

Lost Kingdoms: Hindu-Buddhist Sculpture of Early Southeast Asia by John Guy (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Bangkok: River Books, 2014). ISBN: 978-1-58839-524-5 (Metropolitan Museum of Art), ISBN: 978-616-7339-48-1 (River Books), ISBN 978-0-300-20437-7 (Yale University Press). 2,500 Baht/US\$65.

The exhibition *Lost Kingdoms: Hindu-Buddhist Sculpture of Early Southeast Asia* brought together 170 sculptures from across Southeast Asia dating from the seminal period from the 5th through 8th centuries when local communities began to coalesce into civilizations. When I first looked through this landmark exhibition catalog, I was struck by the number of pieces that were literally of “National Treasure” stature that had been borrowed from the museums of six Southeast Asian countries: two in Europe and from collections in the United States. Not only does this 318-page lavishly illustrated catalog document this extraordinary exhibition, but it is presented in a fresh and insightful manner with contributing essays by many of the top scholars in early Southeast Asian history, art history, Buddhist and Hindu studies, and linguistics. It discusses and presents advances in scholarship that have been made towards understanding this complex and crucial period in the development of Southeast Asia in the last few years. As John Guy notes in the Preface, without these advances in scholarship, this exhibition could not have been undertaken a generation ago, and even a few years ago it would not have been possible to obtain the loan of so many important objects. John Guy is to be congratulated for the difficult and subtle negotiations that resulted in such a diverse group of strong national and regional interests cooperating together to loan so many important objects, not only to the history of their cultures, but also to the history of Southeast Asia as a whole.

As one who has regularly taught classes on Southeast Asian art history, the problem of how to coherently present the developments that follow the bronze and iron ages has always been a problem. Traditionally the art and architecture of this period have been presented according to modern political division and primarily categorized in terms of an ethnic group or nation state, or a combination of both. This does not adequately reflect the conditions during the 5th through 8th centuries. Similarly, an approach based on religious traditions also has shortcomings. In organizing this exhibition John Guy chose to approach the material using not just a single methodology, but from multiple viewpoints that both stand by themselves and overlap with each of the other groupings. The resulting sections of the exhibition clearly discuss and place in a relative context select groups of objects, permitting them to be understood as both distinct within local religious and cultural frameworks, and related to larger regional developments.

The catalog is divided into five thematic sections, and each section is introduced with essays by leading scholars in their respective disciplines. These serve to define the underlying premise of each section and contextualize the catalog objects. John Guy’s well researched and carefully considered catalog entries then analyze each

object and also provide a continuous and interrelated narrative. In teaching my first class in Southeast Asian art history after reading this catalog, I rearranged the material for this period according to some of the groupings used. The lectures flowed more evenly and the students were better able to critically analyze and relate the material than in previous years.

Section 1, titled “Lost Kingdoms”, begins with an introductory essay by John Guy, “Introducing Early Southeast Asia”, that discusses traditional and new views as to how Indic ideas were selectively adopted and adapted to local cultural conditions in Southeast Asia. The subsections within the chapter outline past scholarly assumptions and the reevaluation of these existing connections in light of new scholarship concerning Southeast Asia’s earliest contacts with other civilizations and religions. They are: “Defining the Kingdoms in Space and Time;” “New Religions;” “Respect the Buddha, Revere the Brahmins;” “Lands of Gold;” and “Scripts and Inscriptions.” John Guy’s second essay, “Principal Kingdoms of Early Southeast Asia”, gives a brief introduction to the early kingdoms of Southeast Asia in terms of indigenous historical records and recent archaeological evidence. The kingdoms of the Pyu, Funan, Zhenla, Champa, Dvāravatī, Kedah, and Śrīvijaya are concisely introduced.

These two introductory essays are then followed by Bérénice Bellina’s short essay, “Southeast Asia and the Early Maritime Silk Road”, which discusses the changing view of Southeast Asian trade routes made possible by recent advances in geo-archaeology and archaeo-botany, and the laboratory analysis of finds. These studies have shown that from Neolithic times, there were extensive, well-developed trade routes throughout Southeast Asia. When they came in contact with the global trading network linking the West through India to China, these interregional trade networks interacted with it both from within and from without the local infrastructure, supplying goods for export and receiving in payment items made specifically for their local consumption. The competition between the local elites to control trade along the interregional networks contributed to the cultural complexity of the region. Geoff Wade’s essay, “Beyond the Southern Borders: Southeast Asia in Chinese Texts to the Ninth Century”, concludes the first section. As there are few early indigenous inscriptions and most are very short, much of what we know about these formative societies is known from Chinese references to them. As noted by Wade, this is not a comprehensive or coherent selection of available Chinese sources, but is “... aimed at illuminating the early societies in a synoptic manner, by extracting from a wide range of sources the data most relevant to the traditions represented in this publication.” Each region and culture is viewed in light of Chinese sources with a brief discussion as to the interpretation of the texts and their reliability. The catalog entries for Section 1 by John Guy on objects 1-18 follow under the heading “Indian Imports and Native Cults.”

Section 2 is titled “Emerging Identities” and begins with Arla Griffiths’ essay,

“Early Indic Inscriptions of Southeast Asia”, which is an analysis of the Indic scripts used in early Southeast Asian inscriptions, the general nature of the inscriptions, and the role of these inscriptions as art-historical sources. Peter Skilling’s essay, “Precious Deposits: Buddhism Seen through Inscriptions in Early Southeast Asia”, examines the nature and context of Buddhist inscriptions in early Southeast Asia, especially the role of the “stanza of causation” (*pratītyasamutpādagāthā*), the four-line formula that is a summary of the Buddha’s teaching. Both Pali and Sanskrit inscriptions are introduced in the context of the religious doctrines that they embody. He concludes that while Southeast Asian Buddhists participated in the pan-Asian Buddhist ritual culture, they “forged their own identities and developed their own practices and customs.” The essay by Thein Lwin, Win Kyaing, and Janice Stargard, “The Pyu Civilization of Myanmar and the City of Śrī Kṣetra”, concisely summarizes the history of the Pyu at Śrī Kṣetra through the presentation of inscriptional and archaeological evidence. Concentrating primarily on the findings from Śrī Kṣetra beginning in the 5th century, Buddhist inscriptions, sculptures, and religious structures are introduced. Concluding Section 2 is Pierre Baptiste’s essay, “Early Cham Art: Indigenous Styles and Regional Connections”, which weaves Cham inscriptional evidence together with Chinese records in contextualizing the Hindu and Buddhist art of the early Cham civilization; Baptiste also provides stylistic comparisons with South Indian art and other Southeast Asian civilizations. John Guy’s catalog entries from 19 to 56 for the section follow under the title “The Arrival of Buddhism.”

While Section 2 looks primarily at Buddhist influence and the local states that adopted it, Section 3 is titled “The Brahmanical World.” Pierre-Yves Manguin’s essay, “Early Coastal States of Southeast Asia: Funan and Śrīvijaya”, looks at how recent archaeological research has changed our view of the evolution of the region, especially the early kingdoms of Funan and Śrīvijaya. This essay begins with a concise presentation of the archaeological evidence for the economic and religious development of the Oc Eo floodplain and concludes with the question of why the site was abandoned and major cultural activity was shifted elsewhere. Pierre-Yves Manguin then looks at the Kingdom of Śrīvijaya through both Chinese records and indigenous inscriptions before exploring how Śrīvijaya established itself as the first large state in insular Southeast Asia based on international trade. Using archaeological evidence, he places the center of the kingdom along the Musi River at Palembang and proceeds to discuss the archaeological evidence and its implications. Then, using Chinese records and inscriptions, he concludes with the circumstances linking it to the rise of Central Java. Agustijanto Indrajaya’s “Early Traces of Hinduism and Buddhism across the Java Sea” is a short essay which expands upon Manguin’s. Le Thi Lien’s essay, “Hindu Buddhist Sculpture in Southern Vietnam: Evolution of Icons and Styles to the Eighth Century”, reviews the archaeological evidence for southern Vietnam, including the site of Cat Tien, which was excavated in the 1990s. His stylistic analysis of stone Buddha images considers both Indic

origins and local synthesis and is followed by a review of Śaivite and Vaisnava sculpture. Hiram Woodward's "Stylistic Trends in Mainland Southeast Asia 600-800" is one of the best essays in the catalog. He establishes the value of Khmer art in setting a baseline for the stylistic study of artistic developments in Southeast Asia due to the relatively large number of monuments and their accompanying dedicatory inscriptions that permit the stylistic development to be considered over time. Beginning with a clearly defined and presented discussion of the changes among three early Khmer lintels, he establishes reference points. A discussion of early Khmer sculpture follows, again establishing reference points with regards to both indigenous and Indic prototypes. He concludes his essay with a brief discussion of the complexities involved in the study of 8th century sculpture, as dates are often open to interpretation and many images display a subtle mixture of influences from different sources. Following these essays are John Guy's catalog entries 57 through 187 under the headings "Viṣṇu" and "Śiva's World."

Robert L. Brown's essay, "Dvāravatī Sculpture", begins Section 4 titled "State Art", reflecting that Dvāravatī is referred to in its own inscriptions in terms that we equate with statehood. He first looks at why the term Dvāravatī has been applied to the 7th and 8th century Mon civilization of central Thailand, the development of scholarship and stylistic analysis of Dvāravatī sculptures, and the influence of the Gupta Sarnath style on the development of the Dvāravatī Buddha image. He then discusses how the argument that a single style of art and characteristic iconography with inscriptions and records serve to establish Dvāravatī as a real place. While most scholars speak of Dvāravatī as lasting until the 11th century, Brown then points out that there is so little evidence of Dvāravatī as a political presence from the 8th through the 11th century that there has been a rush to arbitrarily classify the art and architecture to build a bridge between Dvāravatī and modern Thailand. He continues with the advent of the Thai in the region in the 12th century. The fact that Dvāravatī and most of the art associated with it can only be placed in the 7th and 8th centuries has also been argued from other disciplines such as those of Peter Skilling, Pierre Baptiste, and Claude Jacques, who argues in an essay that the political history of Dvāravatī is a construct, not a reality. Thierry Zéphir's essay, "*Cakra*: Quintessential Symbol of the Buddha's Law", is an in-depth review of scholarship concerning the Dvāravatī "Wheels of the Law" from the political and religious sources in South Asia and contributes a concise discussion of their possible religious significance in the Dvāravatī context. The last essay in Section 4 is by Stephen A. Murphy on Dvāravatī Buddhist art in Northeastern Thailand, "Buddhist Architecture and Ritual Space in Thailand, Seventh to Ninth Century." This essay discusses the development of a cult of large stone boundary markers, *sema*, used to designate the sacred space within whose boundaries all crucial Buddhist ceremonies need to be conducted. He suggests that Buddhism influenced the development of urban and political life of the early polities and states of Northeastern Thailand. John Guy's catalog entries 108

through 130 for Section 4 are presented under the title “State Art.”

The final section of the catalog is titled “Savior Cults”. Pattaratorn Chirapravati’s “The Transformation of Brahmanical and Buddhist Imagery in Central Thailand, 600–800” is the sole essay in this section and concentrates on the ancient cosmopolitan center of Sri Thep that was located in the Pa Sak River Valley along a major regional trade route. Easily accessible from Mon Dvāravatī centers in Central Thailand, the art and architectural remains show that Buddhism and Brahmanism were practiced concurrently. In addition to Buddhist sculptures, several large images of Surya and Viṣṇu have been found. The core of the author’s thesis is that the worship of Surya was associated with the rulers of Dvāravatī and Surya was also conceptually connected with the Dvāravatī appreciation of the “Wheel of the Law,” *dharmacakra*. Building upon the research of Robert Brown and Hiram Woodward, she concludes with the suggestion that in the fluid religious atmosphere of Dvāravatī: “Southeast Asian Buddhism incorporated different Indian and Sinhalese styles and iconography, seemingly creating their own versions of objects best suited to the ritual and cultural needs of Si Thep and other Dvāravatī sites.” John Guy’s catalog entries 131 through 170 are presented under the category “Savior Cults.”

The *Lost Kingdoms* catalog concludes with two technical essays by research chemists on the type of stone used in Southeast Asian stone sculptures and metal casting technology. The essay by Federico Carò and Janet G. Douglas, “Stone Types and Sculptural Practices in Pre-Angkorian Southeast Asia”, presents observations on the different types of stone used for the production of early Southeast Asian sculpture. While detailed geological, mapping, and petrographic studies are still lacking for most of Southeast Asia, some information is available for Cambodia and permits some general conclusions. For this publication twelve stone sculptures from the National Museum of Cambodia and the Museum of Vietnamese History, Ho Chi Minh City, were analyzed, with the full reports published for two objects—an early 6th century Viṣṇu and the mid-7th century Lintel with a King’s Consecration—in the exhibition. Lawrence Becker, Donna Strahan, and Ariel O’Connor’s “Technical Observations on Casting Technology in First-Millennium Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam” presents an overview of early Southeast Asian metal casting technology based on the examination of sculptures in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. General observations are that the images were cast using the direct lost-wax technology. Sculptures under 25 cm in height are generally solid, while larger ones are hollow with iron armatures supporting the sculpture on the interior. Techniques are similar to those used in Northern India, and the continued use of iron armatures in Southeast Asia—even in relatively small sculptures—points to a conservative tradition. General studies are presented for Dvāravatī, images from the Prakhon Chai Hoard, and Pre-Angkorian Khmer and Vietnamese images, noting the general quality of the casting, the percentages of the metals comprising the alloys, along with notes on the armatures and general casting technology. The catalog

concludes with a well thought out and easy to reference research bibliography and a Bibliography, as well as a comprehensive glossary of important archaeological and cultural sites in Southeast Asia. Organized by country, it is clear and easy to use.

While the essays and research material contain some new theories and summarize the advances that have been made to date in the understanding of how the art and cultures of these early states developed and provide suggestions as to how their religious beliefs can be appreciated, it is John Guy's carefully researched and insightful catalog entries on each of the 170 objects in the exhibition that form a consistent narrative throughout the catalog. While specialists might find fault with his interpretation or approach with a few objects, the overall quality of the research and discussion of the objects is consistently high and helps to bring both them and the cultures that produced them alive to the reader. The curatorial vision and selection of objects for the exhibition is also worthy of comment. As noted earlier, the difficulty of putting together an international loan exhibition is a daunting challenge; and to obtain the loan of so many extremely important and high quality pieces from so many different museums in Southeast Asia is unprecedented. Hopefully this will pave the way for future collaborative exhibitions. For anyone interested in early Southeast Asian studies, this is a "must have" addition to their library.

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