511 CE. The Sultanate of Malacca is often lauded as representing the peak of Malay cultural, political and economic achievement. It remains a major part of Malay historical consciousness, despite the presence of earlier polities such as Ancient Kedah and Langkasuka. This imbalance is probably due to the lack of historical accounts of predecessor polities, while numerous Chinese, Portuguese,

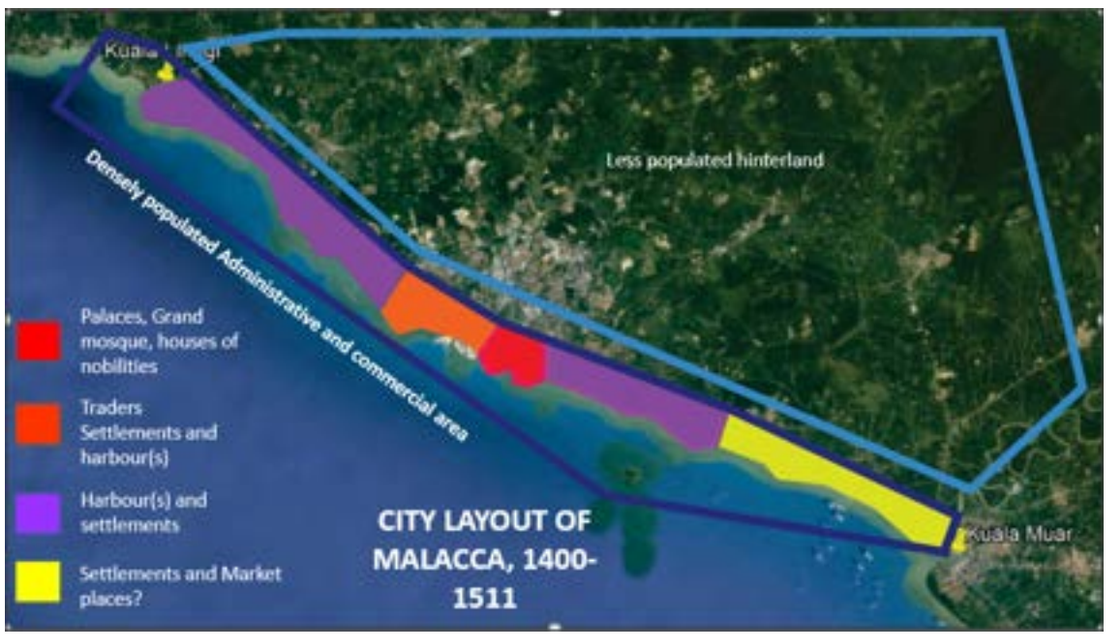


Fig. 8.2 Layout of Malacca City, 1400-1511. (Photo: Nasha Rodziadi Khaw)

and Malay accounts gave detailed descriptions regarding Malaccan court customs, politics, and administrative systems, as well as the names and genealogies of Malaccan rulers and nobles. The relative abundance of historical data on Malacca has enabled historians to construct a clear narrative that coincides with currently popular understandings of Malay culture, kingdoms, and statecraft.

Almost everything that is known about the Sultanate of Malacca is based on historical records. Chinese records come mainly from the Ming Dynastic Histories (Ming Shih Lu), travel accounts as well as other miscellaneous documents. The Chinese accounts recorded events that were meticulously dated, enabling researchers to establish a detailed chronology for Malacca.

THE PEAK OF MALAY CULTURAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The Portuguese accounts consist of books, reports, and letters by cartographers, sailors, and bureaucrats. These documents were produced by the Portuguese either from their own observations, or were based on knowledge gained from their contact with traders and locals in Malacca. The most well-known of these records are the writings of Tomé Pires and Duarte Barbosa. The Portuguese accounts, especially that of the *Suma Oriental* by Pires, give detailed descriptions regarding the founding of Malacca, the genealogy of rulers, and the expansion of Malacca's territories, foreign relations, and trade.



Fig. 8.3 Historic core of the Malacca River. (Photo: Fayed El-Geziry / NurPhoto via AFP)

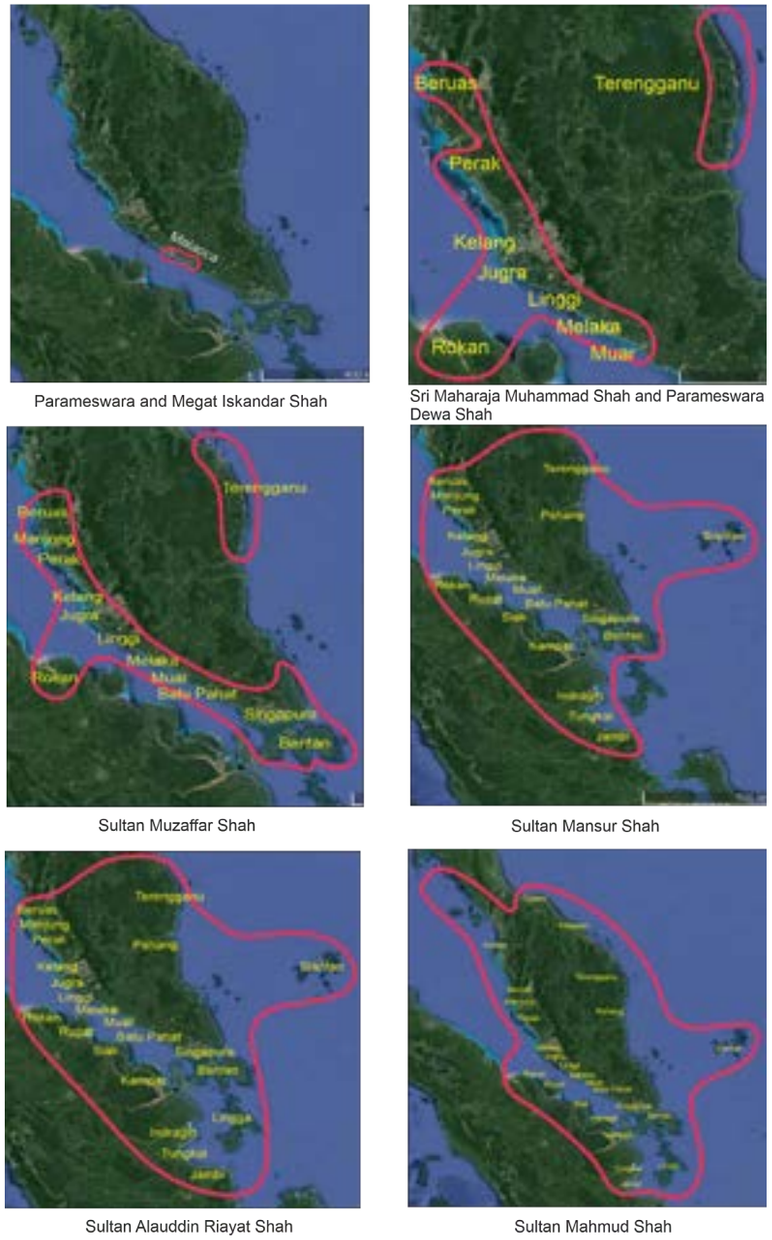


Fig. 8.4 Expansion of Malaccan influence over time. At its height, Malacca controlled the Straits of Malacca, the entirety of the Malay Peninsula, parts of Southern Thailand, and parts of Sumatra. (Photo: Nasha Rodziadi Khaw)

Finally, Malay-language accounts such as *Sulalatus Salatin* (*The Genealogy of Kings*, also known as *The Malay Annals*) were compiled in the mid-16th century, decades after the fall of Malacca. The *Sulalatus Salatin* gave detailed descriptions on Malacca regarding the genealogy of its rulers, court customs, foreign relations, administration, jurisprudence, as well as conquests and other important events.

The Sultan was at the top of the Malaccan political hierarchy, functioning as the hereditary head of government with considerable authority over most matters. He was assisted by the Bendahara (Grand Vizier), the Laksamana (Admiral), Temenggung (Chief of Security), and the Penghulu Bendahari (Treasurer). Trade in Malacca was managed by Shahbandars (port masters) who were the first point of interaction for all traders and foreign envoys. A complex system of taxation and the control of trade routes by the Malaccan navy ensured that Malacca became the main trading port in the region.

The Sultanate of Malacca was a thalassocracy, heavily dependent on extracting wealth by controlling the movement and distribution of commodities. Thus, the expansion of Malacca's empire did not necessarily mean direct rule over people or territories through invasion, and instead mainly revolved around having strategic control over coastal settlements, potential rival ports, and centres of commodity production. At its peak, Malacca's territorial influence reached most areas of the Malay Peninsula, the Riau-Lingga islands as well as southeastern Sumatra. But different areas were administered with varying levels of political control, from direct rule by the court, to a nominal recognition of overlordship by local rulers. Generally, the further away territories were located from the capital, the looser the political grip. Such differences in political power fostered a network of subordinate groups with varying degrees of loyalty.

Information on how the Sultanate of Malacca expanded over time and its final dissolution is based almost exclusively on the *Suma Oriental* and the *Sulalatus Salatin*. The founding of Malacca involved a series of events that led to the establishment of settlements by Parameswara in Muar and Bertam between 1398 and 1401. The coastal port at the mouth of Malacca River only became the political and economic centre of Malacca under the rule of Megat Iskandar Shah in 1414, after the demise of Parameswara. Over the next hundred years, Malacca grew as a regional port, expanding direct control over adjacent areas and securing supply chains for trade goods (Fig. 8.4). By the mid-15th century, Malacca was effectively an independent polity, being able to repel Siamese reprisals and only paying tribute to China. Towards the end of the 15th century, Malacca controlled most of the Straits of Malacca and southeast Sumatra, with influence as far north as Kelantan, Pattani, Kedah, and Lingga. Malacca continued to play the role of most dominant port in the Straits of Malacca until the early 16th century. By this time, however, the Sultanate's power faced multiple threats from political disunity, corruption, and port mismanagement. The Portuguese conquest of Malacca brought an end to the Malaccan empire.

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CHAPTER 9

CERAMICS

By Heidi Tan



Fig. 9.1 Stoneware sherd with underglaze iron-oxide decoration, Sukhothai kilns, north-central Thailand, ca. 14th or 15th century. Collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore. (Photo: Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore)

Research on ceramics in Southeast Asia is still relatively young. Starting with the study of prehistoric pottery by archaeologists in the 1960s, ceramic studies developed over the following decade, culminating in the first survey exhibition and publication of historical ceramic traditions in 1971. The field has since expanded alongside maritime archaeology and studies of intraregional trade in ceramics.

Although ceramic traditions in Southeast Asia are diverse, they are characterised by two common attributes. First, the region developed innovative technologies. Second, people in Southeast Asia cultivated distinctive forms of local connoisseurship. These two kinds of innovations emerged through the adaptation of new ideas and cross-cultural exchange. For example, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, West Asian, and European ceramics excavated or found in the region demonstrate the existence of a long history of demand for imported ceramics and lively artistic transactions.

Innovative ceramic technologies

Technological advancements in the first millennium CE resulted in a wide range of ceramics production for domestic use and export. These included the prolific earthenwares and high-fired stonewares of mainland Southeast Asia. Earthenware is red or white bodied pottery that is low-fired (up to 1000°C) and hence porous; stoneware has a grey body, is high-fired (up to 1200°C), and is much more durable.

Production methods since ancient times include hand-built pots, made by coiling clay and finishing the vessel with a wooden paddle. Pots were also constructed on a wheel. A combination of the two methods was also used. When leather-hard, pots were fired on the ground or in a wood-fuelled kiln. Often built into a natural slope like a riverbank, such furnaces are termed cross-draft kilns. Meanwhile, sculpted and hand-modelled reliefs for temples, and moulded tablets for ritual offerings, were notable in Myanmar (ca. 7th–8th centuries) and Thailand (ca. 9th century) respectively. Elsewhere, a lively sculptural style was also later achieved by Majapahit potters in Java.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS IN THE FIRST MILLENNIUM CE RESULTED IN A WIDE RANGE OF CERAMICS PRODUCTION FOR DOMESTIC USE AND EXPORT.



Fig. 9.2 Betel set, Gowa, Sulawesi. Assembled ca. late 1800s to early 1900s, using 15th–16th-century cobalt-painted stoneware sherds (Vietnam). Collection of the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore. (Photo: Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore)

Glazes were developed using organic compounds such as wood-ash mixed with clay. When fired, the glaze fused with the body of the pot and provided a waterproof durable exterior. Control of iron oxide in the clay and firing conditions produced a range of colours. Iron-rich glazes produced monochrome black and brown wares, while reduced iron resulted in paler green and off-white colours. Warm tones, such as olive green, resulted from higher oxygen levels during firing, while cooler bluish-green tones were produced by reducing available oxygen. The earliest glazed wares were produced in northern Vietnam (ca. 1st–3rd centuries) and in Cambodia (late 9th century). Monochromes were later exported widely from mainland Southeast Asia; for example, wares from Champa (15th and 16th centuries) were distributed widely along regional trade networks and beyond, including sites in Japan and Egypt.

Underglaze decoration was developed by applying iron oxide prior to the glazing process. Lively designs in brown or black were painted on a pale ground of white slip (liquid clay), the latter applied earlier to the surface of the pot. Such painted wares were produced in large quantities at Sukhothai and Sawankhalok in north-central Thailand for export across the region and beyond during the 14th–16th centuries (Fig. 9.1). This period, which some have termed the ‘Ming Gap’, saw an expansion of production from Southeast Asian kilns, enabled by imperial bans on Chinese porcelain exports.

Cobalt oxide was another innovation, resulting in the production of blue and white painted stoneware in northern Vietnam around this time (Fig. 9.2). Red, green, and yellow overglaze enamels subsequently enriched these designs. It remains unclear where the sources of cobalt originated from; West Asian cobalt was used at kilns in China as early as the 9th century and later for producing imperial blue and white porcelain production. As with Thai ceramics, high-quality Vietnamese wares were exported in large quantities throughout the region and beyond during the Ming Gap.

The unique production of glazed earthenware using lead as a flux (an ingredient to lower the firing temperature of the glaze) was developed in Myanmar, probably through the adaptation of glazing technologies from West Asia. Of special note are the colourful architectural tiles that adorn temples at Bagan (11th–13th centuries), Bago (15th century) and Mrauk-U (16th century) (Fig. 9.3).



Fig. 9.3 Lead-glazed tiles depicting Mara's armies, ca. 11th–13th centuries, Ananda Temple, Bagan, Myanmar. (Photo: Heidi Tan)

Connoisseurship and creative reuse of ceramics

Demand for high-fired ceramics by the mid-second millennium CE resulted in the production of unique wares for domestic use. These included architectural elements such as roof tiles and zoomorphic finials in Thailand, and Vietnamese blue and white tiles for mosques in Java. The ritual value accorded to ceramics is demonstrated by *pusaka* (heirloom) collections made by communities in areas such as Sarawak and Sulawesi, the extensive use of ceramics as status goods for burials, and the incorporation of wares such as storage jars into local mythology. The creative reuse of imported and local ceramics demonstrates a connoisseurial tradition that also extends to Buddhist rituals. For example, in Thailand, merit-making offerings from the 17th century onwards included embedding porcelain dishes from China and Europe in the walls of shrines. Similarly, in Myanmar, imported wares and locally made clay sealings—kept and displayed in temples since at least the early 20th century retain their potency as meritorious objects today.

Such traditions of keeping and displaying ceramics have been attributed to beliefs regarding their presence as having an 'aura' or 'radiance that shines through' (O'Connor 1983: 406). O'Connor's provocation—to consider both ceramics and the transformation of clay through fire as analogous to one's own spiritual transformation—challenges us to rethink ceramics' status as 'archaeological' or 'art' objects. A different aesthetic evidently prevails in the creation and use of ceramics that have remained essential to the ritual lives of many Southeast Asians today.

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HINDU AND BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURE

By Chotima Chaturawong

Southeast Asia has a rich Hindu and Buddhist architectural heritage that goes back to the first millennium CE. The region was then a crucial crossroads for the maritime trade route from the Middle East and India to China. As early maritime trade depended on monsoon winds, seasonal weather cycles often forced merchants to stop on their way and replenish their food and water supplies, providing local polities with opportunities to take part in international trade. Indic cultures and religions came along with trade and deeply transformed Southeast Asian culture, art and architecture.



Fig. 10.1 Ashram Maha Rosei, Cambodia. (Photo: Chotima Chaturawong, 2018)



Fig. 10.2 Burmese Shwe-in-pin monastery, Mandalay. (Photo: Chotima Chaturawong, 2017)

Archaeologists and art historians often divide the history of Hindu and Buddhist architecture in Southeast Asia into three overlapping periods. An early period, occurring between the 4th and the 8th century—depending on location—was followed by a so-called classical period from the 8th/9th to the 13th century. The third period, beginning around the 13th century saw an increased localisation in Island Southeast Asia and the development of a new aesthetic in Mainland Southeast Asia—coinciding with the rise of Thai kingdoms.

Our knowledge of the first Hindu and Buddhist architecture of Southeast Asia is still limited. The shrines and sanctuaries that can be ascribed to this period are clearly inspired by Indian models. Many are single-cell structures in a square plan, sometimes with a projection at the center of each side. Examples of this simple square temple type dedicated to Hindu cults include the Khmer Ashram Maha Rosei (Monastery of the Great Hermit) (Fig. 10.1) and Temples of Sambor Prei Kuk; Cham open temples and brick temples; and the two small temples of Kota Kapur on the island of Bangka (Indonesia). Among Buddhist temples of the same type are the Pyu shrine KKG-4 in Beikthano and the Bebegyi temple in Sri Ksetra, as well as the temples and stupas of Batujaya, West Java.

Despite similarities in temples structure, Southeast Asia presents a great variety of architectural types from an early period onwards. Temples were adapted to local topography, craft and building knowledge, as well as available materials such as brick and stone. Southeast Asian Hindu and Buddhist architecture reached a peak during the second phase (8th/9th–13th century) thanks to the development of the powerful and often competing kingdoms of Mataram (Central Java), Angkor (Cambodia), Champa (Vietnam) and Bagan (Burma). Royal ideology and Indic cosmology played an important role in the conception of many temples, such as Javanese Borobudur temple and the Khmer temple-mountains. During this "classical" period, levels of localisation in Southeast Asian architecture increased: each region developed its own architectural style and building ornamentation varied widely. Meanwhile, Buddhism in India declined, and Sri Lanka supplanted India as an important center of Theravada Buddhism.

This increase in localisation was strengthened during the third period (from the 13th century onwards). The phenomenon might be partly explained by the political turmoil in India, the growing Vietnamese influence in Vietnam and new population influx in mainland Southeast Asia. Examples include the (mostly Hindu) temples of the Majapahit kingdom (East Java), as well as the Buddhist architecture of the Thai and Pa-o in Thailand, and that of the Burmese and Mon in Myanmar.

Thailand and Myanmar are neighbours with interrelated histories, and for a time followed the same school of Theravada Buddhism originating from Sri Lanka. However, during the third localisation period, Siamese, Pa-o, Burmese, and Mon Buddhist monasteries and monastic compounds were constructed differently from each other, in terms of layout, functions, styles, decoration, and building terminology.

The localisation of temple features continued well into the 19th and 20th centuries. During the reign of King Rama IV (1851–68) in Thailand, for example, royal Buddhist monastic compounds in Bangkok were divided by walls between the public area (Buddhavasa)—where Buddhist rites took place—and the private area for the monks' residence (Sanghavasa). At Wat Sommanat Ratchaworawihan (constructed from 1853–56), the public area (Buddhavasa) was aligned along a northeast-to-southwest axis stretching from front to rear. Along this axis, several buildings served as landmarks: a gateway, an assembly hall (*wihan*), a stupa (*chedi*) in a bell shape of Sinhalese style, and an ordination hall (*ubosot*). A bodhi tree located to the rear of the Wat, outside the compound walls, was also planted along the same axis. This building arrangement is not found in India, where monks' residence (Sanghavasa) were divided into six groups to the left and right of the public area. Furthermore, at Wat Sommanat, the compound of the abbot developed into a large centre. It consisted of his monastery, monasteries of his disciples, a dining hall, and a library.

Unlike the Thai Wat Sommanat, the public and private areas of 19th- and 20th-century Burmese, Mon, and Pa-o monastic compounds were not divided by walls for monks' residence. Instead, they were organised according to a concept of multipurpose Buddhist monastery building, rather than the concept of a monastic compound laid out along an axis. Called *kyaung* in Burmese and *bha* in Mon, these structures were built on piles/stilts, with public and private areas arranged with varied floor plans. For instance, the sleeping area of monks in a Burmese monastery was situated to the west of the main hall (Fig. 10.2). In Mon monasteries it was situated to the south, and in Pa-o monasteries to the east and west of the main hall. Furthermore, unlike Wat Sommanat, Mon Buddhist monasteries in Moulmein often faced north and had verandas to the north and west (Fig. 10.3).



Fig. 10.3 Mon principal monastery-Kaw-hnat monastic compound, Moulmein. (Photo: Chotima Chaturawong, 2008)

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RELIEF SCULPTURE

By Natalie S. Y. Ong

Relief sculpture is a form of art that combines features of sculpture in the round (a free-standing image that can be viewed from all angles), and painting (an image fixed upon a surface). Relief sculpture can therefore be likened to three-dimensional modelling on a two-dimensional plane. Two types of relief sculpture exist: high relief and low relief. They are usually referred to in French as *haut-relief* and *bas-relief* respectively, meaning deep (high) and shallow (low) reliefs. Most common are bas-reliefs found in architectural decor (Fig. 11.1) which can be also carved on large boulders or the environment, such as on natural stones and cave walls. Immovable objects for ritual purposes or for commemoration are also often decorated in relief.



Fig. 11.1 First gallery of Borobudur, 8th–9th centuries, Central Java, Indonesia. (Photo: Natalie S. Y. Ong)

Techniques, materials, categories

Relief techniques depend on the material used. Stone was popular, but brick, wood, and bone can also be carved. Some types of malleable material such as stucco (plaster) or ceramic can also be sculpted to form bas-reliefs.

For small- to medium-sized surfaces, reliefs can be moulded by making or forming various shapes. Relief plaques from temples in Bagan, Myanmar were manually shaped from lumps of clay before they were fired and embedded into temple walls. This technique was likely combined with the additive (adding material) method, such as on ceramic vessels, and the subtractive (subtracting material) method for the finer details, or on large bodies. Most relief sculpture is the subtractive type, as can be seen on the Hidden Base of Borobudur.

Teams of artisans worked in sections, and some specialised in specific subjects, such as human figures, architecture, flora and fauna, or objects.

Bas-reliefs were most likely covered in stucco (plaster) and then coloured. As pigments and stucco are easily degradable, very little of this remains on ancient artworks but modern temples maintain such practices. There are only two categories of reliefs: decorative/ornamental, and figurative. Figurative reliefs are those that represent objects and human or animal figures. Figurative reliefs can be found as iconic images representing a single idea, or narrative images that tell a story or an episode of a story (Fig. 11.2).



Fig. 11.2 Brahmins at a feast, the *Ramayana*, Candi Loro Jonggrang, Prambanan, 9th century, Central Java, Indonesia. (Photo: Natalie S. Y. Ong)



Fig. 11.2 Brahmins at a feast, the *Ramayana*, Candi Loro Jonggrang, Prambanan, 9th century, Central Java, Indonesia. (Photo: Natalie S. Y. Ong)

Relief sculpture and merit-making

A patron commissioning these works of art stands to gain power, reputation, and merit. Power by showing his enemies and allies that he can command many people and has the means for such large projects, which in turn increases his reputation. As for merit, a Buddhist patron pronounces his faith by commissioning these works to transmit Buddhist tales and wisdom, while a Hindu patron does his duty for the public good by giving artisans and stonemasons jobs, and providing people with spaces of worship.

Reliefs as tools for the study of Southeast Asian history

For the archaeologist or historian, reliefs are extremely useful ways to gain new knowledge, especially in areas and periods where there are not many texts available.

For example, in the Central Javanese Loro Jonggrang temple's depictions of *Ramayana* (Fig. 11.2), several episodes that were not in the Indian versions of the story were found to have come from the Malay versions of the epic poem *Hikayat Seri Rama*. However, all known versions of the *Hikayat* are written in Jawi (Malay language written in Arabic script), and Islam only came to Southeast Asia in the 13th–14th centuries. This means that local versions of the *Ramayana* existed by the time Loro Jonggrang was built in the mid-9th century, and that the Javanese were already in contact with Malay culture. Most importantly, the Loro Jonggrang *Ramayana* reliefs tell us that the *Hikayat Seri Rama* is a lot older than existing manuscripts.

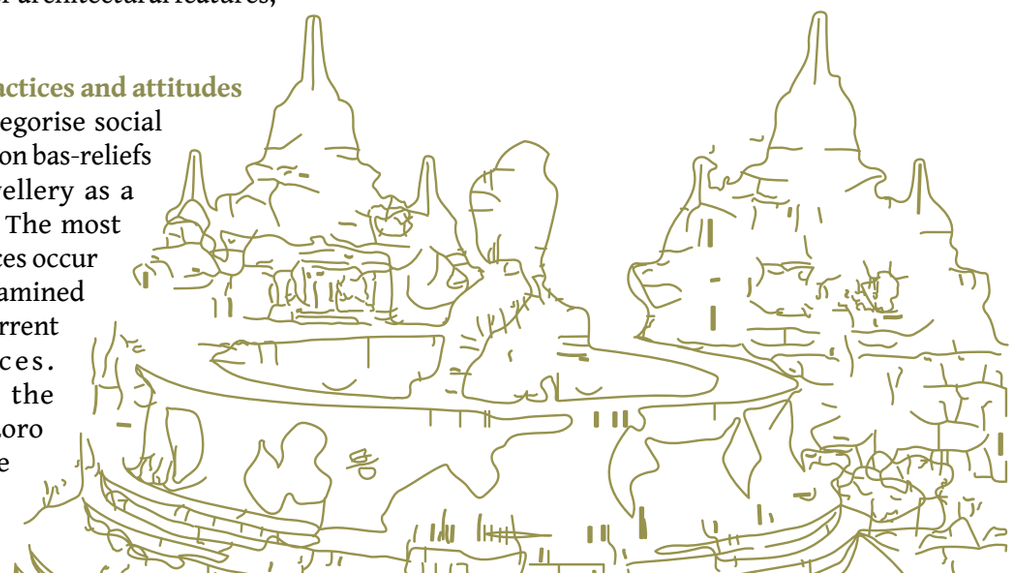
Bas-reliefs can also be used to help date monuments, especially in areas where inscriptions are found but are difficult to match to a specific temple. For example, in the early stages of its representation in Central Java, the *kala*-head motif did not have a lower jaw or hands by the side of its face. It evolved to include these two features in later East Javanese art. The development of the *kala*-head motif over time shows how temples may be dated. However, successful dating of a monument should consider other factors, such as other architectural features, or building phases.

Inferring social practices and attitudes

It is possible to categorise social groups represented on bas-reliefs by using their jewellery as a measure of status. The most interesting inferences occur when reliefs are examined for evidence of recurrent social practices. For example, in the Central Javanese Loro Jonggrang temple *Ramayana* depictions, women of the ruling class are generally shown interacting only among themselves or among men of the same rank, wearing the same types of jewellery (Fig. 11.3, at the left of the panel). These depictions suggest that the practice of cloistering noblewomen dates to at least two centuries earlier than extant texts tell us. In the same relief, the menial classes—such as the *mahout* (elephant rider) and the grooms for the horses—were also always placed as far away from the highest-ranking elites as possible (Fig. 11.3, at the right end of the panel). In between these two sections of society, the middle classes, composed of the courtiers and religious figures, were placed as intermediaries. This panel clearly shows a social hierarchy of descending order from left to right, represented by those with the most jewellery to those with minimal ornaments. Thus, segregation occurred by occupation, which in turn decided which social class one belonged to. This same practice can be found repeated across many other relief panels and on other temples, suggesting that it was widespread at that time.



Fig. 11.3 Separation of social classes by gender and occupation; the sage Wiswamitra visits Prince Rama in Ayodhaya, the *Ramayana*, Candi Loro Jonggrang, Prambanan, 9th century, Central Java, Indonesia. (Photo: Natalie S. Y. Ong)



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TEXTILE DEPICTIONS IN SCULPTURE

By Sandra Sardjono

The scarcity of surviving early textiles in the superhumid regions of Southeast Asia forces scholars to turn to other sources of information. First, there are textual sources such as legal records and poetry, for example, the *sima* charters and *kakawins* from Java and Bali. Accounts by travellers such as Zhou Daguan, a Chinese emissary who stayed in 13th-century Angkor, also left records about such textiles. These texts illustrate how textiles were essential trade items, presented during official ceremonies and used for creating alliances and contracts among people while also establishing social status and prestige. The second type of source is ethnographies of living textile traditions in Southeast Asia. The third, which is well developed in Southeast Asia, is depictions of textiles on sculptures and wall reliefs.

As most art forms in Southeast Asia were patronised by elites, textile depictions reflected the status of upper classes more than that of commoners. Another specificity of these textile representations is that their patterns also occur in other media. Thus, a recurrent question about textile representations is whether they were copied from actual textiles, or inspired by other types of ornamentation. Finally, many of these patterns reflect the circulation of trade goods.

The movement of trade textiles through Southeast Asia occurred through trade routes commonly known as Silk Roads, which comprised the Overland Routes and the Maritime Routes (the latter are also known as the Spice Routes due to the importance of spice trade; see UNESCO's map: https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/about-silk-roads). Two examples of textile patterns illustrate the dynamism of textile circulations in these early global trade networks: the clusters of dots and circles pattern, and the overlapping circles pattern.

Clusters of dots and circles

Among the various textile patterns found in Indonesia, the clusters of dots and circles pattern is one of the most prevalent. This pattern is predominantly seen on small metal statues produced between the 8th and 12th centuries (Fig. 12.1), but it also appears on a few stone statues from Central Java. Metal artisans likely preferred this pattern because it was simple and could be quickly executed using a hammer and chisel. This pattern is also present on many Indian bronze statues from comparable periods.



Fig. 12.1 Avalokitesvara, Central Java, 775-850 CE, Museum Nasional Indonesia. (Photo: Sofia Sundstrom)

One of the earliest examples of fabric with the dots and circles cluster pattern is a cotton fragment dated to the 4th–5th centuries, excavated from a Greco-Roman trash dump in the ancient Egyptian town of Berenike. This fragment most likely originated from Gujurat, western India, which is well known for its resist-dyeing and block-printed textiles. Many archaeological findings along the Silk Roads from a later period also show that cotton and silk textiles with a similar pattern based on resist-dyeing techniques were common. Such evidence suggests that such materials may have also been exported to Java and copied by Javanese artists.

TEXTILES WERE ESSENTIAL TRADE ITEMS, PRESENTED DURING OFFICIAL CEREMONIES AND USED FOR CREATING ALLIANCES AND CONTRACTS AMONG PEOPLE WHILE ALSO ESTABLISHING SOCIAL STATUS AND PRESTIGE

Overlapping circles pattern

Another widely circulated pattern in Southeast Asia is the overlapping circles pattern. It has a long history in the region, starting from as early as the 13th century. This period corresponds to the Singhasari Dynasty in Java, which produced the most beautiful rendering of these patterns, as seen on statues from the Singhasari temple in East Java (Fig. 12.2).



Fig. 12.2 Nandishvara, Candi Singhasari, East Java, late 13th century, Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden. (Photo: Sandra Sardjono)

During the following period of the Majapahit Dynasty, the overlapping circles motif became even more popular, with evidence of a wider circulation of this pattern around the globe. It is called the cash or coin pattern in China, and can be found on textiles and ceramics there. In Burma, it was painted on the ceilings of temples in Bagan, most likely reflecting the use of textiles as canopies. Many such coin patterns are also found on temple reliefs in Cambodia, with one such example carved on a false window to represent a covering blind. Depictions on the ceiling of a temple in the Himalayas, where the same color scheme and design are represented, further testifies to the popularity and wide circulation of such textiles. In Egypt, remnants of an Indian cotton textile found there provide clues as to what these textiles may have looked like in real life (Fig. 12.3).



Fig. 12.3 Textile fragment with overlapping circles pattern from Gujarat, India but found in Egypt. Cotton, block-printed with resist and mordant-dyed. Dated ca. 1350–1450 CE. (© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, EA1990.1099)

Textile representations also demonstrate how the past continues to echo in the present across periods, continents, and media. For example, today's *kawung* motif, one of Java's most important batik patterns, can be traced to the overlapping circles pattern that started in the 13th century. Likewise, current dress attire for the Javanese court and dancers owes something to the waistbands we find on many ancient Javanese statues. Similarly, the costumes of the *apsaras* on Angkor Wat's temple pillars continue on in contemporary Cambodian dance outfits.

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CHAPTER 13

BRONZE SCULPTURE

By Mathilde Mechling & Eko Bastiawan



Fig. 13.1 Nganjuk bronzes, *desa* Candirejo, *kabupaten* Nganjuk, eastern Java. Photo OD-1705. (Courtesy of the Leiden University Library)

From around the 6th century onwards, bronze—an alloy of copper and tin—was used in Mainland and Maritime Southeast Asia for making religious statues representing Buddhist and Hindu deities. The religious nature of these images impacted their fabrication, defined their uses, and played a role in influencing exchanges within Southeast Asia, as well as between Southeast Asia, India, and China. Southeast Asia also had the advantage of possessing one of the world's largest tin deposits, known as the Tin Belt.

The most common technique for making a bronze statue is known as the lost-wax casting technique. It combines the techniques of modelling wax and clay with that of metallurgy. Apart from the living bronze-casting traditions, another way to know more about ancient casting techniques is through archaeometallurgy, a subdiscipline of archaeology that examines all aspects of the production and use of metals, including the manufacturing of bronze statues.

Devotion and merit-making

The large bronze statues that have survived until the present—such as the West Mebon Temple's Viṣṇu statue, now at the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh—were often commissioned by the political elite. They were the main religious icons in temples. The West Mebon Viṣṇu statue's metal composition indicates that it was cast in Angkor Thom's royal foundry, which has recently been excavated. Other large bronze statues have also survived, for example, in Java and in the Thai-Malay Peninsula, offering a glimpse into what might have once existed on a broader scale.

Smaller Hindu and Buddhist metal figures between 5 cm and 50 cm in height have survived in larger numbers all over Southeast Asia. They are interpreted as objects made for personal use and private devotions, but they were also likely donated to temples. Such figures were commissioned to accrue spiritual merit for their donors. Some of them still retain their original consecration deposit in an internal cavity, indicating that they were more than just images; they were, in fact, believed to house the living presence of the divine. These consecration deposits contained small objects considered sacred (coins, stone beads, metal threads, etc.) and extracts of scriptural texts inscribed on metal foil or other writing surfaces.

Dynamic and multidirectional circulation of motifs

Some small statuettes travelled with pilgrims via maritime trade routes. A study of the style of these bronze images, combined with technical analysis, can shed light on interregional exchange in Asia during the premodern period. Much has previously been written about India being the artistic source for Southeast Asian bronze statuary traditions. However, current scholarship sees these interrelationships as having been more dynamic and multidirectional than previously believed. For instance, the site of Amaravati, in the Andhra region of India, may not actually be the source for the standing Buddhas with pleated robes found in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka as previously thought. Only one such bronze image is known at Amaravati, while there are many more in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka. There is thus a need to continue reassessing past theories, especially since there were multiple agents—including traders, pilgrims, and artisans—known to be travelling across these regions.

Meditation and mandalas

Small bronze statuettes were also used in Java, Indonesia, to represent three-dimensional mandalas, which were likely used as a support for visualisation during meditations. A mandala is a circular, (micro-) cosmic diagram of esoteric deities used for ritual purposes in esoteric Buddhism, and whose design is often depicted in Buddhist art. One such example is the group of statuettes known as the Nganjuk bronzes. The discovery of this sizeable group of small Buddhist bronzes at the village of Candirejo in Nganjuk district, East Java, by two local farmers in 1913, has been offered as evidence of Java's high aesthetic accomplishment and its connectedness during the 9th–10th centuries (Fig. 13.1). However, the precise dating and location of the Nganjuk bronzes' production are still unclear. Several techniques can be used to establish this information: analysis of the bronzes' style

and ornamentation, material analysis, and how the bronzes portrayed a mandala.

Regarding the style of the bronzes, the *kala* face on the backrest of the main image, Mahāvairocana, is represented without a lower jaw, a typical feature of central Javanese *kala*. However, the image's horns suggest a later production date, possibly during the shift in power from central to eastern Java during the 9th and 10th centuries. This is because horns only became prominent features in eastern Javanese *kala*. Indeed, another *kala* with similar features (lower jaw and horns) offers further evidence of a later dating, namely the *kala* engraved on the Anjuk Ladang inscription, dated 859 Śaka (937 CE), discovered in the same village of Candirejo. However, research on the copper alloy used in a similar style of bronzework indicates that the Nganjuk bronzes were probably manufactured in central Java. Taken together, these elements suggest that the Nganjuk bronzes were made in central Java during the first half of the 10th century, before they were transported, for reasons still unknown, to eastern Java.

Two specific features make the Nganjuk bronzes' style unique to this transitional period: the presence of spiky ornamentation on figures, accompanied by elaborate and intricate jewellery, as well as the dramatic attitudes of the figures themselves (the ornamentation is also represented on pedestals in the form of antefixes). Each figurine is portrayed wearing a headdress consisting of a diadem set with five triangular ornaments. Each also wears one or two necklaces, a bracelet on its upper section, a bracelet at the elbow, a bracelet at the wrist, a girdle around the upper part of the body. Each figurine also displays curling ribbons and strands of hair on the shoulders (Fig. 13.2). These features were never seen in figures from the earlier period. Other features unique to this ensemble are the figurines' acrobatic postures, the unusually detailed representation of their body parts, and their large, half-closed eyes.

Another useful way to establish the production date of the Nganjuk bronzes is by studying their relationship to a specific mandala. The main figure of Mahāvairocana in the Nganjuk group plays a significant role in identifying the mandala represented: the Vajradhātu mandala (Fig. 13.3). This mandala appears in a text written by the Indian scholar Anandagarbha, who, according to some sources, lived in the 9th century. The Vajradhātu mandala associated with Anandagarbha has also been found in several places in Tibet, such as Alchi and Tabo. This distribution shows that Java—where the Nganjuk bronzes were found—was in close contact with other regions and participated in global Buddhist networks. The representation of two other Buddhist figures (Akṣobhya and Vajrānkusa) amongst the bronzes suggests that there is more than one configuration of mandala represented in the Nganjuk group.

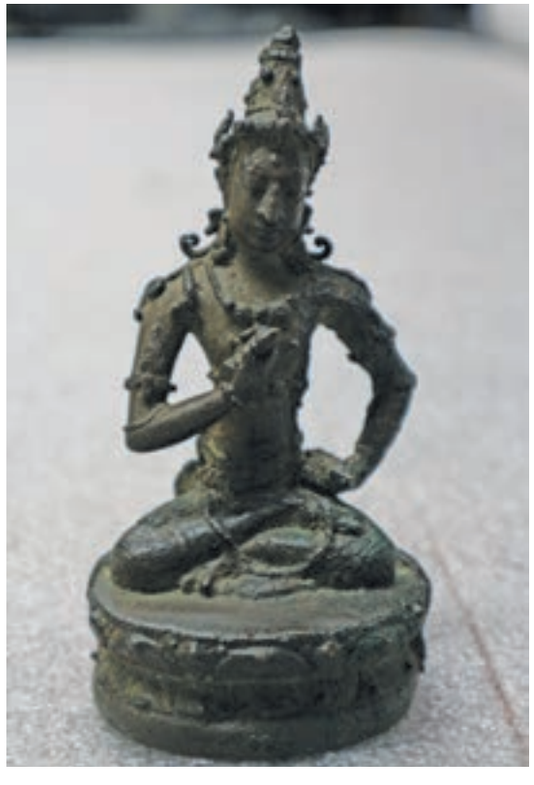


Fig. 13.2 Vajrasattva figure, Nganjuk, eastern Java. Collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. (Photo: Eko Bastiawan)



Fig. 13.3 Four deities from a Vajradhātu mandala, Nganjuk, eastern Java. Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, public domain)

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ISLAMIC ART

By Noorashikin binte Zulkifli



Fig. 14.1 Qur'an, Terengganu, 19th century. Paper, ink, coloured and gold pigments, cotton, leather binding. (Photo: Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore)

Today, Southeast Asia is home to around one-quarter of the world's Muslim population. With majorities in Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia, and significant minorities in Singapore, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and the Philippines, Muslims make up just under half of the region's population. But Islam's presence is not just of contemporary significance. The discovery and recovery of a 9th-century CE Arabian *dhow* off Belitung, which cargo is now kept at the Asian Civilisations Museum of Singapore, is one example of Southeast Asia's early contact with Islam. Ensuing encounters led to the establishment of the first sultanate in northern Sumatra by the late 13th century.

An overview of Islamic material culture

Despite its long history, Southeast Asian Islamic art has been largely excluded from canonical surveys of Islamic art. Islamic art in general encompasses not just ritual or liturgical accessories, but everyday items, ceremonial material, and even scientific objects. Although a great many traditions and localised styles have emerged, Islamic art retains a preference for abstract motifs over representational art, and tends towards the intricate decoration and extensive ornamentation of surfaces.

Calligraphy and illuminations

The most commonly perceived Islamic art is calligraphy, which is found mainly in manuscripts and inscribed objects. Muslims generally regard calligraphy as the highest form of expression, arising from the need to reproduce the Qur'an. Historically speaking, Qur'anic production commanded the finest arts of the book: calligraphy, manuscript illumination, and bookbinding. This was also the case in Southeast Asia, where, despite some shared features with the wider Islamic world, distinct regional styles developed, such as an additional illuminated doublespread in the middle of a Qur'an.

The most outstanding illumination styles in Southeast Asia are usually attributed to the culturally contiguous zone between the northeastern coast of the Malay Peninsula—including Terengganu and Pattani—and Aceh in northern Sumatra (Fig. 14.1). Across the Malay world, yellow and gold are generally understood to be the colours of royalty and hence are seen as appropriate for texts of such stature. In contrast to these styles, Javanese illumination exhibits a greater variety of colours and patterns.

Southeast Asian languages and the Arabic script

Across the world, newly Islamised communities often adopted modified versions of the Arabic script to write their native tongues as a way of visually identifying with the *umma* (wider Muslim community). In Southeast Asia, similar developments occurred wherever Islam was firmly established. The most well-known form is Jawi, the Malay language rendered in Arabic script, used for over 600 years until a mainstream switch to the Latin alphabet in the mid-20th century. Other regional languages that employed the Arabic script include Javanese (termed Pégon), Bugis/Makassar (Sérang), Acehnese, and Cham in Mainland Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asian manuscripts of other genres and inscribed objects bearing the Arabic script can also be found. An unusual example is an illuminated page dated 1289 AH (1872 CE) announcing the birth of Jawiyah, daughter of Encik Sudin and Encik Unah in Lingga, Riau.

Informative and talismanic inscriptions

Inscriptions are applied across architectural elements, furniture, textiles, and metalwork. Sometimes such inscriptions are informational, marking graves, demarcating devotional spaces, or communicating prayer times. In other instances, the visual form of the Arabic script alone suffices as an emblem of the owner's religious identity and is not necessarily intended to be read.

It is sometimes believed that inscribing Qur'anic verses or other formulas onto an object endows it with amuletic or curative properties. Such beliefs are shared across the Islamic world, even if their status and

acceptability vary from place to place. For example, talismanic vests from Lampung and Java are intended to protect their wearers from both physical and supernatural harm. Engraved brass bowls from Perak and Padang sport designs similar to those of bowls from Iran with central bosses. Following a tradition that has been established since the 9th century, these bowls enable one to drink water that has touched Qur'anic verses, so as to cure illnesses, counter poisons, or relieve the pain of childbirth.



Fig. 14.2 Ceremonial cloth (*pesujutan*) showing *shahada* in conventional orientation, northeast Lombok, early 20th century. (Photo: Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore)

Figural versus abstract representations

A common preconception of Islamic art is that figural representation is forbidden. Reasons revolve around fear of idolatry and artists potentially usurping God's role as the Creator. Yet no such prohibition is explicitly prescribed in the Qur'an, giving rise to varying *fatwa* (legal opinions) where much hinges upon the content of an image and the context of its viewing. In reality, artists exercise various tactics such as stylisation in light of such concerns, and there are numerous instances of figural representation in the Islamic world. An example is a cloth called *pesujutan*, belonging to the Sasak people of Lombok. It bears highly abstract human figures that frame the first part of the *shahada* (an Islamic oath and creed) (Fig. 14.2).

One of the most popular figural motifs in the Islamic world is based on the Buraq, a mystical steed that transported Prophet Muhammad to the heavens. Two-dimensional forms are often depicted in illustrations and paintings. In Aceh, Buraq motifs are often sewn on decorative hangings used in weddings, symbolising the union between the lover and the beloved, a Sufi treatment of one's relationship to God. Three-dimensional sculptures of the Buraq as found in the southern Philippines and Lombok are more unusual.

Adaptation of new motifs in Southeast Asia

Other objects illustrate dynamic links between Southeast Asia and the wider Islamic world. Brass kettles with zoomorphic spouts from the Minangkabau region in Sumatra show remarkable similarities with metal ewer forms from 17th- and 18th-century Safavid Iran, begging the question of how such sources may have reached Southeast Asia. Taking another example, this time from clothing, the base hat in the ceremonial Acehnese men's headgear, *kopiah meukeutop* is inspired by the Hadhrami *alfiah*. Finally, the fez has sometimes been attributed as the source or model from which the songkok—recognised today as the ubiquitous, formal hat for Muslim men of the Malay world—developed.

A new faith adapted to ancient Southeast Asian cultures

One should also consider whether artists broke completely from their existing art and culture when a new faith took hold, or if existing art was modified, or even reinvented. Beyond inscriptions, artists in Islamic Southeast Asia had long been influenced by their physical and cultural environments, including earlier traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and animism. For instance, a 19th-century Kelantanese ornament for a palanquin used in Islamic circumcision ceremonies for boys takes the form of the *makara*. Yet the *makara* is a composite creature that serves as the vehicle of the Hindu river goddess Ganga. Another example of such artistic syncretism is the curvilinear *okir* designs of the Maranao people of the southern Philippines. These designs have pre-Islamic origins, though their flora and fauna-based motifs have become increasingly stylised over time (Fig. 14.3).

The largely peaceful embrace of Islam across Southeast Asia can be attributed to Sufi masters. They appealed to local communities by adapting to existing local traditions, extracting common spiritual values before recasting them with Islamic elements. Sunan Kalijaga (b. 1450) of the Wali Songo (a group of missionaries who played a vital role in the spread of Islam in Java between the 14th and 16th centuries) is often credited with developing *wayang kulit* (shadow puppetry) to suit Muslim sensibilities. Thus, in the *wayang kulit* portrayal of the Hindu epic, *Mahabharata*, Bima embarks on a quest and encounters Dewa Ruci of Javanese mythological origin to gain spiritual insight. This reimagining of the epic can nowadays be regarded as a Sufi parable.



Fig. 14.3 Grave marker (sunduk), southern Philippines, 19th century. (Photo: Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore)

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MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE

By Imran bin Tajudeen



Fig. 15.1 Variety in the pyramidal-hip or *tajug* roof form: (Left to right) Banten Royal Mosque in West Java, Indonesia with five tiers, the top two being miniature tiers; Limo Kaum Mosque in West Sumatra (Minangkabau), Indonesia with five tiers topped by a pavilion; and Surau Labuk Bauk in West Sumatra (Minangkabau), Indonesia with four projecting gables and a summit pavilion. (Photos: Imran Bin Tajudeen)

A great diversity in mosque building types proliferated in Southeast Asia before the introduction of the dome form under European colonial rule. This variety bears witness to trans-local circulations and recombination. Contrary to the narrative in most regional surveys, the Southeast Asian mosque form is not confined to a single type featuring a multi-tiered pyramidal hip roof only. Several other types are also to be found. However, there are few comprehensive or in-depth studies of historical examples and their former contexts. Besides a number of examples in Java, historical mosques from other regions of Southeast Asia have not yet been well studied. Many have also been demolished and replaced by new buildings featuring the dome.

Variety of forms

There are four main types of mosque roofs, within which further variability can be observed. Despite these variations, some architectural features are found in common throughout the region. These include the finial (*mustaka* or *momolo*), used to decorate the summits of mosques.

The first type is the *tajug* or pyramidal-hip roof type. It can be found in places from Champa (in central and south Vietnam) to Banjarmasin, Palembang (Masjid Agung), Melaka (Tengkera, Kampung Keling and Kampung Hulu) or Banten with its miniature upper tiers, and Minangkabau mosques that possess two variant forms depending on the *laras* or clan fraternity. In Java and Sumatra alone, great diversity may be seen in the form, the number of roof tiers, the construction of walls and platforms, and the configuration of columns and beams (Fig. 15.1). In the mosques of Jepara and of Limo Kaum (Minangkabau), for example, the multiple roofs are used as true floors, unlike other mosques where multi-tiered roofs are superimposed primarily for ventilation, aesthetic, and symbolic purposes.

A second type, using the gable-on-hip form, is found in Teluk Manuk (Patani, south Thailand), and Kota Bahru (Kelantan, Peninsular Malaysia) (Fig. 15.2) but also in Champa. It is also present in old temple reliefs such as those of Prambanan in Central Java. A third type is the hipped roof, found for example in Cirebon, Buton, and Singapore (the Khadijah and Hj. Muhammad Saleh mosques), along with other sites around the Straits of Melaka and the Malay Peninsula (Fig. 15.3). Finally, the multi-tiered gable type is seen in Patani's Surau Aur and Melaka's *suraus* or small mosques (such as at Tengkera and Banda Hilir).



Fig. 15.2 Teluk Manuk Mosque in Narathiwat province, formerly the kingdom of Teluban in southern Thailand. (Photo: Imran Bin Tajudeen)

THE TRANSCULTURATION PROCESS FROM PRE-ISLAMIC MALAY AND JAVANESE LITERATE CULTURES SEEN ON THESE AND OTHER GRAVESTONES SERVE AS INDICATORS OF PARALLEL PROCESSES OF ADAPTING OLDER BUILDING FORMS FOR NEW ISLAMIC NEEDS



Fig. 15.3 Surau Tok Kerinchi in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia. (Photo: Imran Bin Tajudeen)

Position of Southeast Asian mosques in 'Islamic architecture' and Southeast Asian art and archaeology surveys

The built heritage of mosques developed in maritime Southeast Asia is invariably excluded from most surveys of Islamic art and architecture, a fate that is shared with Southern Arabia, Southern India and Southern China. This exclusion needs to be understood in relation to the historiographical and geographical contexts behind the study of mosques and Islamic art and architecture. These studies focused on the archaeology and art historical study of brick and masonry structures left behind by a number of inter-related dynasties and polities. For the period covering the 12th–18th centuries, for instance, the centre of scholarly attention fell upon Persianate West and South Asia, Turkic and Persianate Central Asia, and the Arabic-speaking lands of West Asia and the Mediterranean. In the Indian sub-continent, the focus was on what historian Richard Eaton calls the Indo-Persian axis, which excludes the maritime Muslim regions of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The maritime regions of the Indian Ocean and beyond—where maritime Southeast Asia is to be found—thus lay beyond the scope of Islamic architecture surveys.

The 'vernacular architecture' category used to define Southeast Asian mosques may have further removed its interaction with the earlier-mentioned studies of Islamic architecture. Vernacular architecture is typically defined as structures in wood as opposed to classical or canonical stone or brick architecture. This separation is not very useful as mosques and associated structures in Southeast Asia use a variety of materials beyond wood. Conversely, it is also necessary to expand the horizon of surveys of art and archaeology in Southeast Asian architecture beyond their usual focus on Hindu and Buddhist structures. Mosques typically do not even appear in such surveys or are consigned to a very small section.

Translation and reworking

The names of some features found on these various mosque types point to derivation from various building types used as Hindu or Buddhist wooden and masonry shrines, as formerly found in Kedah, Muara Jambi, Central Java, and East Java. These features are distinct from those of temples found in India. Conversely, the indigenous names and forms of buildings used as small prayer halls for Islamic worship—now based on the Arabic term *musolla*, but originally called *surau*, *langar*, and *deyah*—point to origins in indigenous faith buildings and men's houses.

A key illustration of translation and reworking is seen in Java, where early tombstones' dates followed the Saka calendar rather than the Arabic-Islamic one. In Peninsular Malaysia, the Terengganu Stone was written in the Jawi script but termed God using the name Dewata Mulia Raya, rather than Allah. These examples complicate the idea of a simple rejection of pre-Islamic cultures or of an unconscious 'influence' of pre-Islamic cultures. Instead, we observe the conscious and literate translation of culture across conversion. The transculturation process from pre-Islamic Malay and Javanese literate cultures seen on these and other gravestones serve as indicators of parallel processes of adapting older building forms—some of which had previously served as faith buildings for indigenous, Hindu, and Buddhist creeds—for new Islamic needs.

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MALAY ILLUSTRATED MANUSCRIPTS

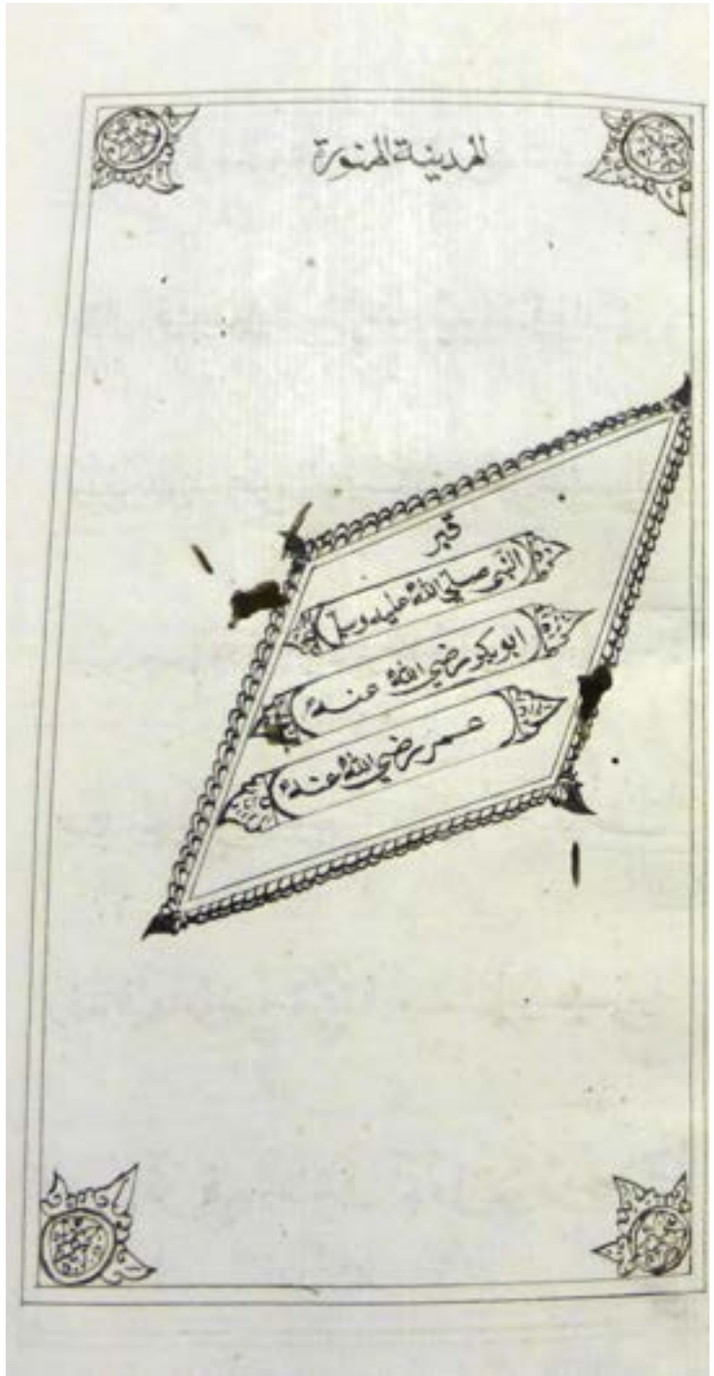
By Farouk Yahya

Manuscripts are handwritten texts. In Southeast Asia, manuscripts were made of various kinds of materials (e.g. paper and palm leaves) and can be found in a number of different formats. The texts they contain are written in a variety of languages and scripts. Most surviving examples date from the 17th to the early 20th century.

The arrival of Islam into Southeast Asia brought Islamic writing culture to the Malay manuscript tradition. Malay began to be written in a form of Arabic script known as Jawi. Books were typically made from paper and in the codex format (i.e., like a modern-day book), although there were also other formats used, such as scrolls and folding books.

Illuminated Qur'ans

For Muslims the most important text is the Qur'an, which is in Arabic. Manuscript copies of the Qur'an were often decorated or illuminated. The illumination acts to beautify the manuscript and functions as a marker for highlighting important divisions or parts of the text. The styles of Qur'an illumination vary according to geographical regions and time periods. In Southeast Asia, among the most distinct illumination styles are those from Aceh, Terengganu, Patani, and the Sulawesi diaspora.



Illustrated devotional manuscripts

Qur'ans are rarely illustrated, but other religious texts may contain images. One such example is a devotional work titled *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* ("Guidelines to the blessings"). Composed by a 15th-century Moroccan mystic named Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Jazūlī (d. ca. 1465), it is a collection of blessings upon the Prophet Muḥammad.

In manuscript painting, there is often a strong relationship between text and image. For instance, an image may serve to explain a text, as can be seen in manuscripts of the *Dalā'il*. The text mentions how the tomb of the Prophet Muḥammad was situated alongside his companions Abū Bakr and 'Umar. As such, manuscripts of the *Dalā'il* often contain illustrations of these three tombs next to each other. They may be depicted within a single-page illustration, as in a manuscript from Singapore, dated 1881 (Figure 16.1). The art in these manuscripts is often based on local styles. This can be observed in the colour palette, decorative motifs, and the architectural forms of the buildings depicted.

Illustrated literary manuscripts

Malay manuscripts of literary texts are rarely illustrated. One exception is a group of four manuscripts from Kampung Kapor in Singapore, which date to the early 1900s. The *Hikayat Hanuman* (Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, MS 30), for example, was copied and owned by a woman named Encik Siti Mariam bin Encik Sahbudin, whose signature also appears in the *Hikayat Indera Mengindera* (Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, MS 126). Women therefore also copied and owned Malay manuscripts.

The illustrations in these manuscripts have limited use of perspective and shading. They are placed either above or below the relevant paragraph describing the scene, thus serving to illustrate the text. There are also captions accompanying the paintings that help to identify them.

Fig. 16.1 The tombs of the Prophet Muḥammad, Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Al- Jazūlī, *Dalā'il al-khayrāt*, Singapore, 1881. Kuala Lumpur, National Library of Malaysia, MSS 2368, fols. 19r. (Photo: Farouk Yahya)

Illustrated magic and divination manuscripts

One group of manuscripts which often contain images are those that relate to magic and divination. Typically, the figures contained are schematic, two-dimensional and stylised. In most cases, they are depicted singly without any background or landscape elements.

Spirits

We can see the close relationship between text and image in a depiction of two spirits in a manuscript from Melaka, ca. 1845 (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, MSS 119). Here, the text above the figures provides instructions on how to use the images. It instructs placing them above children's beds to repel evil spirits. In addition, texts are also incorporated within the images of the spirits. These include Qur'anic verses, which are often employed for protection and healing.

Rotating Naga

The most popular animal found in this type of manuscript is the *naga*, a mythical serpent. A common divinatory technique is the Rotating *Naga*. Here, the *naga* rotates four times a year, every three months, along the four cardinal points. When undertaking human activities, such as travelling or building a house, the texts advise readers to consult the position of the *naga*'s body parts (particularly its head, back, belly and tail) to determine whether the timing is favourable or otherwise. In Malay examples of the Rotating *Naga*, the text is often accompanied by an illustration of a single *naga*, such as in a manuscript from the Stamford Raffles collection, probably copied in Penang, dated 1806 (Royal Asiatic Society, London, Raffles Malay 34).

Images of the Malay *naga* are different to those in India, which are depicted like cobras. Malay versions are more akin to the

Chinese dragon but without any legs. As in the Raffles manuscript, they often have a crest, an elaborate tail and an open mouth with a protruding tongue. This iconography of the *naga* can be seen in other forms of Malay art, such as shadow puppets. Similar depictions are also found in manuscript illustrations from other cultures in Southeast Asia, indicating a shared artistic heritage within the region.

Rejang calendar

The *naga* also appears in the *Rejang* calendar, where each day of the month is assigned a symbol. For instance, the ninth day of the month is the Dog, and the tenth day is the *Naga*. Each day can be good or bad for human activities. In one manuscript from the National Library of Malaysia, each day of the *Rejang* calendar is allocated a full single page, with the image at the top, and the text underneath it (Figure 16.2). The illustrations have no background or landscape elements. Animals and birds are typically depicted in profile, usually with two eyes on the same side of the face. The bodies are left uncoloured, and in some cases, decorated with geometric motifs.

Calligrams

Images of animals can also be formed as calligrams (pictorial/figurative calligraphy), where the texts are shaped into figures. In the Islamic world, lion-shaped calligrams were the most popular. These are often composed of verses praising the Prophet Muḥammad's cousin and son-in-law ʻAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (ca. 600–661). A formidable warrior, ʻAlī was known as the "Lion of God". Consequently, this calligram is referred to as the "Lion of ʻAlī".

Southeast Asian examples of the Lion of ʻAlī differ from those in other parts of the Islamic world. Firstly, the texts used to compose the calligrams do not relate to ʻAlī. Instead, other texts are used. For instance, in a 19th-century manuscript from Patani or Kelantan, the calligram is composed from a Qur'anic verse (Figure 16.3).



Fig. 16.2 (Bottom left) *Naga* (tenth day) (left) and Dog (ninth day) (right). *Rejang* calendar, Malay peninsula or Sumatra, 19th century. Kuala Lumpur, National Library of Malaysia, MSS 291, fols. 4v-5r.
(Photo: Farouk Yahya)

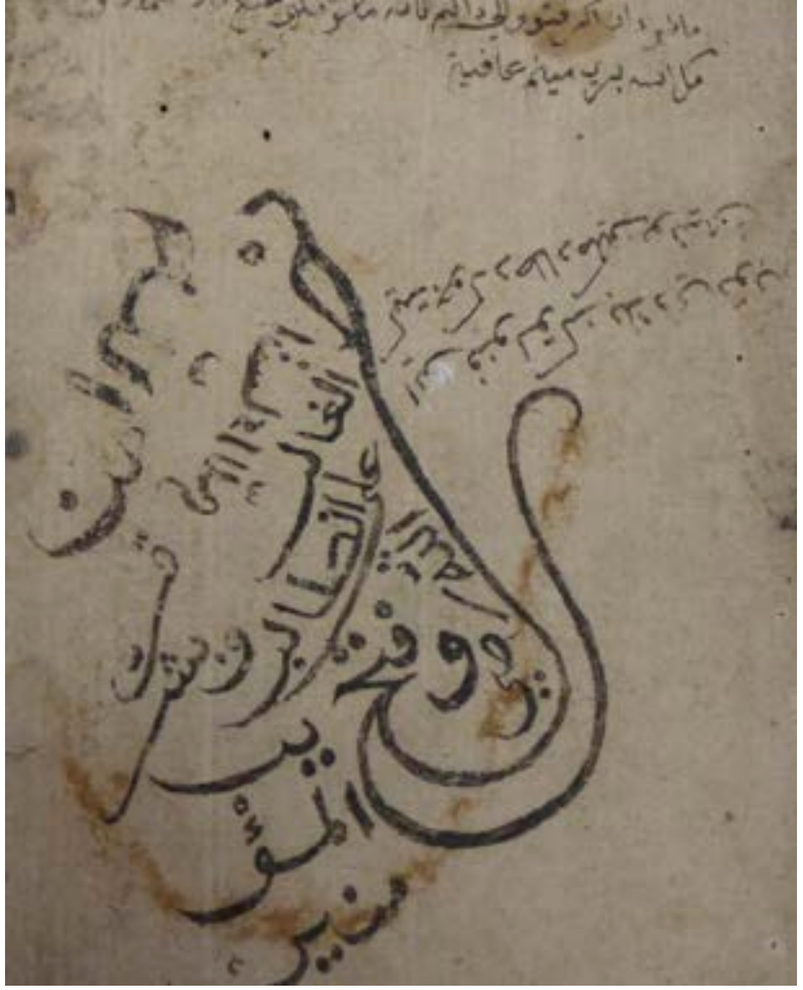


Fig. 16.3 Calligram of the Lion of ʻAlī as a talisman to protect against misfortune, Patani or Kelantan, 19th century. Kuala Lumpur, National Library of Malaysia, MSS 2778, side A, eighth opening.
(Photo: Farouk Yahya)

Secondly, the figures are often identified not with a lion, but instead may be referred to as tigers, which were the dominant predator in the region at the time. For instance, in Cirebon the calligram is known as the "Tiger of Ali" (*Macan Ali*).

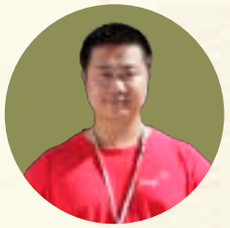
With calligrams there is a very strong connection between text and image, and indeed the lines between the two can be blurred ('is it a text or is it an image?'). Calligrams were often used as talismans, and their magical power derives not just from their textual and visual components individually, but rather the entire design as a whole.

The use of calligrams as magical devices can also be found among non-Muslim populations of Southeast Asia. Their widespread application suggests that the power of figural calligraphy is part of a long-standing tradition in the region.

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