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pp. 35-64

Southeast Asia
A Concise History

with 131 illustrations and 11 maps

Thames & Hudson
Chapter Two

Temples and Rice

Land-Based Kingdoms

In the lowland regions of mainland Southeast Asia and on the fertile, volcanic island of Java, kingdoms arose at least as early as the fifth century AD that were based on the growing of rice, especially wet rice, a technique that enables a relatively large population to survive on relatively little land. Elaborating their agricultural techniques through control of water, artificial irrigation, and other means of intensification, these kingdoms laid the foundation for major land-based states in which trade and international contact were usually of only secondary interest.

Wet-rice agriculture requires large inputs of labour compared to rotating dry field or swidden (slash-and-burn) practices, the second major form of rice agriculture in Southeast Asia. Swidden agriculture is practised in less densely settled areas where labour is at a premium and where ample land, often of low fertility, is available for exploitation. Although some scholars suggest that wet-rice cultivation is very ancient in Southeast Asia, even that it originated there, most believe that the technique arrived with early migrants from China and that swidden practices are the older ones; they are now more typical of semi-migrant upland minority peoples. Wet-rice agriculture, on the other hand, binds a population to fields and to irrigation systems. Control of people becomes as important as control of land. Furthermore, whether using natural rainfall or artificial irrigation, it produces surpluses that allow many people to engage in non-agricultural pursuits: government, religion, handicrafts or art, all useful to early land-based kingdoms. Although rice agriculture remained the most important activity, many crafts and trades flourished in these societies. Weaving and pottery were usually
the domain of women, metal-working that of men. In Java, village markets met every five days, while a refined system brought local products to larger markets and to coastal harbours.

SOUTHEAST ASIAN KINGSHIP
Like maritime states such as Srivijaya, land-based kingdoms drew subordinate states into their spheres, creating what have been variously described as 'galactic polities', 'concentric realms' or 'mandalas' (see pp. 21–22). Subordinate polities had their own centres, and they might break off and join other centres or form their own, making these states similarly unstable. Unlike modern nation-states, Southeast Asian kingdoms thought boundaries unimportant. Control of the centre was their paramount concern; the capital stood for the entire realm.

Much of the instability of early Southeast Asian realms resulted from internal factors. Important was the lack of fixed rules for royal succession. The title of crown prince was little known, and where it did exist the position immediately made its holder a rival not only to the king himself but to any number of other potential successors. These were numerous because any male closely related to the king—son, brother, uncle, cousin—might have a claim to succeed him. Since most rulers had a number of wives and concubines, their relatives were legion. A woman might also succeed, either in her own name or that of her son or husband, or she might bring in her own family as competitors to the royal line. The female line could be as prestigious as the male. Huge palace complexes might harbour hosts of scheming relatives; poisoning, murder and treachery were by no means unknown at the centre of power.

Another contributor to instability were the great migrations from the mainland of Burmans, Tai or other peoples entering Southeast Asia from southern China. After the Mongol (Yuan Dynasty) invasions of the thirteenth century and the defeat of Pagan in northern Burma, a Tai people, the Shan, established a successor kingdom there. The southern expansion of the Vietnamese from the eleventh to eighteenth centuries entirely displaced the realm of Champa and weakened Cambodia.

KINGSHIP AND DISPLAY
The great importance of the centre is reflected in ancient capitals by their orientation to the cardinal points, a pattern repeated in palaces, temples and monuments. Control of the realm radiated
from the centre, the capital, and within the capital, from the palace. A capital or a temple complex might be so built that it represented the kingdom itself. Within the palace, the throne and the kingly regalia – including dagger, sword or kris, umbrella, spear and even elephants – were the real locus of power. A rival might dethrone a monarch simply by seizing his regalia.

Underpinning political control was a plenitude of ritual and display, so much so that Clifford Geertz described Southeast Asian statecraft – in this case as practised in petty kingdoms on Bali – as ‘theatre state’. Appearance reflected, but also created, reality. This description by an early Chinese visitor records the Cambodian ruler’s love of display:

Every three days the King goes solemnly to the audience-hall and sits on a bed made of five pieces of sandalwood and ornamented with seven kinds of precious stones. Above this bed is a pavilion of magnificent cloth, whose columns are of inlaid wood. The walls are ivory, mixed with flowers of gold. The ensemble of this bed and the pavilion form a sort of little palace, at the background of which is suspended... a disc with rays of gold in the form of flames. A golden incense burner, which two men handle, is placed in front.... More than a thousand guards dressed with cuirasses and armed with lances are ranged at the foot of the steps of the throne, in the halls of the palace, at the doors and peristyle.

In the fourteenth century King Hayam Wuruk of Majapahit on Java went to visit his people:

When the King set out... the royal servants attended him in great numbers, and the whole breadth of the royal highway was filled with a limitless number of laden carriages standing like a solid wall.

Man on man, footman on footman they came with ox-carts before and behind,

While other followers went on foot, crowded, confused and jostling, with elephants, horses and so on in vast numbers.

... the carriage of the King, adorned with gold and flowing jewels;

Its appearance was different: it was a palanquin with screens, with gleaming lac, broad, and its brightness shining roundabout, dazzling.

Since a kingdom was defined by its centre, relations with more distant, peripheral groups were fluid. Ideally they were satellites, providing political tribute and participating in an exchange of valued upland and forest products for rice, salt and, where trade permitted, imports from abroad. In some cases, such as Angkor and Majapahit, the centre was strong enough to actually govern subordinate regions through a centrally directed bureaucracy.
Kings often titled themselves *chakravartin*: universal monarch or, literally, 'he who turns the wheel of the universe'. Statecraft meant convincing subordinate rulers to accept a king as their overlord. Since this involved primarily ceremonial recognition, such alliances remained fragile and in practice new chakravartins might emerge.

Between the eighth and the fourteenth centuries, land-based realms created the great monuments for which Southeast Asia is justly famous, including those of Angkor, Borobudur, Prambanan and Pagan. These religious and, to a lesser extent, political edifices are preserved in stone or brick; their wooden predecessors are lost. There are also innumerable inscriptions on stone, gold or copper, as well as statuary and literary texts to confirm the glory of these kingdoms, and historians can tell much about the practices at court. Unfortunately, the records and implements of daily life in these realms remained as perishable as those of maritime peoples, although some visual depictions are found in temple reliefs.

**ANGKOR AND CAMBODIA**

Funan had continued to send trade and tribute missions to China until the sixth century. Some time later, Chinese archivalists noted that Funan had been replaced by Zhenla (the Chinese writing system,
relying on fixed syllables, gives only a hint of what the name may have been). This new polity (or polities), composed of ethnic Khmers (Cambodians), had its centre in dry, relatively infertile plains on the lower Mekong River, near that natural reservoir of the Mekong, the Tonle Sap or Great Lake. During the monsoon, rainwater, augmented by melting snow from Tibet where the river rises, rushes into the lower reaches of the Mekong with such force that its tributary stream, the river of the Tonle Sap, actually reverses direction and empties its contents into the Great Lake. The lake increases in size from 2,700 square kilometres (1,040 square miles) to a maximum of 10,000 (3,900). When the waters begin to recede in October, the deposit of silt fertilizes the fields, and the lake and its ponds deliver a rich harvest of fish. Like maritime Southeast Asia, but in a very different way, this rice-based economy profited from its relation to water.

Scholars are uncertain to what extent Zhenla was a single kingdom or a collection of statelets. Its king Jayavarman II, who reigned from the late eighth century to about 834, is said in later inscriptions to have freed the land from the rule of 'Java' (perhaps not meaning the island of that name), subdued smaller principalities, and unified the realm. By about this time, artificial irrigation of rice had become widespread. Jayavarman II finally established his capital north of the Great Lake, settling at Hariharalaya (modern Rolous), close to Angkor. The city's name derived from Harihara, a god or image that combines the attributes of the Hindu gods Siva and Vishnu. In 802 Jayavarman II was enthroned as a devaraja, a god-king, probably meaning that he identified his person with the Hindu god Siva. After his reign there is a silence of half a century, perhaps indicating a return of internal division, but the foundations now existed for one of Southeast Asia's most durable kingdoms.

Between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, successive Khmer rulers (though not necessarily direct successors), their priests, monks, craftsmen, artists and labourers constructed Angkor. Little remains of the city, and even the residences of kings and monks are largely lost, but the temples were of stone and brick, their ornamentation of stone and bronze, and they have endured. Angkor was erected at a beautiful location by generations of builders, who embellished the site with temples, monasteries, residences, walkways and reservoirs. Immense pools of water express the importance of waterworks to the society. Holding water for irrigation, but also reflecting the sky and the man-made surroundings, they enhance the aesthetic impression.
Angkor Wat, built in the twelfth century, is the largest temple in Angkor; here its beauty is enhanced by reflection in one of the site's reservoirs. It was built by King Suryavarman II, who dedicated it to Vishnu. Angkor Wat is also a calendar: the sunrises precisely over its main tower on the first day of the Indian solar year.

Because it was constructed over several centuries, Angkor incorporates different artistic styles. Angkor's founder, King Yasovarman (r. 889–c. 910), moved his capital from Hariharalaya to a site north of the Great Lake. His first temple, Phnom Bakheng, was constructed on a hill and was itself a representation of a mountain, Mount Meru, the centre of the Hindu and Buddhist universe and the magical centre of his kingdom. Within the Phnom Bakheng was a linga, a phallic symbol and sign of Siva, but also a symbol of the king himself. He built monasteries and waterworks, and certainly erected other edifices that have since disappeared. The name Angkor (from the Sanskrit negara, meaning both capital city and state) signifies both the realm and the temple and urban complex.

Subsequent kings added to the complex, which is often erroneously named Angkor Wat. In fact Angkor Wat is its largest monument (wat means temple), 60 metres (200 feet) high and built by Suryavarman II (r. 1113–c. 1145) in the twelfth century to honour and associate with Vishnu and to celebrate the reunification of the kingdom after a time of strife. While the temple itself represents both the kingdom and the universe, its bas-reliefs show episodes from...
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the life of Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu, as related in the Indian 
epic Ramayana; scenes from another Indian epic, Mahabharata; and 
some 'historical' court scenes. Angkor Wat may be Suryavarman II's 
tomb, but it is also an observatory: the sun rises directly over the 
temple on the day of the summer solstice, the beginning of the solar 
year in the Indian calendar. Its dimensions reflect Indian notions 
about time. Beautiful as it is, in its day Angkor Wat was even more 
impressive, its towers gilded and its exterior painted white.

In the nineteenth century, a visitor wrote of Angkor Wat:

At the sight of this temple, one feels one's spirit crushed, one's imagination 
surpassed. One looks, one admires, and, seized with respect, one is silent. 
For where are the words to praise a work of art that may not have its equal 
anywhere on the globe?

After the death of Suryavarman II in about 1145, Angkor, and 
in particular its waterworks, is believed to have fallen into decay, 
with stagnant, untended canals becoming a breeding-ground 
for malaria. In 1177 and 1178 the Chams invaded and pillaged 
Angkor. In 1181, however, Jayavarman VII assumed kingship 
after a bloody war against the Chams. Possibly a usurper, he was 
a devout follower of Mahayana Buddhism, integrating 
its teachings with his idea of kingship, and identifying 
himself as a bodhisattva, an individual who has attained 
enlightenment but refuses to pass into Nirvana, choosing 
instead to contribute to the enlightenment of other 
mortals. Jayavarman VII's contribution to Angkor was 
the Bayon, a temple consisting of a series of towers crowned 
with immense human faces directed to all four cardinal 
points. Although much of the religious imagery is Hindu 
in inspiration, the bas-reliefs of the 
Bayon clearly celebrate the war 
against the Chams and illustrate 
scenes from daily life. The Bayon 
admits of more than one 
interpretation. On one level, the faces 
represent the Hindu god Brahma, 
who sees in all four directions. On 
another, it is Buddha Lokeshvara, who 
sends his merciful gaze to all points of 
the compass. Finally, it is Jayavarman VII 
himself as bodhisattva, bestowing his 
benevolence on all his realm.
Jayavarman VII complemented this work with construction of hospitals and inns; an inscription describes his piety:

Filled with a deep sympathy for the good of the world, the king swore this oath: ‘All the beings who are plunged in the ocean of existence, may I draw them out by virtue of this good work. And may the kings of Cambodia who come after me...attain with their wives, dignitaries and friends, the place of deliverance where there is no more illness.’

Jayavarman VII was the last king to build at Angkor; power relations shifted and following generations abandoned the site. In the late fourteenth century, Siamese invaders sacked the city; Cambodian kings returned for a brief period in the sixteenth century. French visitors in the nineteenth century ‘rediscovered’ it (although the Khmers had never forgotten Angkor),

A bas-relief (left) from the thirteenth-century Bayon at Angkor (opposite) represents fighting between the Khmers and the Chams. Prominent are the royal war elephants, a typical feature of Southeast Asian conflict. (Below) The wise Ganesha, a son of the Hindu god Siva, with the head of an elephant and the body of a human, appears here in the style of the Bayon.
Angkor returns to the jungle as a giant tree grows through the doorway to one of Jayavarman VII's temples. Once the Cambodian kings had abandoned Angkor, even the most magnificent temples fell prey to invading vegetation, water and other damage. Restoration and preservation are ongoing tasks.

and archaeologists undertook restoration of the huge complex. Unfortunately, the Indochina wars in the twentieth century again took a toll of the monuments and subsequent neglect brought more damage to these priceless remains.

Why was Angkor finally abandoned? The kings of Angkor had been able to build such great monuments because they controlled not only Khmer labour from the agricultural region around the Great Lake, but ample slaves who had been captured in wars with their neighbours. Possibly they also requisitioned non-Khmer forest peoples from within the realm. Construction thus depended on warfare, but wars were not always victorious. The Khmers now suffered attacks from the Siamese to the west, from the Chams and, later, the Vietnamese to the east. Furthermore, trade in Southeast Asia increased after the fourteenth century, but Angkor was in no position to participate in overseas commerce. The capital moved near to modern Phnom Penh, a better site for trade. Finally, and perhaps most decisively, Theravada Buddhism came to be the dominant religion of the Khmers. Its otherworldly orientation needed no elaborate kingly monuments. Nevertheless, Angkorean
kingship was a model for later mainland kingdoms and Khmer pilgrims continued to worship at the site.

EARS JAVANESE KINGDOMS

The oldest known inscriptions from a Javanese kingdom are those of the fifth-century ruler of Taruma, Purnavarman, who resided not far from modern Jakarta. He left an inscription associating himself with Vishnu, carved in stone and adorned with his footprints and those of his elephant. Purnavarman’s most important work, however, was to build a canal changing the course of the Cakung River, draining a coastal area for agriculture and settlement. Taruma soon disappeared from the scene, but Purnavarman’s hydraulic achievement remains.

Chronologically the next centre of monument-building was the volcanic Dieng Plateau in central Java, where buildings date from the eighth century. Neighboring south central Java, below the still-active volcano Mount Merapi, soon became the site of dozens of candi or shrines built to glorify deceased rulers. Hindu and Buddhist themes co-exist, temporally and spatially, yet there is no mixing of religious styles (as happened later). By the early tenth century, temple-building stopped in this area, and the centre of activity moved to eastern Java.

Like Angkor’s rulers, those of Java identified in life with Hindu deities like Siva or Vishnu, and in death they were thought to be reunited with the deity in a statue of the god placed in the candi, which was both tomb and memorial. A candi, like Angkor’s temples, represents Mount Meru, the centre of the cosmos. Externally, also like Angkor’s edifices, the candis were lavishly decorated with bas-reliefs and carvings showing religious and mythical figures.

The temples of Dieng are attributed to a larger agriculture-based kingdom that appeared in Java some decades after Srivijaya established itself in Sumatra. An inscription of 732 praises a ruler named Sanjaya, who seems to have been responsible for early monument-building. A ruling family called Sailendra (‘lord of the mountain’) subsequently won hegemony in much of central Java and left Dieng behind. Patrons of Buddhism, the Sailendra appear to have subjected the Sanjayas, although this is not certain. They rebuilt existing Buddhist monuments and modified Hindu shrines to represent Buddhist concepts. Above all, they constructed Indonesia’s most famous monument, Borobudur.
Major Hindu and Buddhist temples in central Java. Dozens of monuments were built in this area between the eighth and tenth centuries.

BOROBUDUR
Not far from the present-day city of Yogyakarta in the plains of south central Java, this edifice was begun around AD 760, probably as a non-Buddhist shrine. Built around a hill, it was initially left unfinished. The Sailendras adapted this existing structure by widening its foundation and increasing the number of terraces. Stupas containing images of the Buddha, arranged in concentric circles, formed the uppermost terrace, while smaller Buddha images lined the galleries of the lower ones. Atop the structure was a large, empty stupa. Construction, once resumed, took about fifty years, until 830.

Tantrism, a variant of Buddhism that uses esoteric practices and meditative devices like mandalas to shorten the path to enlightenment, had spread to Indonesia soon after it appeared in the seventh
century. Early Javanese Buddhism emphasized mandalas; the ground plan of Borobudur forms one, a geometric figure with Buddhas in concentric circles, concentrating power and eliminating evil influences.

Visiting Borobudur, the devout would not climb directly to the level of the stupas but rather traversed galleries on the rectangular terraces that are lined with bas-reliefs depicting Buddhist themes. The ascending sequence of reliefs takes the believer from earthly life to enlightenment, beyond which, in the stupas, is the Buddha himself. These didactic aspects, in addition to self-representation, were unquestionably important for the Sailendra rulers.

The lowest level of bas-reliefs portrays earthly misdeeds and the punishments that await them, a prelude to the appearance of the Buddha. This level was later covered, apparently for structural reasons, not out of prudishness. The visible terraces continue with scenes from the Jataka tales, which relate the lives of the Buddha before he was born as a prince. Then follow lives of other Buddhist models.

Such reliefs were common in India, but the idea of telling a story by placing the depictions in a line was a Javanese innovation. The visitor who follows the story also circumambulates the monument in a clockwise direction, in itself a pious exercise. These reliefs reflect much of daily life: handicrafts and trades, agriculture, clothing, the arts, plants and animals. Agricultural scenes show rice cultivation and transplantation of seedlings, practised in wet-rice areas today as it was in the ninth century in south central Java.
One of the uppermost levels of the Borobudur, with its many stupas containing half-concealed images of the Buddha. One of these is partially destroyed, allowing a clear view of the statue. Once brightly painted, the edifice still dominates the Javanese landscape.

In this bas-relief from a lower level of the Borobudur, two elephants come into view while in the treetops, monkeys are at play. The picture reflects the charming naturalism of the monument's extensive reliefs, especially those at the lower levels, which relate the stories of the Buddha's previous incarnations.
The finished structure, built around a natural hill, dominated the countryside. Once colourfully painted, Borobudur would have been strikingly visible from a considerable distance. The immense task of its construction must have tried the population of the area. Yet one expert has estimated that the task was perhaps not as mammoth as it first appears. Some two hundred labourers, working for half the year, could have built it within fifty years, although the number of artists and sculptors required remains unknown. Evidence of a good-sized village has been uncovered nearby, but there were no cities in the area.

Borobudur later lost its significance, becoming finally redundant with the Islamization of Java after the fourteenth century. Colonial officials discovered it in the nineteenth century, by which time it was in danger of collapse because rain water, seeping into the hill below, had washed away its support. Dutch archaeologists undertook a major restoration at the beginning of the twentieth century, but decay resumed until, during the 1970s, the Indonesian Archaeological Service, with the help of UNESCO, restored the edifice and secured Borobudur for subsequent generations.

PRAMBANAN
Thirty temple sites have been discovered within a five kilometre (three mile) radius of Borobudur, most of them Hindu. In 825, a reaction against Buddhism seems to have set in, coinciding with the return of the Sanjayas. They did not destroy or change Buddhist structures (in fact they continued to build them into the late ninth century), but they added important Hindu temples. The largest of these is the Lara Jonggrang complex at the village of Prambanan.

At about this time, rule passed to Rakai Pikatan, a Hindu whose wife was Buddhist; he may have been a Sanjaya who married a Sailendra princess. Pikatan sponsored monuments to both faiths, including the Hindu Prambanan complex, finished in 856, not long after Borobudur was completed. Information from an Indian text suggests that the heirs of the Sailendras subsequently moved to Sumatra, becoming rulers of Srivijaya and leaving Java to Pikatan.

Lara Jonggrang, the ‘slender maiden’, who in Javanese tradition is a princess turned to stone by a rejected suitor, is in reality a beautiful statue of Durga, consort of the god Siva. To him the largest temple of the complex is dedicated. The central shrine of the complex, however, is a small stone shrine, perhaps for a local earth deity. Other large candi are for Vishnu and Brahma. Smaller candi were dedicated
to the mounts of the three deities: Garuda (an eagle) for Vishnu, Nandin (a bull) for Siva, and Angsa (a goose) for Brahma. This upper level of the complex probably represents Mount Meru as the abode of the gods, as do Angkor Wat and other temples. At a lower level, additional edifices were erected by nobles of the kingdom. The non-symmetric arrangement of these smaller chapels reflects the geographic location of these nobles within the realm. Thus Prambanan is also a representation of the kingdom itself and, with that, a mandala, reflecting symmetry between the cosmos, the realm and the temple complex.

Siva, the central deity and one most often identified with rulers, is accompanied in his temple not only by his consort, Durga, but by his teacher Agastya and by the wise, elephant-faced Ganesha. This quartet of deities is often placed together in Javanese religion, but never so combined in other Hindu areas. Similarly, although
for Vishnu. This upper is the abode over level, gdom. The els reflects calm. Thus and, with s, the realm with rulers, Durga, but 1 Ganesha. se religion, y, although

Indonesian statuary follows the iconographic example of India, statues are more slender than the voluptuous Indian models.

In 1990 a chance find of gold and silver objects dating to about AD 900, buried by a volcanic eruption, shed new light on Javanese art. The location of the find, Wonoboyo, is only five kilometres (three miles) from the temple complex at Prambanan. Interestingly, Java has no gold deposits, so it must have tapped sources of precious metals in Sumatra or possibly Borneo. Some gold objects imitate nature: a golden water dipper is in the form of a palm-leaf dipper used by villagers. A lotus bowl of thin gold replicates Chinese porcelain. Most exciting perhaps is a vessel decorated with scenes from the Ramayana. It seems to have been intended for use in religious ceremonies, perhaps for Vishnu worship, since

The Brahma temple at Prambanan. The tallest, central temple of the complex is dedicated to Siva and represents Mount Meru, the centre of the universe in both Hindu and Buddhist cosmology; the entire site is also a representation of the central Javanese realm.

This covered bowl with a leaf design is part of the tenth-century golden treasure unearthed at Wonoboyo, near Prambanan, in 1990. The artifacts were buried by debris from a volcanic eruption.
Rama is an incarnation of Vishnu. Although much remains to be explained, visitors to the collection in the Jakarta Museum can confirm the skill and aesthetic capability of Javanese metalworkers as expressed in these objects so fortunately preserved.

In 919 building activity ceased in central Java for reasons not fully explained, although the location near the volcano Merapi suggests that an eruption could have led to flight. Other explanations (plague, war) are possible. Perhaps the population was simply exhausted by all the building activity and demanded a rest. By 928, Java’s rulers had established their base in eastern Java.

EASTERN JAVA

Whatever motivated the shift to the east, it meant the end of the great monuments, although Indian-influenced statuary and smaller temples continued to develop in the new locations. The shift to eastern Java also accompanied changes in long-distance trade. Under the Song Dynasty, China’s demand for exotic foreign goods, especially for spices, greatly increased. Rulers in eastern Java were in a far better position than Srivijaya to control the spice trade, for the Spice Islands are in eastern Indonesia; they could also access the fertile rice-producing Brantas River valley. Between 990 and 1007, this area warred with Srivijaya, probably for control of trade.

One of the important rulers of the east, Airlangga (r. 1016–49), was the son of a Balinese ruler. Among his feats were the conquest of central Java and of Bali; he also tamed the Brantas River, making it possible to irrigate rice, and established a harbour not far from modern Surabaya. Able to control piracy, he guaranteed safety for international shipping, which gladly visited his new port. Airlangga divided his realm between two sons, establishing the kingdoms of Kediri and Singhasari.

In the late thirteenth century, this division ended when Singhasari overcame Kediri. The first ruler of the united kingdom was Kertanegara (r. 1268–92), who conquered Bali and established hegemony over Srivijaya, now based at Jambi-Melayu. Most Indonesians remember Kertanegara for the rebuff he delivered to a mission from the Mongol emperor Kubilai Khan to Java in 1289. Kertanegara captured and tattooed the Khan's legates, sending them back to China humiliated. When the Mongols responded by sending an enormous fleet to Java, Kertanegara was already dead. His successor was Raden Vijaya, who had established a new capital at Majapahit (‘bitter gourd’) in 1294. Raden Vijaya was able to convince
The carved balustrade of Candi Mendut, with bas-reliefs. Candi Mendut is one of many monuments built in central Java, not far from Borobudur and Prambanan, before AD 919. The devout still place flowers before its imposing statue of the Buddha, flanked by two bodhisattvas.

the Mongols that their enemy was his as well. Then he attacked them, catching them off guard and driving them away.

In eastern Java, religious styles mixed. The father of Kertanegara patronized Sivaism, Buddhism, Tantrism and other beliefs. After his death, his ashes were deposited in both a Siva and a Buddha temple, suggesting he identified with both. Sculpture began to deviate from classic models and temple building was decentralized, one reason why there are no great monuments in the area. Statuary became more 'Javanese', and many images of gods, especially Vishnu or Harihara (Siva-Vishnu), are thought to be portraits of individual deceased kings.
MAJAPAHIT

The literary heritage of Majapahit includes the long poem \textit{Negarakertagama} (properly called \textit{Desawarnana}), written in 1365 by a Buddhist official, Mpu Prapanca. In addition to recording the king's splendour, as in the example of Hayam Wuruk's procession quoted above (p. 37), the poem lists the areas subject to Majapahit. Although it directly administered only eastern Java and Bali, Majapahit's territorial mandala extended from New Guinea and the Spice Islands to Sumatra and the Malayan Peninsula. In addition, Majapahit maintained relations with Vietnam, China and Thailand.

Hayam Wuruk came to power in 1350 at the age of sixteen, succeeding his mother, who ruled as queen for several years before abdicating on her son's behalf. The best-known ruler of Majapahit, he patronized Hinduism and Buddhism, as the \textit{Negarakertagama} indicates. On his travels, he was accompanied by the author of the poem, Mpu Prapanca, and by Gajah Mada, his capable chief minister, an official who was largely responsible for the expansion of the dominions.

Majapahit was not only important because of the extent of its power. This was a time of beginning urbanization and flourishing trade. Taxes and fines were paid in cash. In about 1300, Chinese copper cash replaced the mostly gold and silver indigenous coins, probably because coins of small denominations were needed for monetized transactions. At Majapahit sites, a wealth of clay and terracotta objects - from images of people, animals and houses to toys for children - have been uncovered. Pottery remains, mostly found around the site of the court in modern Trowulan, offer a glimpse of everyday life; they even include banks for saving coins in the form of swaybacked Indonesian pigs.

The flourishing of the spice trade and renewed Chinese interest in the region, as well as the expansion of Islam, brought new rivals to the fore. By the fourteenth century, new trends
were changing Java. Archaeological excavations at Trowulan have unearthed evidence of Muslim settlers, perhaps even members of court. Port cities along the north coast of Java, coming more strongly under Islamic influence, were divorcing themselves from Majapahit, while the Sultanate of Malacca competed for trade. In 1527, Majapahit fell to a coalition of new, Islamic harbour states from the north coast. Some of the royal family fled to Bali.

Trowulan was a centre of religious and civil administration, but also increasingly absorbed foreign settlers – Indians, Khmers, Siamese and Chinese. Majapahit’s economy was both agriculture-based, taking advantage of east Java’s fertile fields, and trade-based, the city acting as an entrepôt for the international spice trade and a major exporter of rice to nearby territories. Royal legitimacy, however, derived more from control of agriculture and from ensuring good harvests than from control of trade.

Geographically Southeast Asia’s most extensive historical realm, Majapahit plays a role in national sentiment today. Indonesia’s national motto, Bhinekka Tunggal Ika (‘unity in diversity’), comes from a Majapahit text. In the twentieth century Indonesian nationalists saw Majapahit as a symbolic predecessor to the modern nation, pointing to its extent to legitimize their inclusion of the Spice Islands and West New Guinea in the Indonesian nation and arguing that

(Left) In this thirteenth-century sculpture from Singhasari in eastern Java, King Anusapati is represented as Siva-Maitreya (great god). The deity, in a meditative pose, carries the symbols of his might in two of his four arms: a fly-whisk and a circle of prayer beads.
upper Burma, and the fall of the Pyu to invasions from southern India eventually led to the decline of Pyu culture. The Pyu seem to have passed Mahayana Buddhism, while the Mons are considered to be Theravada Buddhists. The Mons also have the most developed language and culture among the peoples of the region. The Mons are located in the central part of the Irrawaddy River valley and have maintained their independence from the Burmese Kingdoms.

The eastern known frontier of the Pyu's empire was the modern country of Myanmar.

The eastern known frontier of the Pyu's empire was the modern country of Myanmar.

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In the eleventh century, Pagan was the capital of Burma and a centre of pious construction. Thousands of temples and other edifices were built. Towering over them all is the white Ananda temple, a masterpiece of Burmese architecture.

China gave the Burmans the chance to establish power at their own capital, Pagan, from which they soon expanded toward the coast. The Pagan kingdom absorbed strong influences from both the Pyus and the Mons, whose religion and writing system the Burmans adopted.

Pagan's first king, Anoratha (r. 1044–77), is said to have converted to Theravada Buddhism, but other beliefs persisted. His son Kyansittha (r. 1084–1113) completed the building of the Shwezigon pagoda, a shrine for relics of the Buddha, including a tooth brought from Sri Lanka (Ceylon). This edifice also houses images of thirty-two nats, animist spirits that populate the Burmese countryside. Kyansittha's various inscriptions refer to him as an incarnation of Vishnu, a chakravartin (universal monarch), a bodhisattva, and dhammanaga, king of the (Buddhist) moral law. Ensuring legitimacy apparently required resort to as many spiritual sources as possible. His second great edifice, the Ananda temple, which the French historian George Coedès calls the 'chef d’oeuvre of Burmese architecture', is possibly a funerary temple like those of Angkor or Java, representing the king’s passage to immortality.

During much of the twelfth century, anarchy reigned in Pagan. Then in 1190 Anoratha's lineage regained control with the help of
Sri Lanka and brought about a reform of Buddhism on Sri Lankan models. Like Angkor, another inland agrarian polity that subdued coastal areas, Pagan left a splendid heritage of monumental architecture: there are thousands of smaller pagodas in addition to the grand royal ones. Narapatisithu (r. c. 1173–1211), the last important king, presided over a final transition to Burman cultural dominance. He also sought to deal with problems resulting from a Buddhist piety that transferred land to monasteries and so exempted it from royal control and taxation by reforming the sangha or monkhood and confiscating monastic estates.

Narapatisithu brought Pagan to new power, but the problem of land falling to the monasteries reappeared and his successors failed to assert their authority. This contradiction between Buddhist piety and royal power may have contributed to Pagan’s eventual downfall in the thirteenth century, but internal divisions and events on the periphery like Tai and Mongol incursions were also to blame. A Tai people, the Shans, were beginning to enter Burma’s lowlands from mountains to the east and north around this time. Mongol expeditions moved toward Pagan, ending with its capture and fall in 1287. The Shans eventually forced out the Mongols in the early fourteenth century, but Pagan was reduced to merely local significance, while...

Buddhist statuary at the Shwezigon pagoda in Rangoon, photographed in c. 1885. According to legend the shrine was first constructed 2,500 years ago, when the Mons ruled southern Burma. It is believed to house eight hairs of the Buddha and relics of his predecessor-Buddhas, who lived thousands of years earlier. Shwezigon was an important religious site long before Rangoon was founded in the eighteenth century.
the Shans situated their capital at Ava. The next centuries saw division, conflict and disorder. A Burman polity finally reappeared at Toungoo on the Sittang River in the sixteenth century, where the Toungoo dynasty took power and assumed the task of reasserting Burman rule.

A TAI CENTURY
The collapse of Pagan, and that of Angkor, brought Tai kingdoms to the fore. The Shan capital at Ava replaced the authority of Pagan in upper Burma. Even Srivijaya suffered from Tai expansion on the Malayan Peninsula, while these newly self-conscious peoples attacked Angkor and pushed back its boundaries. David Wyatt has called the period 1200–1351 a ‘Tai century’. Hand-in-hand with Tai expansion and their formation of new states went the consolidation of Theravada Buddhism and the spread of monastic institutions among these former mountain peoples.

The most important expansion of a Tai people was that of the Siamese into the fertile rice-growing lowlands of present-day Thailand, areas then inhabited by Mons (about whose early kingdoms little is known) or ruled by Angkor, which controlled territories reaching to northern Thailand and much of Laos, where the population was not Khmer. The bas-reliefs of Angkor Wat portray Siamese troops, perhaps captives, who fought in the armies of Suryavarman II.

Although a northern Tai kingdom, Lan Na, existed in Chiang Mai from 1292, the kingdom of Sukhothai is considered the earliest predecessor of Siam-Thailand. A core of Tai elite grew up in the mid-thirteenth century southeast of Lan Na, in the Chaophraya valley, not far from Angkor and under the cultural influence of the Khmers and Mons. In the inscriptions of neighbouring states, as in Angkor, these people are known as Syam, or Siamese.
Sukhothai's third and most famous ruler, Ramkhamhaeng, 'Rama the Bold' (r. c. 1279–98) was able to take advantage of Angkor's weakness to make his kingdom a major power on the mainland. Ramkhamhaeng identified his new state closely with Theravada Buddhism; monarchy and sangha supported one another. He subdued, or made vassals of, rulers in Laos, much of modern Thailand, Pegu in modern Burma, and parts of the Malayan Peninsula. This expansion was not so much territorial conquest as the wholesale incorporation of other realms, which in turn brought the loyalty of their subordinates, and so on. The result was a mandala or galactic polity of centre and peripheries, cemented by pyramids of patrons and clients similar to those in many modern Southeast Asian societies.

Ramkhamhaeng's power was not only military; it was based on moral prestige as well, something his support of Buddhism confirmed in the eyes of his subordinates. His patronage and that of his successors gave rise to the Buddhist-influenced Sukhothai artistic tradition. His sculptors also still cast images of Vishnu and Siva, showing the continued influence of Hinduism at the court.

After Ramkhamhaeng's death, Sukhothai lost control of its territories as its vassals became independent. The mandala receded. Although now divided into many principalities, the Tai nonetheless remained important actors on the mainland scene.

**AYUDHYA**

In 1351, U Thong, possibly the son of a Chinese merchant family that had married into the local elite, established Ayudhya as his capital and took the name of Ramathibodi. Its location on the Chao Phraya River enabled Ayudhya to take advantage of the contemporary increase in international trade. Ramathibodi's links to the Chinese community would have reinforced this advantage. By the fifteenth century, Ayudhya was in close commercial contact, and sometimes competition, with Malacca, the Malay entrepôt on the Straits of Malacca.

In administration, Ayudhya adopted Khmer institutions, giving the realm a more structured authority than its predecessors. Successor kings were responsible for an increasing hierarchization of society, probably also evidence of Khmer influence, for traditional Tai societies had been more egalitarian. The backbone of Ayudhya's power was Tai military strength. By the early sixteenth century, Ayudhya, now virtually an empire, was the strongest power on the
mainland. Its culture, incorporating Khmer, Mon and Tai elements, was now confidently Siamese.

Meanwhile, the new Burman state at Toungoo and Ava had gradually gained power, expanding at the expense of its Shan and Mon rivals. It would be the major challenger of Ayudhya for more than two centuries, repeatedly invading and being invaded.

THE INDIAN LEGACY
Borrowings from Indian religion and culture are a key theme in much of the above discussion. Yet nowhere in Southeast Asia were Indian models adopted wholesale, not even in supposedly Hindu Bali. Indian influences, apparently so strong in writing, language, architecture and religious and political discourse, were in the end absorbed into primarily Southeast Asian cultures, contributing to but not replacing them.

Some authors believe that the early Indian religions were essentially a means to legitimize kings and kingship, and that their
influence was limited to the upper classes. Yet even if Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism were for the most part religions of the elite, and temple-building was mostly an exercise of royalty and royal power, important legacies remain.

While all members of the Hindu trinity — Brahma, Vishnu and Siva — are reflected in Southeast Asian remains, Siva was the most widely venerated. Siva worship was closely linked to royal authority. Monarchs in Champa adopted the Siva cult in the second half of the fourth century, according to inscriptions. An emissary from Funan to a Chinese court reported that Siva worship dominated there. And Khmer rulers venerated and identified with Siva, first as a linga (phallus), then as a statue.

Fasting, meditation and the concentration of spiritual power were pursued by Khmer chiefs with the aim of drawing on cosmic power to enhance personal and kingly qualities. The prestige of identification with Siva probably passed to the king's kin and enabled him to construct ever more monuments, statues or lingas. Asceticism entered the religious practice of lesser men, too, and influenced other religions, including Islam.

Basic to Hinduism, but of little influence in Southeast Asia, was the idea of caste. In Indian society, the Brahmans or priests, the Vaisya or warriors, and the Sudra or farmers constitute the three major castes, and there are hundreds of sub-castes related to descent and profession, as well as groups whose supposedly impure occupations (such as the handling of leather or the slaughtering of animals) put them beyond caste. The result of deeds in previous existences, caste was not to be overcome.

In Southeast Asia's more affluent societies, caste meant little. Nonetheless, Brahmans — or self-styled Brahmans, since there is a tradition that the Brahman should not travel abroad — rapidly took over spiritual functions in Southeast Asia. Taruma, the late fifth-century kingdom in western Java, used Brahmans to ritually secure its hydraulic project, the diversion of a river. They assisted in legal questions, importing Indian law codes to Cambodia by the eighth century, and as scribes. Some may have engaged in commerce. Brahmans married into royal families, crossing a caste barrier and becoming highly influential. Even the Theravada Buddhist courts made use of Brahman astrologers. They were valued for their esoteric knowledge as recently as 1948, when Brahmans determined the auspicious time and date for Burma's ceremony of independence.
Only in a few areas has Hinduism persisted as a popular belief. Pockets remain in Java, but the best-known example of Hinduism is on the island of Bali. Local tradition relates that, when Majapahit fell to advancing Islamic sultanates in the early sixteenth century, some of the Majapahit nobility fled to Bali in order to retain their beliefs. Although Hinduism on Bali precedes the spread of Islam on Java, it remains linked with this flight. Castes do exist on Bali, but their hold is far weaker than in India.

An important vehicle of Hindu ideas were the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, epic folk tales which both still appear widely in popular folk drama, tales and art, just as they were illustrated in the reliefs of Angkor Wat. The *Mahabharata* was known in Cambodia in the second half of the fifth century. The *Ramayana* continues to be popular in the *Reamker*, a retelling in Khmer. In Java, *wayang* (shadow puppet) performances of themes taken from both epics (with a preference for the *Mahabharata*) are common in village and urban life. In addition, new tales have been composed, putting the characters in new situations or elaborating on the originals. Thailand’s *Ramakien* situates the *Ramayana* in Southeast Asia, not India. Stories are retold in modern literature and even in comic strips.

Although the great rice-based kingdoms and the god-kings have passed, Southeast Asians have not ceased to build monuments, if for new purposes. One notable recent effort was the ‘monumentalization’ of Jakarta by Indonesian President Sukarno during the 1960s. Some statues and edifices are political, some have religious purposes. In all countries in the region, nationalists have been eager to replace colonial structures with monuments representing their new self-definition.