

Reconsideration of Idianization and Chinization in the History of Mainland Southeast Asia

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1. Articulating the History of Southeast Asia in the Context of World History The study of the history of Southeast Asia is an overlooked field of research

The study of the History of Southeast Asia in Japan has been basically limited to those areas of Southeast Asia, which had dealings with Japanese trading ships authorized by the Shogunate, or areas in which Japanese towns were established in the seventeenth century. It comes as no surprise therefore that research regarding other areas of Southeast Asia, is a field of study which has not yet been fully developed. In the pre-war era, the study of Southeast Asia was referred to as Southern Sea History, History of the South, or South Pacific Sea History, and research into Southeast Asia began with the utilization of Chinese chronicles and other volumes. As parts of the surrounding region are mentioned in such Chinese chronicles, research published in Japan regarding such areas has included the identification of place names, the settling of dates, and the translation into English of commentaries regarding such areas.

In Japan, the name Southeast Asia came into general use during the 1960s, and research into the history of the Southeast Asian region became established in Japan in 1966, with the inauguration of the Japan Society for Southeast Asian History.

Europe and the US were ahead of Japan in terms of research into the countries of Southeast Asia, as they wanted to rule in that region. This field of study came to be known as colonial studies. Research regarding the management policies of profitable colonies was undertaken by these countries, and the results of such investigations quickly accumulated. Research into the history of each country was also announced, as part of the results of such an investigation.

An example of this is the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, which was established in Hanoi in 1900, and which accumulated a huge body of advanced research regarding the history, language, culture, and so on of the three former French colonies (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia), as well as Thailand, Indonesia, and others. One of the researchers at the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, Georges Cœès (ancient history and epigraphy), was the first to form a framework for the history of pre-modern Southeast Asia, based on the text of huge inscriptions, and it was he who unearthed the history of the port city state of Srivijaya, and for the first time endeavored to place the history of Southeast Asia, within the wider context of world history. At the same time, the Indianization that Cœès discovered, provided materials for the consideration of the ancient history of Southeast Asia, during the 1960s.

2. Problems with Historical Materials when Researching the History of Southeast Asia

During the early stages of research into the history of Southeast Asia, work began on the research of ancient history based on colonial documents, on ruins and inscriptions, as it was easy to acquire such historical records.

Although ancient historical records such as inscriptions, ruins, ancient temples, Chronicles of the Dynasties (*phongsawadan*), an account of travels by European wayfarers, excavated articles, art, icons, and others exist as historical materials, all of these are fragmented and emphasize special content, while there is no record of generally accepted ideas of society as a whole. Records of the area in chronological order are rare, and even though epitaphs provide many hints, details have not come to light regarding the relevant time spans involved. In addition, in records such as the Chronicles of the Dynasties, and so on, there are no details of conduct that the ruler did not approve of, and as with the historical records of other areas which purport to record historical facts, things which are often taken for granted are omitted. There are many Chronicles of the Dynasties and other such articles, which have been edited in the nineteenth century.

So what about Chinese chronicles and other volumes? In the various historical records from the Han era to the Tang era (200 BC to 1000 AD), details regarding Southeast Asia are unclear and somewhat one-sided, with a clear Chinese bias.¹ However, from around 1200 AD (the Song era), good quality historical records have survived, such as *Lingwaidaida* by Zhou Qufèi, *Zhufanzhhi* by Zhao Rukuo, *Daoyizhilue* by Wang Dayuan, *Zhenlafengtuji* by Zhou Dagan, etc., although it is necessary to read them in conjunction with historical records from the relevant areas.²

Research regarding Southeast Asia in Japan in the prewar period involved many research volumes written by European and US academics, with related publications being translated into Japanese. After the war, especially during the latter part of the 1960s, as it became easier to travel, Japanese researchers started to venture into the field, settle down and learn local languages, and started to carry out field surveys and research. At the same time, they also traveled to European and US archives and art galleries, mainly researching materials they had acquired, or microfilms.³

3. Research and Methodology of Southeast Asian Researchers

Since the 1970s, it has been possible to utilize historical resources published in the various languages of Southeast Asia. For example, the discovery of documents such as the historical land register of Vietnam, the Lontars of Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, etc., the regional manuscripts of Myanmar, historical records of the old Malayu language in Malaysia, documents from the Spanish period in the Philippines, and new historical inscriptions discovered in Cambodia, and other such local resources, have provided enough historical records to virtually rewrite the history of Southeast Asia. However, the most significant trend is the fad that Southeast Asian researchers themselves are beginning to explore the history of their own countries. The

development of research into the history of Southeast Asia, is encouraging young Southeast Asian researchers who are wanting to get a degree to go to the universities of Europe and the US, study methodology and then return home, to re-excavate and reconsider the historical records of their own countries. Japanese, US and European researchers, on the other hand, are being stimulated by these researchers who are working on the historical records in local languages, with the result that new fruit is being borne from their efforts as well. Even now, the depth of such research and intellectual understanding from local areas, is continuing.

In recent years, based on the field studies, archaeological excavations, and release of historical manuscripts in local languages etc., a new historical picture is starting to emerge.

For example, our Sophia University excavations on Banteay Kdei among the Angkor monuments in Cambodia, discovered the foundation of the construction with the regular hole for the pillar and the under drain site, 3.5 meters below the ground. The Banteay Kdei monument was considered as belonging either to the end of the 12th century or the beginning of the 13th century, but with this new excavation, could it not be dated before the Angkor dynasty? Or perhaps even earlier? However, in Southeast Asia, in comparison with historical research being carried out in other disciplines, accurate historical resources are rare, and as they tend to lack conformity and to be somewhat biased, they in fact pose somewhat of a problem. In order to compensate for such weaknesses in historical records, from early on, Southeast Asian researchers have been conscious of methodology, framework, and so on when contemplating historical records, and have endeavored to conduct positive factual research from new standpoints. In recent years, the methodology, framework, and analytical concepts of social sciences have come to be used in research into Southeast Asian history, in an attempt to overcome the difficulties associated with such historical records and their accuracy. The development of American research in particular, has had a significant impact upon these area studies.

Young researchers who have been grounded in research findings regarding the history of Southeast Asia, have applied the methodology of the social sciences and other related sciences to the study of history, and reconsidered the fidelity of widely accepted theories, reread important materials, and reconsidered the results of various surveys and research. The result is that they have presented Southeast Asia as a single region with a uniqueness and a certain "Asian-ness".

Also, there are objections to the traditional theories that the history of Southeast Asia has been formed by outside cultural influences (India, China, Islam, the West, and so on).

4. The People of Southeast Asia who Accepted Indian Culture

In 1964, in the second edition, when describing the development of the history of Southeast Asia, Cœès used the phrase "Les Etats Hindouisés" or "Indianized States", to describe the founding of Indian style kingdoms on the Indochinese peninsula and in the islands of Indonesia.⁴ In other words, he described the expansion of Indian

cultures in his theory of the formation of states in the Southeast Asian region, (with the exception of Vietnam). When considering the Indianization of Southeast Asia as a guide, one could point to characteristics of Indian culture, such as (1) the conception of royalty, (2) Hindu and Buddhist cults, (3) the mythology of the *Puranas*, (4) observance of the Dharmasastra, (5) the Sanskrit language as a sacred language, and so on. The permeation and development of Indian culture in each area of Southeast Asia is proved by inscriptions, archaeological finds, ruins, pieces of art, and other details.

If we consider the amount of time this Indianization has taken, we note that during the 1st century AD, Indian mariners came by boat to the various areas of Southeast Asia to trade, and that over the years they had contact with the people there, receiving handy tools such as parts for ox carts, and other things.

This Indianization which we sometimes speak of as Sanskritization, started to surface in about 400-500 AD. This is what Cœès refers to as the second Indianization, from the middle of the fourth to the middle of the sixth century. This historical development is reflected in Chinese historical records, which talk about the time when a Brahman came by boat to become King, and about the introduction of the Indian system. Receiving this kind of organizational input from Indian culture, the society in the area started down the road of development. The state of religion and various forms of etiquette in Southeast Asia also shared common aspects with India. In the various areas of Southeast Asia during the formation process of some of the smaller administrations in the region, there is also talk of leaders actively incorporating the Indian concept of sovereignty, and the props and choreography of sacrifice and magical ceremonies and prayers employed in the worship of Indian gods etc., in order to strengthen their position. The leaders of outlying areas in particular, used to invite a Brahman to carry out such ceremonies, in order to show themselves to be reincarnations of the gods, and to thus endow themselves with authority. Although the people of the area who were gathered there were probably unable to adequately understand what was going on, the Brahman held gaudy ceremonies and festivals, which were quite different from the local culture, and used more advanced cultural tools. These ceremonies and so on were accepted by the people of the surrounding area with awe, and resulted in the authority of the king being established.

These leaders, who were known as kings, flaunted their authority in such ceremonies, and subjugated their opponents in each locality into silence.

5. An example of Indianization: The Hindu gods become the gods of the Khmer

Funan, which was inherited by the Khmer Zhenla during the Angkor dynasty, was important in terms of trade in Southeast Asia from early on, and is an example of how Indian civilization entered into the area. The Khmer came to the alluvial fan, the land whose natural condition was easy to utilize of the Siem-Reap region, and built temples and “Baray”, taking approximately 500 years to construct the massive Angkor vat.

It is thought that Cambodia accomplished the building of their nation by accepting part or the majority of their writing system, other systems, art, religion, and so on, from India. When Indian mariners came to Cambodia, why did the local people easily accept the Hindu gods that they brought with them?

The first hypothesis is that when the Indians brought their Indian festivals and faith with them to these areas, that they also brought with them new technology, seeds, irrigation techniques, tools and other related objects, used in everyday life. The influence of Indian agriculture made possible the conveyance of Indica rice, and among the agricultural tools was a joint for an oxcart pulled by 2 oxen, and other similar objects, which are known to have originated in India. Such technology satisfied the local people, and brought a stability into their lives. And all this was due to the favor of the Hindu gods. Copying the Indian style, the local people then built huge temples on a unique Cambodian pattern, and enshrined their new gods there.

The second hypothesis is that Indian civilization was contained in everything, from the culture of minority groups to the Upanishadic Philosophical book of mysteries, and that various faiths, nature worship, and so on, accompanied the Hindu gods that the mariners brought with them. For example, the giving of holy water in both the water faith and the Naga faith have features in common with the indigenous spiritism of Cambodia, meaning that there was already common ground there. As an extension of their indigenous faith, the local people included the Hindu gods among their own gods, and worshipped them. The houses of worship built by the kings were the homes of the gods of the people. Therefore, within many of the Angkor monuments, many scenes depicting the churning of the sea of milk (pulling a net with the body of a serpent) can be seen as bas-reliefs and statues. This is proof of the existence of a type of water faith.

The third hypothesis is that the Khmer people were originally nature worshippers, and that they later formed a common cultural base when the Indian gods arrived, and that these gods found a place alongside the local gods. The fact that their concept of god was similar, and that the concept of god held by the local people was flexible enough to allow the acceptance of other gods, worked out well for both parties. Therefore, over the course of time, the gods Siva and Visnu, as well as the Buddha came to be worshipped in the land of Angkor. For example, the iconography of Visnu in Angkor Wat is almost the same as that of Suryavarman II. The style of the buildings reveals a mixture of both Hindu and Buddhist influences, with indigenous animals which do not feature in the Hindu religion also appearing.

The fourth hypothesis is that the Khmer people enshrined their own god Naga in Angkor Wat as seen from the local spiritism, and that they allowed both the indigenous spiritism and the Hindu gods to co-exist there without conflict, with the aim of promoting prosperity and profit, and in assisting the supreme bliss of the other world. The gods from India made their entrance on the stage of history during the Angkor period, and became one of the major gods in the house of worship. However, the Khmer people did not abandon their own indigenous spirits and gods, but included them as well within the houses of worship.

The fifth hypothesis is that as the indigenous spiritist Neak Tá faith was originally used in the villages of Cambodia and that it was always popular among the villagers. For example, the heroes of the land, god of bumper crops, the water faith, and the protection god, were part of their ancestor worship, and there were also evil spirits which brought sickness and death. Over time all of these gods became one god. They always had to be careful of these indigenous gods. There are records mentioning such gods, which were reflected in the various faiths of the time.

By being enshrined in the various temples of Angkor, the gods who were originally Hindu became the gods of the Khmer, and the area became a localized indigenous version of Indian culture. Buddhism arrived from China in the sixth century, in much the same way as to Japan.

6. Problems with Indianization

If we consider the Indianization hypothesis in light of the actual history of the various areas of Southeast Asia, we come across a number of problems. Let us first consider whether the Indianization of the region, through the partial or substantial acceptance of Indian culture, could have occurred through the acceptance of the Indian culture by the local society as a result of trade over the course of many years. For example, although many Indian artifacts have been excavated from Océo, the outer port of Funan, is it right to say that this proves that the local people accepted Indian culture? Malleret has already produced a study of the culture of Océo, in seven volumes. Of course, the discovery of these artifacts proves that trade was being carried out, but a few Indian artifacts does not mean that the Indian mariners had enough influence to change the local society.

However, there is an example of how local society may have been changed, albeit a part of it, in the story of the establishment of Funan itself. The Queen of the country, Liu-ye, “willow leaf”, was taught how to make Indian tunics, garments made of cloth with a neck hole at the center by the Indian mariners, (Hun-tien=Kaundinya) , after which the members of the royalty and the higher classes adopted an Indian sovereignty ideology.

Secondly, it was the local powers that actively embraced the various elements of Indian culture. An example of the first stage of Indianization was when a minor king invited a Brahman to come and perform festivals in order to endorse his authority, and demonstrate his position both within and outside his kingdom. The successor to this king took matters another step further by promoting the idea of identifying the king as a god (devaraja or ‘god king’). The nature of the god was the same as that of the indigenous god. It was this ideology that supported the “divine ruler”, and made possible the construction of the huge temples. The background to this concept and the cultural basis for it is revealed in the Brahmanic and Buddhistic concept of space, the center of space being the mountain Meru which is surrounded by eight mountains, eight seas, and four provinces. It is said that only the divine ruler is able to reproduce space in this world. The king built a pyramid-like house of worship and called it Meru, he then added axis roads, with the surrounding environment being the oceans. The

scenario that the divine ruler rules the space and the roads, is an example of Indianization.

Thirdly, although it is dear that Indian culture entered and was accepted, is this in fact a papier-mâché tiger Indianization with a lack of substantial evidence behind it? In the inscriptions of Cambodia and Thailand, although the phrase “varna” which refers to the Indian caste system appears, the caste system itself does not exist. Furthermore, although parts of the Indian Manu-smṛti (the code of Manu) appear, the text itself does not appear. Although up until this time it has been said that these Brahmans and the descendants of the Indian mariners have been involved in the concept of sovereignty and various festivals and so on, it appears that there were hardly any authentic Brahmans. In the temple ceremonies of Cambodia and Thailand, although the Brahmans give kings Sanskrit names and carry out complicated ceremonies, if anything, their rank was low, and they are only acknowledged as people performing ceremonies. Therefore, can we have Indian culture without the caste system and without the Brahmans?

Fourthly, what we think about Indianization becomes a problem. Since the 13th century, while Sanskrit-type culture was in decline, other regions and countries were influenced by Indian culture, and its framework and formalities inherited by them. An example of this are the Mon of lower Burma, of whom it is said that “Monized” Indian culture was passed on to the Pagan dynasty. In addition, it is said that during the Angkor dynasty, Cambodianized Indian culture was passed on to Thailand and Laos, but in much the same way as ripples in a pond over a course of time, and it is thought that it became even more Southeast Asianized and indigenous.

So, what is Indianization? It is the partial, selected, or total acceptance and willful addition to the cultural menu of Indian culture, and the changing and remaking of it to suit the needs of the people adopting it. In this context, it is the Southeast-Asianizing of Indian culture, and its spread throughout the region.

7. Problems regarding Chinization and Consideration of such Matters from the Standpoint of Historical Fact

There have been many disputes with regard to the Chinization of Vietnam in the past. Vietnam was under a Chinese local ruler as one of its colonies for approximately 1,000 years. During that time, much of Chinese civilization was introduced into Vietnam, before it finally was able to obtain its independence from China. This is the most popular Chinization theory.

In contrast to this, during the initial period of independence [from the time that Wu Quan (899-946) became independent in 938 until the Ly dynasty (1009-1225), Vietnamese society continued in much the same way as that of other areas of Southeast Asia. As Professor Shiraishi Masaya points out, judging from the list of descendants for each administration during the initial stages of Vietnam's independence, (1) There are multiple proper queens. If the Vietnamese people accepted the Confucianism of that period, the eldest son of the foremost queen would have succeeded to the throne, but the real successor would be the one who was

competent., (2) There are conflicts between the aristocracy for leadership., (3) There are historical records of charismatic individuals, Confucianism and the Chinese legal system were not accepted, and were said not to have functioned. Total or selective acceptance of Chinization by the Vietnamese did not begin until the peace and stability under the Ly dynasty.

However, the content and development of Chinization is always overshadowed by an awareness of the threat of the Chinese empire, meaning that Vietnam was very careful in selective or total adoption of China's writing system, religions, and various other systems, etc.

Vietnam's Chinese-derived ideology and regulations, are used to differentiate it from other neighboring countries within Southeast Asia. This kind of Vietnamese Chinization is continuing, and in a way it can be referred to as the regionalization of Chinization.

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