



## ANALYSIS OF BELIEFS AND RELIGIONS IN THE DVARAVATI ERA IN THE ANCIENT CITY OF SRI THEP, PETCHABOON PROVINCE, THAILAND

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### Abstract

A along the banks of important rivers. Those areas are usually in easy contact with other communities; for example, in the Lopburi-Pasak River basin, there was an ancient city called “Sri Thep” and the people of the ancient city of Sri Thep had a traditional belief cult with clear evidence that a spiritually stable culture was the human skeleton buried in earthen hills and many other objects. On the religious side, the ancient city of Sri Thep used to be the center of both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. Based on the evidence, large Buddhist scriptures (Dhammachakra) inscribed in Balinese and Sanskrit and Amitabha Buddha statues were discovered. The statue respects both Buddha statues and Dhammachakra pillars, and a replica stupa, which is the motto of Theravada Buddhism, and Bodhisattva, which are idols in Mahayana traditions in both Hinduism, where stone sculptures of Vishnu and Krishna have been found. From the information studied, it can be concluded that “the ancient city of Sri Thep” has a cult, belief, and religion that has evolved into the main respect of the community in the area up to the present.





**Keywords:** Creed; Religion; Dvaravati Era; The ancient city of Sri Thep; Archaeological Evidence

## Introduction

Historical evidence such as Chinese archives and evidence from the excavations of archaeologists in collaboration with the Fine Arts Department, which discovered evidence of ancient sites and antiques. Types of Dhammachakra stones, Buddha statues, and various silver coins which is an art only in the Dvaravati period that flourished around the 11th -13th Buddhist centuries. These various evidences show that the Dvaravati Kingdom was prosperous in the central region of Thailand. Evidence of ancient sites and artifacts from the Dvaravati period were found in many different cities, such as Ratchaburi Province, Suphanburi Province, Nakhon Pathom Province, Singburi Province, Nakhon Sawan Province, Saraburi Province, Phetchabun Province, Kalasin Province, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, and Prachinburi Province. Ancient sites and art objects were found from various sources in the central region of the country and scattered in various sources, that is, there was influence in many northeastern provinces. For example, in the area of Sri Thep city, inscriptions both in writing and letters were found, Pallava and after Pallava, the age is determined to be around the 12th -14th Buddhist century, and the Khmer letters around the 15th-16th Buddhist century and Chinese characters. Currently, all 10 Sri Thep inscriptions have been read and translated, including the Sri Thep city inscription. Inscription of Ban Wang Phai, inscription of “Ye Dhammā”, Muang Sri Thep, inscription on a sculpture base, inscription on the Buddha image, inscription on a clay Buddha amulet at Ban Nong Suang, Ban Nong Mai, So inscription of Prang Song Phi Nong 1 and 2 (Fine Arts Department, 2007) from the inscription of Muang Sri Thep. Referring to the leaders of the "hermits" and those with political authority: “Authority in the 2 Pallavas” and the inscription of Ban Wang Phai. It indicates that there was already a monarchy system in place at Sri Thep city, and may have external relations with India. The name of the king ends with “Voraman” like the kings of Jenla at that time (Thida Saraya 1989).





Evidence of inscriptions found in Sri Thep city reflects the prosperity of Sri Lanka in ancient times, which was periodically transmitted from outside civilizations. Since the ancient Indian culture, the Dvaravati Chenla culture group has evolved into the ancient Khmer culture (Suraphon Damrihkul, 1985). The Dvaravati civilization in the ancient city of Sri Thep has stories in the inscriptions and information that will help provide more clarity regarding the Dvaravati kingdom, in particular. If considering the relationship with the beliefs and religion of the ancient Sri Thep people found in historical evidence and inscriptions that appear about the Dvaravati Kingdom, it will create a deep understanding of the context of life. The principles of belief and religion in those days were even more profound. From modern research, it is known that people in the Dvaravati period were a mixture of many races living together and having a relationship with each other in terms of religion, especially Buddhism in the Chao Phraya River Basin, and the creation of cultural traditions together with Buddhism as the link to unlocking the historical clarity of cultural integration. Thus, the unique characteristics of Dvaravati art and culture related to Buddhism were born. The reason why Buddhism, which has its roots in Indian culture, has been chosen and adapted into the core of the country until it has become a center connecting cultural diversity. Society and various beliefs.

### **Basic Meaning of Dvaravati**

The word “Dvaravati” is a Sanskrit word meaning consisting of doors, which may mean the port city is a trade gateway and a commercial hub, and the word "Dvaravati" may be compared to “Dvaraka” which is the city of Lord Krishna in the Indian epic Mahabharata. The word “Dvaravati” is an assumption from the word “To-Lo-Po-Ti” which appears in the travel records of the monks who traveled from China to investigate Buddhism in India by land in 1172 and returned to China in 1172. The name of the To-Lo-Po-Ti kingdom is also mentioned. Scholars believe that the word “To-Lo-Po-Ti” corresponds to the Sanskrit word Dvaravati, a city located to the east of Sri Kaset in Burma, and west of Isanpura in Cambodia. The Dvaravati Kingdom was located in the territory of present-day Thailand (Thida Saraya, 2002). Another record is the record of the





monk Eijing. A person who traveled from China to investigate Buddhism in India by sea between 1214 and 1218. He set out from Guangdong. In the record, mentioning the port cities and kingdoms along the coast that he traveled through (Sakchai Saising, 2019), the names that appear include Linyi, Funan, Dvaravati, Langkasuka, Sriwichai, and Malayu. George Sede and His Royal Highness Prince Damrong Rajanubhab were the first group of people to determine the name of the land where these ancient cities were located. Including many works of art found, especially in the area of the Chao Phraya River basin that is Dvaravati. Using the reasoning of the location of the empire and the age according to Chinese records, the Dvaravati Kingdom thus became the first kingdom in Thai territory.

The word “Dvaravati” was the first cultural group in the early historical period in the area that is present-day Thailand. The Dvaravati culture developed in central Thailand around the 11th or 12th centuries. It is based on contact with people from outside, especially from India. As evidence indicates, around the 3rd–5th centuries AD, which corresponds to the late Iron Age, Ancient communities in central Thailand had trading contacts with people from India. Groups of countries in the Mediterranean and Persia, etc., with the regional trade center in the Kwai Noi River basin. As it appears, there are many important archaeological sites in that area, such as the Ban Kao archaeological site, Mueang District, Kanchanaburi Province, and the Ban Don-Ta Phet archaeological site, Phanom Thuan District, Kanchanaburi Province, etc. In addition, evidence was found in the Lopburi River basin at the archaeological site in Mueang District, Lopburi Province (Fine Arts Department,2011).

Later, around the 6th–9th Buddhist centuries, communities in the central region of Thailand had increased trading contacts with merchants from countries in the western half of Laem Thong. Items that were popular at that time included glass and stone beaded jewelry, glass containers, Persian wares, etc., as well as various objects related to trade, such as seals carved from stone. It shows contacts with Indian and Roman traders. Imitation of Roman goods flowed into the trading ports, and large and small trade centers in this region, which are distributed in the lower central region: Mae Klong-Tha Chin River Basin, Lopburi-Pa Sak River





Basin, and Bang Pakong River Basin. This caused communities in those areas to develop their culture later (Bandit Liuchaichan et al., 2010).

The ancient Dvaravati period communities in the Pa-Sak and Loei River basins have relationships with each other, but such relationships may be more in the form of cultural exchange than political power. There is evidence showing traces of the relationship, such as the discovery of Dvaravati-style Sema stone in the northeastern area. With the idea that the Dvaravati culture in the Northeast has one important identity, which is the tradition of building Sema stones, which have various functions, it is usually understood that they were built solely to mark sacred religious boundaries. But from the studies of many academics, such as Srisak Valliphodom and Suraphon Damrihkul, similar information has been found: Some Sema stones may have been created to make merit. Some of them may be completely sacred in their own right, like a Buddha image or stupa. The Dvaravati Sema stone pattern in the city has also been discovered. Therefore, the discovery of the Dvaravati Sema stone in the northeastern region of Sri Thep city is likely. It probably has a relationship or connection with the ancient Dvaravati period community in the Loei River Basin. It is an ancient community from the Dvaravati period in the northeast that is near the city of Sri Thep and has transportation routes between them. Sri Thep City may have adopted this style of making Sema stones from ancient communities that were contemporaries in Lum Nam Loei. In addition, traces of ancient transportation routes between Lum Nam Pa-Sak and Lum Nam have been found. Loei River Basin, which also shows the connection between areas (Teerawat Saenkham, 2012), groups of people in the Dvaravati Kingdom respected both spiritualism, which is a traditional belief. In the 8th century or earlier, people in the Dvaravati period strictly adopted both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. But from the evidence of the idols and inscriptions, it is found that most of them were built in Theravada Buddhism; those that are related to Mahayana Buddhism and Brahmanism are only a small component (Paladisai Sitthithankit et al., 2012). In particular, Brahmanism is found in various sources or mixed in some sources. In the section on animism, which is a traditional belief, people in the Dvaravati Kingdom have traditional beliefs like other indigenous people in Southeast Asia, namely belief in ghosts





and spirits. Life after death respecting trees, rocks, sticks, and mountains as having power. Based on this belief, leads to the worship of the spirits of dead ancestors. As shown in the archaeologists' excavations, it was found that a foundation stone had been prepared at the base of Julla Prathon Chedi, consisting of several bricks with strange flora patterns, decorated with a gold leaf. There were gold plates and small crystals, colored glass sheets bronze plates placed together in the center of the pagoda, along with a few bones and a large turtle shell fragment lower down. There is a belief that there is a sacred power above nature that will inspire abundance in the lives of one's crops (Sakchai Saising, 2019). Important evidence shows that people in the Dvaravati Kingdom believed in warding off misfortunes. Many clay dolls, such as Sakban dolls, were discovered. There are both male and female genders, in which the head is missing. In this group of Sakban dolls, the most common form is a terracotta sculpture of a person leading a monkey, which may be analyzed as it is a doll created with the belief that made acts as a representative to accept misfortune on behalf of the person who was injured, saying that the doll has already received the misfortune. People will be fine. Therefore, Sakban dolls are often made when people are sick or unwell, pregnant women who are about to give birth, people who are affected by black magic, and various talismans. In conclusion, people in the Dvaravati kingdom believe in ghosts and spirits (Manop, student, 2021).

In the field of art, early sculpture imitated Indian art. Later, it was transformed into the work of local craftsmen. Most of them are stone carvings and stucco designs. There are Buddha statues, the Sema Dhammachakra, the Lord Buddha's footprint, Buddha prints, and stucco designs showing the way of life. The building is made of large bricks and laterite decorated with stucco designs. The Dvaravati people are strict Buddhists. Many Buddha images have been built for worship. Characteristics of modern Buddha statues, it is the shape body, the chest is large, and the hips are small. Some robes are attached to the body. A face is flat, indicating his local identity, the big knot of royal hair, a face is wide, the chest is curved together in the shape of a crow's wings, the eyes are bulging, the nose is relatively flat, and the lips are thick. Buddha images usually have a straight standing posture, both hands are usually in the Dhamma teaching posture. The one sitting in meditation and the one sitting with his feet hanging on both sides is





similar to sitting in a chair. Most often built from stone, it has the Qin Empire (meaning a type of metal alloy). Contains lead and tin. Popularly used to make amulets). Some have only small ones. Other than that, what is usually found is a Dhammachakra with a deer crouching below in front of the Buddha. Buddha images are both carved from stone made from terracotta and cast in bronze.

In the beginning, it followed the Indian model very closely. Later, it combined local influences until it became unique to Dvaravati. The Dhammachakra and the Crouching Deer, carved from stone, represent the first sermons of Buddhist scripture. They are also found a lot, built to perpetuate the religion. Similar ones are found in every ancient city and every region of the country. Sculpture today is influenced by India during the Gupta period, which flourished in the central and western regions of India between the 10th and 11th centuries until the 12th and 13th centuries, of which the Gupta period was the most developed, called Classical India (Buddhapanya Sri Dvaravati Buddhist College, 2019).

The fall of Dvaravati: At the end of the Dvaravati period, most of the cities of the Dvaravati kingdom were abandoned due to the shallowness of important rivers that once flowed to nourish the city or change the walking route, causing a water shortage. Some cities had to move to new locations near waterways. However, there were some cities that had uninterrupted habitation until the Ayutthaya period. Towards the end of the 16th Buddhist century, cultural and political influence from the Khmers from the east spread to central Thailand. The once prosperous Dvaravati culture was dominated by the Khmer culture until it collapsed, ending the Dvaravati empire. The wadi may be due to two reasons: first, the change in geography of the river changing its path, such as in U-Thong, or second, the shallow sea becoming land that grows deeper into the sea. The city that used to be Located by the sea, like Nakhon Pathom, the original city had to move to the land. There is evidence that many ships' anchor remains and sea shells have been found in the old Nakhon Pathom area. This makes communication difficult. Second, it may be because of the Khmer influence that spread into the





16th century, both administratively and culturally, to the point of being difficult to prevent. (Buddhapanya Sri Dvaravati Buddhist College, 2019).

### **Sri Thep: Ancient City**

Sri Thep is an ancient city of great importance in the Pa-Sak Basin. The development of this ancient city dates from a community in late prehistory about 2,000 years ago, when this community received cultural influences from outside, especially from India. As a result, it has continued to develop until it has developed into a complex urban society. There were advances in technology, art, and science, thriving under the ancient Dvaravati and Khmer cultures, respectively (Fine Arts Department, 2011). The city of Sri Thep has a total area of several thousand rai. It is divided into two levels of cities: the inner city and the outer city. The inside city area is round, surrounded by a moat and earthen embankment, with an area of approximately 2,080,000 square meters. The area has been expanded to the east into a place called Mueang Nok, consisting of an area of 2,542,400 square meters, surrounded by a moat and earthen embankment as well, except on the side connected to the inner city, there was already a moat and embankment of the inner city as before, making the city of Sri Thep have a rectangular shape with the upper corners (Fine Arts Department, 2011).







**Figure 1:** Sri Thep city plan. Source: Teerawat Saenkham. (2012). Relationships between ancient communities in the Dvaravati period: Pa-Sak Basin and Loei Basin, “Petchbura Journal of Arts and Culture”, page 7.

On the issue of the development of Sri Thep city, from archaeological studies it is known that Within the area of Sri Thep city, there were already settlements in the late prehistoric period. Since about 2,000 years ago. The archaeological evidence found is human skeletons buried in the same area as a burial site. Jewelry and tools were found buried together with those skeletons, such as pottery, bronze and iron tools, etc. Urban society in general received culture from outside, namely the Dvaravati culture. (12th-16th Buddhist Century) and ancient Khmer culture (16th-18th Buddhist Century) during the period when the city of Sri Thep was within the Dvaravati culture. Religious places and things that were beneficial to life were built (Department of Fine Arts, 2011). The city of Sri Thep prospered for about 700 years and then fell into disrepair around the end of the 18th century. At present, scholars are still unable to find the answer. A true comfortable crash is possible. Most assumptions focus on the outbreak. This is because this ancient city, it is a commercial center. Therefore, there were many people passing by who might have spread the plague to the city. This caused people to migrate and move to settle in a new area, a small community which is



not too far from Sri Thep city. Therefore, it was found that there were many small communities that arose in the late 18th or early 19th centuries scattered in that area (Fine Arts Department, 2011).

Archaeological evidence appearing in the ancient city of Sri Thep, because Sri Thep is a large ancient city. As a result, the remains of more than 100 ancient sites were found scattered within the city, such as Khao Klang Nai, a large historical site in the middle of the city. It is a religious place in Buddhism, assumed to have existed around the 12th Buddhist century (Jirathi Charoenrat, 2022). Prang Sri Thep Archaeological Site and the Prang Song Phi Nong archaeological site, etc., and outside Sri Thep city to the north, such as the Khao Khlang Nok archaeological site. and the Ruesi Prang archaeological site There are also ancient sites that are related to the city of Sri Thep. But it is located far away from Sri Thep city within a radius of 20 kilometers, including the Khao Thamorat Cave archaeological site and the Khao Khlang Koh Kaew archaeological site, etc. (Fine Arts Department, 2011).



**Figures 2 and 3:** Khao Klang Nok and Khao Klang Nai  
**Source:** Sri Thep Historical Park <https://zhort.link/ySj>

Antiques found from the excavation of the ancient site, such as bronze Buddha and Bodhisattva images and other archaeological evidence, make it believed that Khao Khlang Nai was built around the 11th–12th Buddhist centuries, which is probably the same period as the founding of the city of Sri Thep. As for the chedi outside the city, known as Khao Klang Nok, a stone Buddha image of the Dvaravati style was discovered. Standing and giving a



sermon (Vittarakamudra) with both hands. The Buddha statue is approximately 60 centimeters high in academic art history. It is believed that the Khao Khlang Nok archaeological site should be around the 12th–13th Buddhist centuries (Fine Arts Department, 2011).



**Figures 4 and 5:** Bronze Buddha and Bodhisattva statues discovered at Khao Khlang Nai archaeological site. **Source:** Fine Arts Department, Si Thep Historical Park Fine Arts Office 4, Lopburi. (2007). **Sri Thep Historical Park, Nakhon Pathom:** Rungsilp Printing (1997) Co., Ltd., page 60.

Another important part of the Sri Thep archaeological site has evidence of religious beliefs, namely Khao Thamorat. On the top of Khao Thamorat, there is a limestone cave in which the walls have carved images into 3 groups, totaling 11 images. It is Dvaravati art around the 13th Buddhist century, which is contemporary with the ancient city of Sri Thep. Group 1 is when you walk in from the entrance of the cave, you will see natural stone blocks that are tall from floor to ceiling and you can walk around. There is a carved image of the main Buddha. Dvaravati art in the posture of Visakka standing straight-faced on a large lotus-shaped base, approximately 2.5 meters high. Group 2, to the right of the main Buddha image, is a group of images of standing Buddha images (Wisani Kositanon, 2017).

Group 3 is at the end and is a group of engravings consisting of four-armed bodhisattva. It is understood that it is probably the Bodhisattva Sri Ariya Maitreya. There is a Buddha image sitting in a meditation position at the center of the group.



On the left side of the Buddha image is the Dhammachakra supported by a square pillar. On the right side, there is a replica stupa. It is worth noting that the cave on the top of Thamorat mountain is a place where images of Bodhisattvas and Buddha statues, Dhammachakra pillars, and replica stupas, which are the Theravada beliefs. The combination of these two forms of belief is considered one of the distinctive features of Sri Thep's beliefs, which is a society where both concepts are mixed together, but it is very unfortunate that in 1960, there were people who illegally extracted the heads of every Buddha and Bodhisattva statue. But later in 1962 it was only partially recovered and is currently preserved at the Bangkok National Museum (Fine Arts Department, 2011).

Since Sri Thep is a city where Buddhism and Hinduism were prosperous or may have prospered together, various sculptures related to these two religions, for example, Lord Vishnu, standing and tilting his body in a Triphang style, has 4 arms. Wearing a cylindrical hat, the shape of a short loincloth, roughly carved, without streaks. The statue of Lord Krishna is a standing statue with the body tilted in a triphanga style. The sun statue is a sculpture of a bearded man wearing earrings. Standing upright, wearing a long robe above his knees, his body was clearly visible. And there was also the discovery of a bronze idol. From the excavation of the Klang Mountain archaeological site in 1991, there were two small idols, Narayana and Lakshmi. An important part of archeology is the golden amulet that has been moved and preserved at the Norton Simon Museum in the United States. (Sri Thep Historical Park, 2007).



**Figures 6, 7, and 8:** Golden Dun-Thong Deva Body of Lord Narayana /Sun Deva Body. **Source:** Matichon Online “Dvaravati Sri Thep City, Pa Sak River Basin, Phetchabun Province” <https://shorturl.asia/fgwz>.

## Analyze Beliefs and Religions

As for beliefs and religions, the communities living in the area of Sri Thep have developed since the late prehistoric period. Around the 5th Buddhist century onwards, the basis of belief in the early stages probably arose from the same basic natural factors as other prehistoric communities, that is, there was respect and fear of nature. Explain various phenomena that occur naturally as being caused by the inspirational power of spirits, and have belief in life after death. Therefore, it was found that this ancient, prehistoric community at Sri Thep also had customs regarding death like other communities in the same era and found both in the city and outside the city of Sri Thep, it was found that there was a tradition of human burial together with the equipment, burying items that are similar to items used in daily life, it is probably intended that the deceased will use them in the next world.

In the later period, there was another level of cultural development and change in the tradition of burying the entire skeleton to one where the bones were placed in a clay pot along with the utensils and then buried, such changes in tradition did not occur only at Sri Thep. But similar burial patterns have also been found in other regions, indicating the travel and contact of people in this area as well as disseminating and transmitting beliefs to each other. The religious culture



at Sri Thep did not appear clearly at that time until around the 11th-12th Buddhist century onwards, which is probably the period in which Sri Thep developed into an urban society and the same period that the Jenla kingdom was born. This coincided with the same time that the Dvaravati culture began to develop in the central region of Thailand. The city of Sri Thep was located in a location that was like a gateway for trade between the land on the northeastern plateau and the central plains. Therefore, they received religious and cultural influences from both sources and applied them in their own country. From the study of historical information about the ancient city of Sri Thep and archaeological evidence through the remaining arts, it is sufficient to analyze the beliefs and religions of the ancient city of Sri Thep from before the 11th-18th Buddhist century as follows.

<b>Century</b>	<b>Belief/Religion</b>	<b>Archaeological Evidence</b>
Before the 11 <sup>th</sup> Buddhist Century	Nature, Animism, Spirit Worship	Ancient burial pits
11-13	Buddhism	Found influential Buddha statues of Indian Gupta-style art at Khao Klang Nai archaeological site, as well as inscriptions in Pali in Theravada Buddhism.
	Hinduism	Found sculptural representations of Vishnu and Shiva.
14-15	Buddhism	Found baked clay Buddha prints with postscript in Pali and Chinese scripts, Sanskrit, and Chinese languages. Large-scale archaeological sites such as Khao Klang Nai with architectural characteristics resembling a stupa.
	Hinduism	Found sculptural representations of the sun god or solar deity.
16-17	Buddhism	Found some molded clay Buddha statues at Khao Klang Nai archaeological site, with



Century	Belief/Religion	Archaeological Evidence
		influences from Khmer art or contemporaneous with Lopburi art.
	Hinduism	Found inscriptions in Khmer language and script, as well as three main Mon inscriptions. Also found archaeological sites of twin and Sri Thep stupas.
18	Buddhism	Found animal figures in front of the Sri Thep stupa.

**Table 1:** Table showing beliefs and religions in the ancient city of Sri Thep from archaeological evidence from before the 11th-18th Buddhist century.

From the table above, it is shown that in the ancient city of Sri Thep, the first level is mostly about beliefs related to supernatural powers on the ground or on the earth, such as worshiping spirits, trees, mountains, etc. It is a belief in supernatural powers. However, after being influenced by religion or beliefs from India, communities or leaders in ancient cities changed their religion or beliefs. It can be summarized as follows:

**Traditional Beliefs:** In the section on animism, which is a traditional belief, people in the Dvaravati Kingdom have traditional beliefs like other indigenous people in Southeast Asia, namely belief in ghosts and spirits. Life after death respecting trees, rocks, sticks, and mountains as having power based on this belief leads to respecting the spirits of dead ancestors. The skeleton and tools for life were found buried along with the skeleton.

**Buddhism:** Buddhism is the teachings of the Buddha. Buddhism is a religion that was born in India, 45 years before the Buddhist Era (Buddhism began in the year the Lord Buddha passed away). The distinctive feature of Buddhism is that it is a religion of knowledge and reality. Because it is a religion of enlightenment from the Buddha's great wisdom. Buddhism is considered one of



the most important religions in the world, with the Buddhism that came to spread in the land of Dvaravati, the ancient city of Sri Thep, there appeared two sects:

1. Theravada: emerged in India and flourished during the reign of King Asoka of the Maurya Dynasty. He believed in Buddhism and created many religious works of art. Including sending ambassadors to spread Buddhism to various places until various kingdoms in the Suvarnabhumi area or in Southeast Asia were influenced by Buddhism. This can be considered the Gupta style of art and the discovery of the Pali language style from various inscriptions.

2. Mahayana: spread into the Dvaravati region as well. It has the main concept of the condition of every Buddhist being possessing Buddhahood, that is, the condition of being able to reach nirvana. This form of Mahayana Buddhism appeared in the ancient city of Sri Thep during a period that was clearly seen as the era of King Jayavarman VII (1724–1760 B.E.), the last great Khmer king.

**Hinduism:** It is an ancient religion that originated from the Vedas, which the Aryans brought into India, mixed with the indigenous religions that already existed. Hinduism has always evolved. The Hindu religion worships many gods. But it gives importance to three gods: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, which together are called: “**Trimurti**” in the ancient city of Sridevi is revered by both Hindu sects, namely Vaishnavism and Shaivism.

1. Vaishnavism Inscriptions regarding the cult of Vishnu in Cambodia appeared for the first time in the reign of Prince Khun Woraman of the Funan Kingdom. (1000–1050 AD) confirms that during the Gupta period, Vaishnavism spread into Cambodia. In the ancient city of Sri Thep, idols of Vishnu and Lord Krishna Kovaradhana were discovered, which were deduced from the determination of the age of the said idols.

2. The Shaivism found in the ancient city of Sri Thep appeared around the 16th and 17th Buddhist centuries which focuses on the practice of yoga. Worship Lord Shiva, or Lord Shiva, as the supreme god, with the Shivalinga as his symbol. The remaining temples of this cult are the ancient Song Phi Nong Prang and Sri Thep Prang.

3. Sun worship cult Sun worship in Sri Lanka has no clear evidence of where or when it was influenced. Of the 4 Suriya gods or sun gods obtained from

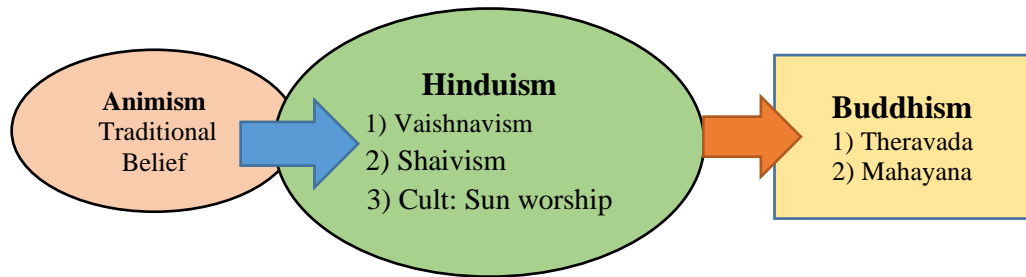






Sri Thep city, 3 of them are of unknown location. But there is one that was found in 1992. Its exact location is known: it was found in front of the entrance to the Prang Song Phi Nong temple, which is a Hindu temple.

### Knowledges Remark on Belief Development



**Figure 9:** Knowledges Diagram of Remark on Belief Development

### Conclusions

People in the ancient city of Sri Thep had beliefs influenced by India, before the Dvaravati Kingdom came to play a role in their livelihood and culture, belief in spirits like other indigenous people in Southeast Asia is also apparent. The ancient city of Sri Thep was once considered the center of both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. From the evidence, a large Dharma Chakra and inscriptions in Pali and Sanskrit were discovered. In addition, a statue of Amitabha Buddha was discovered, which is the maxim of Theravada Buddhism and Bodhisattvas in the Mahayana tradition. There was also the discovery of idols which were forms of other religions that were different from Buddhism. The idols were discovered in order of age by examining the substances that appear on archaeological evidence. However, from the study it was discovered that it was clearly seen that the forms of beliefs and religions that appeared in the ancient city of Sri Thep showed the interplay of cults and religions and may be related to politics and government because if looking back in the period before the 11th century until the 18th, archaeological evidence related to religion has been



discovered. Therefore, it can be known that the ancient city of Sri Thep in the Dvaravati period may have been involved in politics, with the leader possibly being the one who led the local community to turn to worship certain beliefs and religions. For example, in the 18th century, King Chaiyavarman VII turned to Mahayana Buddhism and evidence appears at the ancient city of Sri Thep as well.



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