



DVARAVATI CIVILIZATION FOOTPRINTS, ITS MAXIMUS CREEDS AND CULTURES IN SIAM SUVARNBHUMI, ANCIENT THAILAND

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Abstract

The work on “Dvaravati Footprints, its Maximus Cultures and Creeds in Siam Suvarnabhumi (Ancient Thailand)” was to trace Dvaravati footprints, its creeds and cultures. The author found that Dvaravati Civilization of Nakhon Pathom, Ratchaburi and Kanchanaburi traded with India and Mediterranean countries since 3rd Buddhist Century (BE 236). The testimonial vacuum was likely lost for 400 years. It is certain that the Mons in Myanmar have been two routes migrated from Pyu-speaking Tibet and Yangtze Kiang Basin, China and they have nine times evacuated to avoid genocide of the Burmese to Siam (current Thailand) during [CE.1539-1814]. However, Diasporas always felt nostalgia and stresses on virtual culture and cultural capital. The former pertained the ever-changing set of beliefs, values, behaviors, and performances such as the Jews, the Koreans, the Irish, the Jamaicans, the Syrians, the Bangladeshis, the Rohingyas, and the Mons and so on. The latter was the nostalgia of endowment that each diaspora inherited as a member of a particular ethnic group or sub-group. Though they also carried their traditional creeds of animism, Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism. Their rich cultures lost during before the third Century or around 400 years or during the arrival of Their Most Venerables Sona Thera and Uttara Thera on the Buddhist Proselytization Mission in Suvarnabhumi around Nakhon Chai Si and Nakhon Pathom in BE 236 should be revived. What needs to pursue were first the nostalgia and stresses on

the virtual culture and cultural capital of the Mon Diasporas should be investigated to prevent and to alleviate their deep negative impacts, and second, the lost Dvaravati rich creeds and cultures should be unearthed to revive the root of the Siamese (current Thais) backgrounds.

Introduction

Ancient sites and their excavations, antiques, stone dharmacakkara, Buddha images, silver coins, and the Chinese archives of Dvaravati age enlivened the solar flares of Dvaravati (Krishna-built City) around 9-13th Buddhist Centuries (around 1566 years ago) and depicted its golden years in the central areas of Siam (former Thailand) like the provinces of Ratchaburi, Suphanburi, Nakhon Pathom, Singhburi, Nakhon Sawan, Saraburi, Petchabun, Kalasin, Nakhon Ratchasima, and Prachinburi. Even in Petchabun a province adjoined southern north, northern central and western NE Isarn parts of Thailand of 12-16th Buddhist Centuries, found the post Pallava, the Kamber and the Chinese inscriptions and alphabets aged 1500-1000 years. 10 stone inscriptions have been translated like the Sridhep inscriptions, the Wangphai inscriptions, the Ye dharma Inscriptions, inscribed on the basement of the sculptures, votive tablets, clay votive tablets of Ban Nong Suoang, the inscriptions of Ban Maaisor, and the inscriptions at the Duo-fraternity Prang (Prof. Dr. Sakchai Saasingh, 2019). The inscriptions denoted about the Pallava Hermits, Elites, and the Woruman Kings in the Chenla Dynasty who would have bridged with India. The Sridhep Inscriptions reflected the shining growth of the Ancient Sridhep City embracing the external inheritance of India, the cultures of Dvaravati, Chenla, and the ancient Khmer. With many ethnic tribes, the Dvaravati belief, religion and livelihood were interrelated in particular the Chao Phraya Basin Buddhism fostered their inter-cultures and inter-traditions bridged by Buddhism with the selective Indian cultures to meld their social attitude and culture (Manop and Banchuen Nakkarnrian, 2021). The Department of Fine Arts has surveyed and found archeological remnants aged over 3,000 years or in prehistoric era like stone armlets and bracelets, bronze bowl vessels, stone axes and human bones along with the evidences of pre-historic burial sites. Witnesses were remnants found in Muang Nakhon Pathom, and northward cities like Uthong, Suphanburi Ayudhya, Lopburi until Sridhep: Petchabun. Another evidence was the Dvaravati stone sema (temple campus marker) around the



North East (Isarn). They were believed to be the tradition to carve the sema with the creed as the religious sacred boundary. However, it was found that the stone semas abundantly met were not only depicted the religious sacred boundary but by the investigations it was that the stone semas might also be chiseled for merit-making since they were absolutely sacred by themselves alike the Buddha images and/or the stupas and pagodas. The northeastern semas should have been connected with the ancient Dvaravati in the Loei River basin near the ancient Sridhep city and along the water-way of the Loei River and the Pasak River.

The Dvaravati Civilization has been characterized by certain characteristics which included large population centers; monumental architecture and unique art styles; shared communication strategies; systems for administering territories; a complex division of labor; and the division of people into social and economic classes. Most scholars accepted the Revolution of Neolithic was the start of civilization. This revolution was witnessed with farming rather than hunting and natural fruit gathering as the nomadic styles but ethnic sedentary and ethnic assemblage settlements. Civilization is an advanced stage in developing social and cultural organization. Some scholars held that civilization was referred to a complex community characterized by its way of living and culture. Scholars had contradiction in viewing the civilization concept. At early stage, civilization was counted the final progression step from barbarism, savagery, and lastly civilization. The early farm cultivators could be barbaric, and not the Near East settlements but scholars argued that advancement was invalid since it catalyzed cultural superiority. Anyway, civilized peoples many scholars argued were men who owned strong moral values with more progressed technologies. These definitions supported cultural superiority but not authentic civilization which today, it has been so complex with communicative shared forms, food stability, and urbanizations with strong and good governance.

This article would like to trace Dvaravati footprints, its creeds and cultures. Chronologically, Davaravati civilization was mostly based on the Chinese archives but excavations in Chan Sen, and U-thong could have heralded that Dvaravati set foot in Uthong since 200CE or earlier (Murphy, S.A. 2016). Dvaravati spread and influenced Thai Isarn (Northeastern Part of Thailand) to the Laotian lowland witnessed in the Nakhon Ratchasima, Kalasin and Nakhon

Panom since the 6th Century (Murphy, S.A. 2013). Despite Khmer, Burmese and Thai respective domination, Dvaravati Mon civilization taught its victors about writing system, art forms, governance, religious terminology which exerted another Dvaravati critical force. Nevertheless, bridging with India contributed to developing and characterize Mon civilization. Though the Khmer, the Burmese and the Thai rule the Mons; still the Mons have taught and implanted civilizations to their rulers, which their rulers have still studied the Dvaravati footprints and applied the Mon creed and cultures until today.



*Spread of Dvaravati Culture and Mon Dvaravati sites in Thailand by
Heinrich Damm*

Pyu city-states [red circle] , c. 2nd
century BCE–c. 1050 Upper Burma
(Myanmar).

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dvaravati#/media/File:
DvaravatiMapThailand.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dvaravati#/media/File:DvaravatiMapThailand.png) | Retrieved: 24 April 2023

Dvaravati Civilization Footprints

The Dvaravati civilization has settled and later migrated from central Myanmar to early Siam (early Thailand). This Mon ethnic groups were believed to settle around the Irrawaddy River Valley in southern China approximately about 3000 BCE, and were almost the primary groups to found societies of Pyu



city-state in Burma, in the Thanon capital. The city-state group of Pyu existed around the 2nd Cent. BCE until the mid-11th Century in the Upper Burma (Myanmar). The Pyu speaking or the Tibeto-Burman migrants to southward of Myanmar were the earliest extant Burmese and their cultures lived over millennium years around Bronze Age until the 9th Century of the Burmese Pagan Kingdom. However, Dvaravati culture, art styles, and the different Mon conglomeration and archaeological researches over two decades found that the "Proto-Dvaravati" era spanned around the 4-5th Centuries, or earlier. (Murphy, S.A., 2016, pp.366-392). Nevertheless, archaeological excavations unearthed the northern Mu River Valley, the central Kyaukse plains, and the southern and the western Minbu regions. Researchers found that the city-state have been contemporaries of the Kingdom of Funan (68–550 CE) Cambodia; Champa (192–1832 CE), southern Vietnam; Dvaravati (Thailand); Tambralinga and Takuapa near the Kra Isthmus, southeast Sumatra: thalassocracy or thalattocracy (maritime empire). These thalassocratic/ maritime statelets prefigured the "classical kingdoms" and the rise of Southeast Asia during the second millennium CE. The Mon migrants as maritime traders might have brought the Dvaravati Civilization to Nakhon Chaisi and Nakhon Pathom around 3000 BCE. The Mon people, the descendants of Proto-Austroasiatic blood were assumed to migrate from Southern China along the Yangtze Kiang valley to Southeast Asia between 3,000 and 2,000 BCE, along the Mekong, Salween, Sittaung, Irrawaddy, Ping and Chao Phaya rivers (Za Wa Na, V. 2018, pp. 194-211). They have even moved to eventually settle in Malaya. The Mon carried their DNA of riverine agriculture skills, and the wet rice cultivation skills, particularly to the Red Delta in North Vietnam (Blench, R. 2018 pp.174-1933; Sidwell, P. 2022, pp.56-72).

The Mons migrated in 2 routes, i.e. the first route was from Tibet with the Pyu speakers to the central Burma. The second route migrated from the Southern China along the Yangtze Kiang valley to Southeast Asia. The civilization gaps that polities or governments in riverine urban polities along Southeast Asia, embracing Indic civilization, had emerged during the 3-6th Centuries; and Thailand was not exempted. Exploring most regions in Southeast Asia revealed that the Indian materialized influences were eventually incorporated with the Dvaravati Culture, and these were found before around 400 CE. The Dvaravati's absence or gap was then earlier than 400 CE but unfound in the Chinese archives during the Tang dynasty. Excavation of

Dvaravati sites supported by numerous sponsors to secure the foundation of the Dvaravati, however alternatively, the evident gap was between settlements during the prehistoric Iron Age and the burial ceremony and the influence of the Indian cultural emergence during the 1st millennium BC and from 1000 CE onwards and we needed the new generation archaeologists to bridge this gap.

However, the Mon have, by investigation, nine times migrated into Thailand during CE.1539-1814 to flee genocide from the Burmese (Phramaha Paritas Worakitjo (Thip-o-sod), 2022). They have settled in more than 23 locations in every part of Siam or Thailand enjoying their creeds and cultures and some Mons were awaiting to return to Myanmar in future, if possible. Diasporas always felt nostalgia on virtual culture and cultural capital. The former pertained the ever-changing set of beliefs, values, behaviors, and performances such as the Jews, the Koreans, the Irish, the Jamaicans, the Syrians, the Bangladeshis, the Rohingyas, and the Mons and so on. The latter was the nostalgia of endowment that each diaspora inherited as a member of a particular ethnic group or sub-group (cf. Bourdieu, 1986). These nostalgias erode the mind and the heart of every diaspora since homesick, loneliness and longing criminally kill. Yet, Diasporas and exiles if returned home, could differently develop their country said Deng Xiaoping (1978).

“Some have come home to ministerial posts; others hold important jobs in academia, finance and business. I (Deng Xiaoping) am not sure whether or not they will be the country's next leaders, but their influence could profoundly change China. While most returnees don't see America as an absolute model for our country, our experiences made us see that there are alternative ways for China to develop and for us to lead our personal lives. Being in the United States made us realize that things in China can be different.”

Dvaravati Creeds and Cultures

Creed, is also called confession of faith, an authoritative formulation of the beliefs of a religious community or, by transference, of individuals asserts Lindbeck, G. Arthur (2022). Edward Tylor (1871, pp.1-26) postulates that culture is a humanity umbrella encompassing the social behavior, institutes, and norms found in societies, the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs,



capabilities, and habits of each person also culture is usually attributed to specific locations and regions.

Dvaravati Animism Creeds

Dvaravati kingdom in Southeast Asian believed in animals had been culturally and traditionally inherited from India along trade-routes and proselytizing Brahmanism and Buddhism generally found in the sacred artworks like elephant, lion, cow, deer, fish, or hybrid, mythical creatures, for example Garuda, Naga, Narasingha, and Vanaspathi. They were bear relevant to religions and divinities. Dvaravati societies were agricultural and mercantile society with devout beliefs in wealth, fortunes and fertility. They mostly embraced Buddhism. Animal figures were found in major cities aimed to decorate religious edifices symbolizing auspicious elements.

Animal Symbols on Silver Coins in Dvaravati Period

Nathikan Chantayod, (2018) furthered that archaeological testimonies asserted the Dvaravati ages engaged in trades within their societies and Indian-mint coins were their currency. Many symbolized animals were designated to the king, his authority, royalty, fecundity, and wealth of the kingdom like **cows and calf** (the light and fertility world and the vehicle of Shiva), **deer** (Dharmachakra and the vehicle for Chandra), **conch shells** (water or the fertility source, the Brahmin sacred creature one of Vishnu's arms (Shankha) and Sri Lakshmi, the fertility goddess of fertility), **fishes** (fertility, water, achievement and happiness a sacred symbol in India and in the footprints of Buddha), **hares** (people and their city, in Buddhist belief, playing the principal role in Sasajataka and also represented the virtue of charity), and **singhas or lions** (bravery, strength, grace, elites, ruling class, the vehicle of the goddess Durga, the Sakya dynasty, Buddhism, and the bravery, power, and authority of the Dvaravati civilization).

The animals in the coins were influenced by the Indian civilization and other symbols from nature. They implied sacredness, prosperity and royal authority and both Brahmanism and Theravadan Buddhism recognized them but those migrants settled in North Vietnam embraced Mahayan Buddhism. Still, no testimonies proved that these coins were circulated in India but in Dvaravati

civilization. People recognized these coins in their own communities and played the central role in their communal political, religious and economic lives.

The majority of Mons practiced a mixed animism and Theravada Buddhism. Earlier, they had 3 traditional creeds, i.e., the Kalok (spirits) creed, Isi (holy hermits) creed, and Hinduism. The Mons by tradition believed in many Kaloks (spirits), family kalok, and guardian kaloks for shelters, towns, villages, farms, forests, and mountains. Kalok was regarded as spirit, demon, or immaterial beings that can take on a visible form asserted Ji na dha ja, et. al. 2020, pp.1-11).

Animism is, by deep examination, the faith in countless spiritual beings implicated with people affairs and fit to either help or harm human interests (Kerlin, P. G. 2020). However, the variance is that animism concentrates more on personal spirits; with its perspectives, every being has a soul and is linked within the spirit world. Unlike pantheism, animism is not one spirit as God. Shared with Buddhism and Hinduism by common linguistic and cultural background; the traditions of Jainism is counted an independent phenomenon unlike Hinduism and Buddhist heresy, which some Western scholars earlier believed. As Wallace precisely hints, the Bible echoes animism in the Canaanite ancestors that the Hebrew God walks in Eden with Adam and Eve, manifesting in cloud, light, and fire, then burns like a bush. God is botanical and elemental (Brown, J. 2020). There is much of Judaism as Rabbi Geiger showed that much are Judaism even of Christian thoughts pervasive in Arabia in times of Prophets; however, greater space of Islam is extensively full of animism and practices describable as pagans in in tendency and in origin. What we do not see it does not mean they do not exist. Logics may be possible to prove such unseen things as it has been implemented in Justice Administration system.

Dvaravati Civilization Cultures

Dvaravati, by history, was the important transmitter of many main Indian cultural features through commercial and cultural socialization with India, particularly the Indian literatures and art such as sculptural, writing, legal, and governmental forms. In “The Art and Culture of Burma”, the first Indianized peoples in Burma were the Mons. Shared with the Pyus, the Mons, the Malayo-Indonesian breeds connected with the early Thai and Khmer extants who



communicated Mon-Khmer languages. The Mons were the indigenous dwellers in the lower Burma in the capital of Thanon, located for commerce and trade around the Martaban Gulf and the Sea of Andaman. Dr. Cooler furthered the early history of the Mon was little known about its flourishing and its domain. For example, it was curious whether the Pyu or the Mon ruled the lower delta areas, the monsoonal plains of Pegu and Moulmein, where they were first known as Suvannabhumi (land of gold) and later called Ramannadesa (Land of Ramanna) by the Mons though adopted many main Indian cultures but were proselytized, converted and first founded strong Theravadan Buddhism in Burma. This was witnessed its connection with King Asoka in early 400 BCE and the establishment of the Shwedagon Pagoda the most revered stupa in Burma but the archeological evidences yet to be further explored. Nevertheless, the Mons inherit the arts of painting and terracotta, architectures and sculptures of Maurya and Gupta Styles and the Vyasa's Mahabharata and the Valmiki's Ramayana in the Indian literatures. Being the diffusers of the Indian arts, cultures, and literatures, the Mons around 700 CE adopted The Theravadan Buddhism proselytized by the Buddhist missionaries for Ceylon and pervasively spread it to the Khmer Land and the Tambralinga Malay Peninsula. Hinduism and Buddhism never raise any conflicts, though Buddhism was their official religion but the Mons also adopted several local cults.

In the Lonely Planet guide for Thailand: "Dvaravati is a Sanskrit name meaning Place of Gates, referring to the city of Krishna in the Indian epic poem Mahabharata. The French art historian Georges Coedès discovered the name on some coins that were excavated in the Nakhon Pathom area. He furthered that the Dvaravati culture was renowned in its art work, Gupta-influenced Buddha images, temple-wall stucco reliefs and caves, various sculptures, architecture, votive tablets, exquisite terracotta heads. The cultures of Dvaravati, Chenla, Funan, ancient Laos and ancient Khmer may have existed in the same period. The areas of Tuoluobodi, between Isanapura (Laos-Cambodia) and Sriksetra (Myanmar) was well known by Xuan Zang, the Chinese pilgrim. Bodhiramsi the Chiang Mai monk, in the Cāmadevivam̐sa the 15th century text narrated how Camadevi, the Mon Queen and former princess of Lavo Kingdom founded Haripunchai (Lamphun) city around 600 CE. Haripunchai was defeated by King Vilanga of Lawa dynasty but at the end, her 2 princes married the 2 princesses of King Vilanga and both dynasties became allies.

During the 9th Century, Nakhon Pathom was the centre of the Mon Dvaravati culture (analogous to some main Indian cultures like Maurya and Gupta arts and cultures, including the Vyasa's Mahabharata and the Valmiki's Ramayana literatures), located in central Thailand but in the 11th Century it declined under the pressure by the Khmer invasion. However, Hariphunchai (Lamphun Province) a Mon kingdom continued until the late 12th - early 13th Century, and annexed by the northern Thais. Despite cultural dominance in the northern areas, the Mon were consistently conquered by Khmer and Burmese. In the 10th Century, Dvaravati civilization and the entire Chao Phraya Basin were mastered by the Angkor.

By the Metropolitan Museum of Art: "between the 7-9th Centuries, many rivalry kingdoms rose in the central of Thailand when the very earliest Hindu and Buddhist sculptures appeared in this area. For a time, the Dvaravati rulers in Nakhon Pathom retained their power and number of scholars used their names to identify this period and the Mon speakers. Different from the kingdoms of Pre-Angkor in the Mekong delta linked to India and China through international trade network, the central of Thailand still remained likely isolated. As a result, a distinct and highly sophisticated Mon-Dvaravati style emerged. Buddhism appears to have been the major religion, but the presence of Hinduism is well attested by monumental lingas found throughout the region and images dedicated to Vishnu. By the eighth century, Mahayana and Esoteric Buddhism had begun to take hold in the area of the Korat plateau; especially notable are the many multi-armed bronze bodhisattvas found near the town of Prakhon Chai. The Dvaravati civilization existed around 7- early 13th Century.

Dvaravati is, by analyses, a civilized culture lasted approximately 400 years, from 7-13th century C.E. It has engulfed South East (SE) Suvanrnbhumi or current Thailand with rich and civilized arts, architectures and edificial monuments but absence of dated and histories. No local inscriptions, text and recorded evidences incorporated with the Dvaravati civilization. Some ephemeral references have been found in the Chinese histories (Brown, 1996, p. xxii). The paucity of direct evidences of Dvaravati Culture, contributed from sites in Thailand, should have also been implicit in recent site investigations about the early Indian-influenced polities in Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar and Indonesia, before "new" evidences of Dvaravati Culture in U-Thong,



Suphanburi province. It is likely clear that many thalassocratic or thalattocratic and riverine polities throughout Southeast Asia, which are the Indian consolidated elements had appeared between the 3rd and 6th centuries. Barram and Glover (2008) challenges that research in many Southeast regions show that the Indian-influenced Dvaravati Civilization has already in western and central Thailand ahead the 3th century. The absence of Dvaravati civilization ahead this period has been unfound the Tang dynastic histories (Jiu Tang Shu). The vacuum of this first millennium CE period should be excavated. But most essential, the vacuum during the arrival of Their Most Venerables Sona Thera and Uttara Thera arrived Thailand in BE 236 (307 BCE) or 2,330 years to proselytize Buddhism should have been investigated in order to close the vacuum of this Dvaravati civilization.

Conclusions

In fact, Dvaravati Civilization of Nakhon Pathom, Ratchaburi and Kanchanaburi traded with India and Mediterranean countries since 3rd Buddhist Century (BE 236). The testimonial vacuum was likely lost for 400 years. It is certain that the Mons in Myanmar have been two routes migrated from Pyu-speaking Tibet and Yangtze Kiang Basin, China and they have nine times evacuated to avoid genocide of the Burmese to Siam (current Thailand) during [CE.1539-1814]. However, Diasporas always felt nostalgia and stresses on virtual culture and cultural capital. The former pertained the ever-changing set of beliefs, values, behaviors, and performances such as the Jews, the Koreans, the Irish, the Jamaicans, the Syrians, the Bangladeshis, the Rohinyas, and the Mons and so on. The latter was the nostalgia of endowment that each diaspora inherited as a member of a particular ethnic group or sub-group. Though they also carried their traditional creeds of animism, Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism. Their rich cultures lost during before the third Century or around 400 years or during the arrival of Their Most Venerables Sona Thera and Uttara Thera on the Buddhist Proselytization Mission in Suvarnabhumi around Nakhon Chai Si and Nakhon Pathom in BE 236 should be revived.

Suggestions

Dvaravati could mean the door of trade or the city built by Krishna. However, in the Chinese archive, it is called “To-Lo-po-ti” recorded by His Ven. Hain Jang (around 1172-1188). And His Ven. I-Jing (1214-1218) (Sakchai Saaisingh, 2019). Chao Phraya Basin is counted the first Kingdom of Thailand (Manop and Banchuen Nakkarnrian, 2021). What needs to pursue are:

1. The nostalgia and stresses on the virtual culture and cultural capital of the Mon Diasporas should be investigated to prevent and to alleviate their deep negative impacts.

2. The lost Dvaravati rich creeds and cultures should be unearthed to revive the root of the Siamese (current Thai) backgrounds.

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