CONTIGUITY, CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BAY OF BENGAL REGION IN INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Edited by
Suranjan Das and Anita Sengupta

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The Importance of the Bay of Bengal Region in Indian Foreign Policy

The volume examines themes like contemporary factors shaping the emergence of the Bay of Bengal region as a critical strategic theatre in Indian foreign policy; the inter-connectedness of the Indian and Pacific Oceans; the importance of oceans to security and commerce and India's role within the broader region; the twenty-first century maritime Silk Road and Indian alternatives and the possibilities of reconnecting disconnected spaces through re-imagining a Bay of Bengal Community. In this connection the volume takes particular note of the emerging regional cooperative order for the promotion of peace and development in the Bay of Bengal region (BIMSTEC). The volume brings together historians, political analysts and political economists to emphasize the interconnectedness of the oceanic space through a detailed analysis of the Bay of Bengal as a space of strategic and economic significance, particularly for India, but also as a space for re-imagining a new regional community.

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Preface

This volume is the result of a collaborative exercise between Netaji Institute for Asian Studies, Kolkata, Asia in Global Affairs, Kolkata, the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, and the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi.

Traditionally connectivity has been seen as part of geo-political and geo-strategic exercises. However this is an opportune time to view connectivity within a broader canvas, from a historical perspective and from a perspective beyond that of state actors. This volume has made a breakthrough by including a historical section on the Bay of Bengal to show how through the historical perspective, it would be possible to enter into other realms of significance vis-à-vis connectivity. There is today also need to discuss the functionalities of connectivity; i.e. connectivity for what and whom and to emphasize that time has come when regional connectivity should not only replicate the broad trading and economic patterns of the international level but strive to develop an alternative paradigm of relations and governance—different from that which has already been established at the global level.

The notion of connectivity should not be confined to development of relation between states but should also make possible relations between non-state actors and people to people relationships so that social issues like those of refugees, human rights and climate change can also be included and understood through connectivity. It is now time to view connectivity within a new paradigm and the volume makes important contributions in that context. While there are discourses which view regional connectivity as an impediment to the globalization process, it is important to keep in mind that regional connectivity is not hindered by globalization and should not replicate global economic patterns but must come up with alternative paradigms of governance suited to regional requirements and specificities. Regional solidarity can only bolster and not impede global understanding

as regional connectivity need not be confined only to state-actors but move beyond it and address regional social, economic and cultural issues.

I wish to thank all staff and members of the Netaji Institute for Asian Studies, Asia in Global Affairs and the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University for their support in the project. I would also like to place on record my thanks to the Indian Council of World Affairs for their financial support. I would like to acknowledge the help of Rita Bannerjee in copyediting the volume.

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Introduction

In *Crossing the Bay of Bengal, The Furies of Nature and the Fortunes of Migrants, Sunil* Amrith writes:

> The Bay of Bengal is a large triangular Basin in the Indian Ocean and the largest Bay in the world. It is an enclosed sea surrounded by miles of coastline—an arc stretching from the southeastern edge of India, up and along the coasts of present day Bangladesh and Burma and down to the western coast of Thailand and Malaysia. It is a narrow continental shelf and "islands are scarce and small except for Ceylon" in the west and the smaller Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the east. At the southeastern edge the Bay of Bengal meets the waters of the Southeast Sea—the Straits of Melaka, the Java Sea and the South China Sea—which are by contrast shallower, fresher, warmer and "thickly strewn with small islands". Ceylon and the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent at Kanyakumari, mark its western boundary with the Arabian Sea.[1]

A significant platform of maritime connectivity, the Bay of Bengal is important not just for the littoral states (India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka) but also for the landlocked countries of Bhutan and Nepal. Since time immemorial the Bay had been a maritime highway witnessing the movements of traders and commodities facilitating economic exchange as also large scale labour migration which encouraged cultural cosmopolitanism and exchange of ways of life. In the post-colonial era, these linkages declined as self-sufficiency replaced trade and the mental maps of the region were redrawn to accommodate national boundaries. The post war distinction between Southeast and South Asia, later concretized in the two separate regional associations ASEAN and SAARC, further divided the littorals on either side of the Bay. As a flourishing region of trade and exchange the Bay

of Bengal disappeared from geopolitical and geo-economic imaginations.

However, with the increasing importance of the Indo-Pacific region in the contemporary connectivity matrix, the Bay of Bengal is acquiring greater strategic significance with its critical position as a bridge between South and Southeast and East Asia. This in turn has prompted China to increase its presence in the region and initiate a series of developmental and connectivity projects in its western and south-western regions because of which the Bay of Bengal has attained the image of a pivotal economic space as well as an alternative to China's dependence on the Malacca Strait. This has deepened maritime competition between India and China as India is apprehensive about greater Chinese engagements in its neighbourhood. China, on the other hand, is hampered by the absence of naval bases which circumscribes its capacity to provide security in the Indian Ocean region as well as protect its energy routes.

China is seeking to link with the Indian Ocean through Myanmar and the Bay of Bengal as well as through economic corridors like Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) corridor and through financing major projects in their littorals like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. India, in contrast, having comprehended the changed geopolitical situation in conjunction with the security architecture of the Bay has begun to engage and pay attention to the problems and anxieties of the littorals. It has adopted a strategy of developing a sense of community among the littorals along the Bay region in addition to its role as the major security provider in the region via regular patrols through the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC). It is simultaneously encouraging participation through forums such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium and Exercise MILAN (biennial naval exercise) that has ensured participation of the navies of the littorals; Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), for greater awareness to respond to any maritime challenge particularly due to the existence of important Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) in the Bay region. With the ever increasing strategic importance of the Bay of Bengal region, there is a growing sense of desire among the littorals that India should consolidate its relationships across the expanse. At the same time, India should realize that increased Chinese presence is a given and has to be acknowledged and accommodated even as she continues to mold a Bay of Bengal community.

Unlike the global division of the earth's land surface that saw complementary and conflictual spatial imaginations, till recently spatial imaginations about world oceans were not in vogue. It was partly the increasing significance of 'blue economies' but also emerging challenges to maritime security that has led to the search for the creation of global maritime governance and consequent emerging terminologies that encompass parts of the aquatic space. The delimitation of oceanic spaces as 'natural regions' is increasingly becoming as significant today to strategic discourse as the continental spaces and subject to similar terminological transformations based on global politics.[2] 'Maritime' regionalism emerged with the awareness among littorals that marine resources must be used sustainably and that economic development derived from maritime domain must be integrated with sustainability, conservation and the heath of the marine eco system. There was simultaneously an awareness of the economic potential of the maritime environment and a political and economic turn to better govern the marine potential. As Timothy Doyle argues, this was a global phenomenon that partly followed the adoption of the UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) and partly emerged with 'new' construction of sea space.[3] The Indian Ocean rim with nearly half the global population and its core position in terms of global trade, industry, labour, environment, security and potential to shape global geopolitics has the potential to develop as a new region in global politics. In Steinberg's opinion the sea is no longer separate from the land and is no longer a two dimensional space configured in terms of shipping lane security.[4] He goes on to argue that the changing uses of ocean spaces in recent times have reflected changes in the material organization of society and contributed to the social construction of ocean spaces.

> The uninhabited ocean space across which extensive trade and interaction occurs is not a formless void between societies but rather a unique and specifically constructed space within society. Indeed, noting the unique role that the world ocean has played in integrating the modern (post 1450) world system Modelski and Thompson proclaim, "The modern world system is characteristically and importantly an oceanic system". [5]

Oceans have historically been a space both for expanding state control as well as acknowledging limits. Steinberg argues that "the history of the modern world economy can be read as a history of the simultaneous 'opening' and 'closing' of the ocean frontier. The formation of merchantilist empires that claimed exclusive rights to maritime trade routes formed the foundation for modern capitalism but their efforts to establish exclusive territorial authority in the ocean was not tenable."[6] With this realization there were efforts to ensure that areas of the sea distant from the land were open to all and the ocean was not to be constructed as a frontier. While this was the position till about the middle of the twentieth century the narrative changed with the recognition of the potential for extraction of spatially fixed resources (petroleum, minerals and biological resources) and the increasing movement towards the recognition of oceans as claimable, governable and amenable to infrastructural developments. As the ocean presented opportunities it became increasingly clear that new regulatory frontiers would have to be developed. The UNCLOS recognized that in the regions of the ocean closest to the shore the frontier could be exclusive and under the control of the land based state. But even here foreign merchant ships were to be allowed entry. The high seas would be a space beyond frontiers and between the high seas and the territorial sea would be exclusive economic zones extending into the continental shelf. The 'opening' and 'closing' of maritime frontiers continues and as Steinberg argues this has been a cyclical process presenting opportunities for political innovations.[7] The transformation of the Asia Pacific to the Indo-Pacific is reflective of this cyclic process of transformation.

It has been argued that the Indo-Pacific is at one level simply an expansion of the Asia Pacific notion to reflect the fact that India with its Look and Act East Policy has become an economic and strategic actor in a larger maritime theatre.[8] It also reflected the Obama administration's rebalancing of interests towards East Asia through the Pivot to Asia policy. Historically the idea of Asia Pacific was a continuation of the World War II understanding of global space developed in the context of Japanese air power and the sea battles after Pearl Harbour. The Indo Pacific centralizes the Indian Ocean as a region and extends it up to Africa. It was Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who in a speech to the Indian Parliament in August 2007, brought into focus the

confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans as 'seas of freedom and prosperity' in a broader Asia. In addition to extending the region to the shores of Africa, the Indo Pacific as a region brought together the overlapping memberships of the Indian Ocean Rim Association member states with members of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Organization and Association of South East Asian Regions. At the Shangri La Dialogue in June 2018 there was also a call for greater cooperation between India, Japan and Indonesia and create a common rule based regional order. While this is yet to be institutionalized the idea has brought geo-political contestation to a new level with China reaffirming its interest in the South China Sea and India attempting to create a more comprehensive partnership with the South East Asian states by upgrading some of its bilateral relations to strategic partnerships. This has led to the argument that the logic of regional cooperation in the Asia Pacific/ Indo Pacific region and the emergence of marine regionalism is transforming the ways in which member states would interact with each other.[9]

The reconceptualization of oceans as new economic frontiers calls for the creation of new political organizations and institutions. While the ocean space has been variously imagined and constructed in different historical eras the recent re-imagination of ocean space as part of a larger infrastructural project has meant that ocean governance today is not just about sustainable development and sharing of ocean resources but also the creation of a series of ports as part of a larger project for search of new markets and expansion. As Ertor and Hadjimichael argue this creates the necessity to critically discuss and reflect on "the impact of this new shift towards the exploration of new markets via the oceans and seas and coast unpacking the approach towards oceans as a new commodity frontier for further capital accumulation."[10]

This is clearly reflected by Constantino Xavier and Darshana M. Baruah in their analysis of the Bay of Bengal when they argue:

> The new narrative about the Bay of Bengal is driven by a variety of actors and interests. For India which has almost one quarter of its population living in states bordering the Bay, growth and development are increasingly seen to hinge on the degree of connectivity with the Southeast Asian markets as reflected in its Act East Policy. As the Belt and Road Initiative increases China's North South Access route to the Indian Ocean especially via

> Myanmar, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, New Delhi is accelerating alternative East West connectivity plans.
>
> For Bangladesh and Sri Lanka the rising centrality of the Bay of Bengal helps to realize their economic interests in the emerging markets of South Asia and to reduce their dependence on India. For Nepal and Bhutan, both landlocked between India and China growth prospects will increase dramatically by giving their Himalayan hinterland economies a stronger economic link. Finally 'Look West' policies of Myanmar and Thailand will only succeed if the Bay of Bengal is transformed into a hub of connectivity with adequate infrastructural investments.[11]

It is in this context that the demand for empowering BIMSTEC has gained ground both within India and among the participant states. The regional multilateral forum was set up in 1997 and is well situated to tackle the challenges faced by the Bay of Bengal region provided the member states—Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand—remain committed to the cause and invest in the forum by way of time, resources and initiation as well as implementation of reforms. A conjunction of dynamics has facilitated circumstances whereby the organization can assume a greater role in integrating the Bay region. In a globalized, symbiotic world, the states around the Bay region have come to appreciate that their individual economic and security interest are progressively intertwined and dependent on their capacity to collaborate beyond their national confines by way of regional organizations based on the principles of inclusive regionalism.[12] India on its part has come to realize that the most appropriate way to respond to China's efforts at gaining ground in the region is through the intensification of regional connectivity projects and deepening linkages with South East Asia. The smaller nations, on the other hand, perceive BIMSTEC as a multilateral forum by way of which they could counter the hegemonic practices of China, India and other dominant extra regional powers. However, in order to function effectively BIMSTEC needs to imbibe an attitude of collaboration, reciprocity, respect for norms, rules and instill a spirit of liberalism and multilateralism as an alternative to unilateralism among the constituent member states.

The organization, however, requires larger fiscal investment as well as a greater degree of autonomy and decentralization of operations. Infrastructural

development and physical connectivity should be a priority so as to ensure enhanced mobility in both human and material terms. Multi-nodal schemes that connect coastal ports to the neighbourhood, comprising Bhutan, which is non-coastal, North-East India and Nepal, should be given priority. If India wishes to assume the role of an informal leader it has to go beyond the posturing and back it up with greater investment without hampering the security of the other members.[13] BIMSTEC should also endeavour to collaborate with powers outside the region such as Australia, the European Union, Japan and the United States as well as other multilateral institutions such as the Asian Development Bank. However, in addition to connectivity by way of logistical and infrastructural development, it is imperative to encourage 'people to people' interactions for revitalizing the 'region'.

As Suchandra Ghosh notes in this volume, the Isthmus of Kra, the much coveted sea link which is now being sought as a part of the BRI, was once a transnational space with the presence of communities from India, Sri Lanka, lower Myanmar, northern Sumatra, lower Mekong (which includes present day Cambodia and part of southern Vietnam) and formed part of the extremely complex trading networks that stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the Chinese coast. The archaeological evidences unearthed from sites of peninsular Thailand also indicate close connections between both sides of the Bay, a shared tradition that can be revitalized.[14] At the same time, the political limitations of any regional organization should not be underscored, in the context of BIMSTEC; the issue of migration of a large number of Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh from Myanmar and its attendant ramifications is a case in point. The region is also beset with matters related to narcotics trade, extremist violence, movement of both people and weapons, environmental exploitation as well as other non-conventional security hazards. As such regional institutions need to keep these in mind while re-envisaging the Bay of Bengal as a region.

Critics have also argued that in contrast to proactive regionalism where member states tap unexplored opportunities for combatting challenges BIMSTEC represents reactive regionalism where there was attention to the organization only with the realization that uncertainties associated with SAARC or the rise of the BRI were overwhelming and required focus on an alternative.[15] Nilanjan Ghosh goes on to argue that what held the

organization back from realizing its full potential was lack of political will and more recently divergence about thinking on how to treat China and the BRI, which are seen both as an opportunity and a threat. Another challenge emerges from global warming and climate change leading to extreme weather conditions that has affected the region. However, the region is rich in human, natural and social capital, provides a product market with a large consumer base and has potential for intra-regional trade pointing to the potential for a free trade area or free economic zone. Ghosh also argues that there is opportunity for exploring regional value chain where the value added trade dynamics of Thailand, India and other BIMSTEC nations can be integrated through backward linkages to participate in value added chains.[16]

The recognition of the Bay as a strategic space with a shared history and 'regional' institutions has brought into focus the necessity of creation of boundaries and a model of governance. On the other hand, the recognition of the Bay of Bengal as a 'region' also re-conceptualizes imagining of South and Southeast Asia as distinct spaces traditionally divided by a line running through the middle of the Bay. Both underline the recognition that an inter oceanic model of governance can only work in tandem with 'regional' associations and organizations already in place. This means that an oceanic regional system centred around the Bay of Bengal and the Indo Pacific can only be viable as part of an integrated Eurasian security and economic system. It is probably this recognition that led to the imagination of a Maritime Silk Route connecting to a continental system of transport in the Chinese imagining of the BRI. As Francis A. Kornegay Jr argues this is the result of globalization encompassing both land and sea and the necessity of "imagining a continental-maritime nexus or interface as an intellectually improvisational tool for unpacking the complexities of regional and global dynamics."[17] He goes on to note:

> The maritime domain comprising the global commons via sea lanes of communications forms the connectivity of intercourse linking onshore regional and continental venues of resource access and exploitation with infrastructures of coastal and inland transport links essential for reaching overseas markets and vice versa. These realities inevitably inform national geo-economic strategy, subject to conflicting interpretations regarding great

power and naval intentions as indicative in the ambivalence of Sino-Indian relations—their BRICS membership notwithstanding—in and around the Indian Ocean.[18]

Others like Samir Saran however argue that efforts to shift global centrality to the 'Indo-Pacific' remain an insufficient response to China's spectacular measures to connect Europe and Asia. Reiterating Macinder's position he contends that Eurasia remains the 'supercontinent' and the new world order will be defined by who manages it and how it is managed. It is in this supercontinent that the future of democracy, of free markets and global security arrangements will be decided. Having assessed that the divide between Europe and Asia is artificial, China has moved towards the creation of a network of connectivity projects that have diluted the significance of sub-regions and upset power arrangements. He argues that an open Indo-Pacific vision is an insufficient response to China's relentless pursuit of building infrastructure, facilitating trade and creating alternative global institutions across Eurasia.[19] Both positions converge on the necessity of moving beyond binary imaginations of space to newer imaginations where oceans emerge as significant to strategic and economic understanding of the global system as continental spaces.

For India, the Bay of Bengal region is today emerging as an area of strategic significance and a potential zone for Asian economic growth. Keeping this significance in mind a joint seminar was organized by the Netaji Institute for Asian Studies and Asia in Global Affairs in collaboration with the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, sponsored by the Indian Council of World Affairs on 4-5 February 2020 at the Jadavpur University. The seminar examined themes like the contemporary factors shaping the emergence of the Bay of Bengal region as a critical strategic theatre in Indian foreign policy; the inter-connectedness of the Indian and Pacific Oceans; the importance of oceans to security and commerce and India's role within the broader region; the twenty-first century maritime Silk Road and Indian alternatives and the possibilities of reconnecting disconnected spaces through re-imagining a Bay of Bengal Community. In this connection it took particular note of the emerging regional cooperative order for the promotion of peace and development in the Bay of Bengal region (BIMSTEC). The

volume is based on these presentations and the discussions that followed. Given the historical, economic and cultural interconnectedness of the oceanic space, the volume, while focused on the Bay of Bengal region, took note of developments in the larger Indian Ocean space as the background against which it seeks a deeper understanding of the Indian position.

The first section of the volume on 'Imagining a Bay of Bengal Community: History, Literature and Diasporas' focuses on connects that have their roots in history. This section begins with Suchandra Ghosh's article entitled "'Convergence' across the Bay: Early Interactions and Exchanges between Regions of Eastern Sea-Board of India and Regions of Southeast Asia", where she explores the metanarrative of connectivity in the Bay of Bengal region, in the period between seventh century CE to thirteenth century CE, through micro stories. Sarvani Gooptu's article "Forging New Friendships through Oceanic Travels: Cosmopolitan and Nationalistic Ideas in Bengali Journals (late 19th and 20th centuries)" is a study of popular literary journals of Bengal to reveal a new social world where there was no apparent contradiction between the emerging nationalist ideas during this time and a desire to look beyond the nation. The writings, mostly by unknown authors, reveal the narratives of a "Greater India" as a cultural sphere, inspired not only by nationalism but also cosmopolitanism. Susmita Mukherjee, in her article "Locating the Bengali Revolutionaries in Burma (1923-33): As Reflected in the History and Literature of the Wider Migratory Culture of Bay of Bengal" brings to the forefront Bengali revolutionaries in Burma who were mainly involved in the crucial task of coordinating and strengthening the movement being carried on by their accomplices in Bengal. Often supported by the locals, this indicates a wider sense of community within the region.

The second section of the volume is on 'The Contemporary Factors Shaping the Emergence of the Bay of Bengal Region as a Critical Strategic Theatre in Indian Foreign Policy'. Shantanu Chakrabarti's article "Projection of the 'Bay of Bengal Initiative' as a Strategic Endeavour: A Critical Survey" is the interlude between the historical and the more recent strategic reading of the region. He argues that the recent focus on the Indo-Pacific has brought back into limelight the eastern and south-eastern parts of the Indian Ocean, including the Bay of Bengal, which had remained marginalized for very long. He argues that the Bay of Bengal world is

like a palimpsest, with multiple layers of civilizational linkages connecting the past with the present. Significantly, all the regional policy documents highlighting agendas of growth focus on the historical heritage and talk of reviving and expanding those old linkages. Reflecting on this, Anindya Jyoti Majumdar in his article entitled "The Bay of Bengal as a Strategic Theatre: Trends in Narratives" underlines the relationship between strategic theatres and geopolitical narratives and explores the emergence of the Bay narratives and their implications in ascertaining patterns of geopolitical interactions in the region. However, he argues, strategic narratives are often shaped and re-shaped by unprecedented challenges like the pandemic that swept the world in 2020 creating possibilities of disconnects. Subhadeep Bhattacharya in his article titled "India's Bay of Bengal Strategy: Programme and Predicaments" echoes similar uncertainties while arguing that though the Bay of Bengal maritime region is increasingly gaining leverage, since her littoral states are featuring prominently in India's boost to connect with the east to promote trade, nevertheless, there are issues which cast a shadow over the prospects of this difficult but achievable mission.

The third section of the volume on 'The Importance of Oceans to Strategy' begins with Vivek Mishra and Rushali Saha's article on "The Strategic Significance of Andaman and Nicobar Island: Assessing Anti-Access Area Denial Potential in the Bay of Bengal". Here the focus is on this archipelago and its strategic significance. Located at the junction of the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea, it is situated about 140km from the shipping lines of Malacca, which is one of the worlds most congested shipping choke points with major Asian economies such as China, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea depending upon it heavily for transit. The authors argue that the single most important factor in renewed attention to the strategic importance of the island nations is the increasing Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean, countering which will require developing the economic and military might of the Islands. However, they argue the opportunity to utilize the islands to forward foreign policy goals are not straightforward as turning the islands into a strategic-military hub may not sit well with the Southeast Asian countries. Nevertheless, a strong naval presence in India's eastern entrance into the Indian Ocean will complement its diplomatic soft power persuasion and signal clearly its intention to be a strong maritime power. Sayantani Sen

Majumdar in her article entitled "India's Littoral Strategy in the Indo-Pacific Region: Partnership and Beyond" emphasizes on the significance of maritime strategy in determining India's diplomatic and strategic equations with her neighbours. Abhishek Mishra in his article "Piracy and Armed Robbery in Indian Ocean Region: Assessment, Challenges and the Way Forward" continues this theme of the significance of maritime security by focusing on one of the most significant challenges to effective maritime governance across sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian subcontinent, the threat of piracy and armed robbery at sea.

The fourth section of the volume is on 'Globalization, Regionalism, and Indian Alternatives'. It begins with Avipsu Haldar's article on "Globalization, Asian Regionalism and BIMSTEC: An International Political Economy Perspective" where he delineates the relationship between globalization, an Asian variety of regionalism and connectivity. He argues that regionalism in the Asian context is dynamic in character and has been visualized primarily from the standpoint of political economy. It is in this background that he focuses on BIMSTEC as a forum for augmenting bilateral and multilateral trade in the region. Pratnashree Basu in her article entitled "The Bay of Bengal and Politics of Strategic Geographies" assesses the reasons behind the rising strategic prominence of the Bay and the ensuing factors which will contribute to the shaping of Bay's role as part of the larger Indo-Pacific maritime region in the years to come. She notes that China is acutely aware that the Indian archipelago, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, is located near the western opening of the Malacca Strait and has initiated the twenty-first century Maritime Silk Road Project in response. Urbi Das in her article "Power Projection in the Bay of Bengal: Comparing India and China's Naval Strategies", juxtaposes the more inclusive Indian naval and maritime policy in the Bay and the larger Indian Ocean space against exclusionary Chinese policies. She argues that with their core interests at stake the Bay of Bengal is likely to become the theatre of Indo-Chinese competition in the years to come.

The volume brings together historians, political analysts and political economists to emphasize the interconnectedness of the oceanic space through a detailed analysis of the Bay of Bengal as a space of strategic and economic significance, particularly for India but also as a space for re-imagining a new regional community.

Notes

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Section One

Imagining a Bay of Bengal Community: History, Literature and Diasporas

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1. 'Convergence' Across the Bay: Early Interactions and Exchanges between Regions of Eastern Sea-Board of India and Regions of Southeast Asia

Suchandra Ghosh

The Bay of Bengal, the largest bay in the world, is a thriving maritime space that connects South and Southeast Asia. Contacts were based on the movements of items, people, and knowledge systems over land and sea, of objects, and of people and knowledge systems by sea and land routes. Buddhism was also one of the conduits that facilitated civilizational dialogues across the Bay. The Bay of Bengal network encapsulated the mainland polities of Myanmar, Cambodia and Thailand; the different kingdoms on the upper Malay Peninsula and the northern and western coasts of Sumatra, as well as India's eastern seaboard and Sri Lanka. Tamil merchants frequented the ports of Southeast Asia and inscribed their presence in the ports of the Isthmian tract.[1] The network witnessed brisk maritime contacts—commercial and cultural—since the early centuries CE. This is well attested by field archaeological, art historical, textual and epigraphic sources. There is a rich body of literature which traces the nature of this *longue dureé* interaction in various ways, the paradigm of 'Indianization' being the most dominant one, though vehemently critiqued.[2] O.W. Wolters stated that there was no denying the Indian influence in Southeast Asia, but the propositions of the Indianization model were unacceptable. Instead he argued for a process he termed 'localization' where Indian materials were reinvented in Southeast Asia, being drained of its original significance. Wolters emphasized the innovative and dynamic characters of Southeast Asian societies.[3] He had his share of critiques like Sheldon Pollock who labeled Wolters' views as 'civilisationalist indigenism'.[4] However, definitions have evolved with the passage of time and the concept became entwined in multiple historicities.

Hermann Kulke's thesis of looking at convergence on both sides of the Bay of Bengal seems to be more acceptable as he emphasizes that it was not social distance but social nearness that was the crucial factor in selecting and adopting certain Indian cultural elements in Southeast Asia. Kulke argues that Sanskrit inscriptions, Hindu temples, social stratification and the spread of intensive wet rice agriculture appeared simultaneously in various regions of South and Southeast Asia at roughly the same time.[5] These were largely taken to be markers of Indianization. Similar processes of state formation could be seen on both sides of the Bay. Thus, it is the nearness between the societies of the coastal regions of Bay of Bengal that made the Indian model so attractive to Southeast Asian rulers. This nearness was obviously made possible by all kinds of connectivity between the regions. Moreover, as a significant case of concurrence and nearly simultaneous development on both sides of the Bay, Kulke draws our attention to the emergence of free-standing temples on both sides from around the seventh century CE which had a regional orientation albeit with a broader similarity in architectural style with India.[6] So, largely speaking, Kulke's thesis rather implicitly argues in favour of the existence of a Bay of Bengal Community, which adhered to certain common traditions and cultural practices with more space for indigenous initiative and was part of the same historical development.

In this article, I wish to explore further this premise of 'convergence' by looking at aspects like circulation of ceramics and coins, the connected history of the ports across the Bay, movement of a Buddhist ritual object like clay tablet in regions across the Bay of Bengal—early Bengal, Southern Thailand and Myanmar to be more specific—and to understand a space like Isthmus of Kra which was a trans-national space coveted by powers both from the west and the east and a region with complex interaction of human factors in the pre-modern world. The time frame that I shall focus on would be from around the seventh to thirteenth centuries CE.

Aspects of 'Convergence'

Ceramics

Pots and pans, which are integral to our everyday lives, can be a good example to start with. These are also significant for exploring the mobility

of people and patterns of exchange that connected areas on both sides of the Bay. Pots could be transshipped just for their own specific demand, or they could also be sent filled with trade goods to be sold/exchanged in a particular market, or they could come as a personal object/ritual vessel of a traveller. With the explorations and excavations of new archaeological sites in both South and Southeast Asia, it can be said that some ceramic types, which include fine rouletted ware and a few other forms in identical fabrics and knobbed vessels, are known Indian ceramics found in Southeast Asia. The carved paddle impressed pottery reported from coastal sites of South India owes its origin to regions of Southeast Asia. In the opinion of Selva Kumar, this technique reached India through/during more than one spatial and temporal context, and probably developed independently in certain regions.[7] The presence of this kind of pottery in the coastal segments of South India indicates that they were part of the Bay of Bengal Interaction Sphere.[8] A recent study by Coline Lefrancq on the pottery of Mahasthangarh (northern Bangladesh) demonstrates that utilitarian ceramics originating in South Asia, particularly cooking pots and jars, found in the sites of Southeast Asia were morphologically similar to those unearthed from Mahasthangarh from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries.[9]

Coins and Medallions

In case of monetary issues, while the Bay of Bengal network contributed to the monetary design in Southeast Asia, we can see the use of place names on coins both in regions of mainland Southeast Asia and South-eastern Bengal, which embraced part of present Tripura. It is significant to note that the idea of using place names in coins/medallions perhaps came from Cambodia. This is suggested by a recently discovered gold coin or medallion reportedly found from Angkor Borei, Cambodia, issued by Ishanavarman I, who reigned in the early seventh century. This has been read (and partly restored) by Arlo Griffiths as *Srīśānavarmma* [*naḥ*], on the obverse, and *īśānapu(ra)*, on the reverse, meaning, respectively, 'of Ishanavarman' and 'Ishanapura'.[10] The power of the pre-Angkorian Kingdom of Chenla, heir of the Funan empire, stretched from the south of Cambodia to the Mekong Delta in Vietnam under the rein of King Mahendravarman's son, King Ishanarvarman (611 to 635/637 CE)

A reference to the name of a kingdom in silver medallions is also found from Nakhon Pathom in Thailand during a little later period. The precise location of Dvaravati was unknown until the discovery of a number of such silver medals with the reverse inscription *'sridvaravatisvarapunya'* meaning 'meritorious deed of the ruler of Dvaravati' at Nakhon Pathom in 1943.[11] On the obverse was either a cow and calf motif or a flowing vase or *purna ghata* motif. Other examples have also been found after this from Chainat, Inburi and U Thong that were a part of the Dvaravati cultural zone. The idea of using the name of the kingdom or the name of a place continued and here mention may be made of the use of the place name *Lavapura* (Lopburi, Thailand) on silver coins recovered from a jar near U Thong. The word *Lava* was inscribed on the obverse and *pura* on the reverse, in late southern Brahmi script of the seventh or eighth century CE.[12]

This practise of using place name in coins has been found in the silver coins from south-eastern Bengal as well. Here we have two significant series of silver coins bearing the name Harikela from the late seventh century CE. These coins borrowed the device of the Arakanese ruler Dhammavijaya, [13] but Arakanese coins do not have any instance of using place names. Other coins bearing place name relate to Pilak, Piraka in Tripura, Vireka, linked with the river Barak, which reaches the Meghna across the southern border of Sylhet, Pattikera in Samatata[14] and Samatata itself (present Noakhali and Comilla).[15] From a close study of the coins bearing place names in Southeast Asia and south-eastern Bengal, it appears that Isanavarman's medallion/coin is the first one to have the place name engraved on it.[16]

Thus, what transpires from this is that south-eastern Bengal emulated the practise of using place names from the Chenla ruler Ishanavarman. There was a continuous process of adaptation and emulation. While Ishanavarman introduced the name of his capital in his medallion, the script used was late southern Brahmi. In case of Harikela coins, the device was borrowed from Arakan, while the idea of using place name was emulated from the medallion of Ishanavarman. This was possible due to the continuous movement of monks and merchants between south-eastern Bengal and kingdoms of Southeast Asia. The knowledge of place name being used in medallion/coin reached the group of people who minted the Harikela series of coins. For lack of any strong evidence we are still at a loss to identify the issuer who could

either be some royal authority or mercantile group. Thus, here was a case of adoption from regions of Southeast Asia and not vice versa. However, one should note that the practise of using place names was almost simultaneous, which supports Kulke's theory of nearly concurrent development on both sides of the Bay.

Maritime 'Convergence'

Connected history of the ports can also be a good example to better understand convergence. A recent essay by Ranabir Chakravarti situates the premier ports, dotting both the seaboards, in the maritime profile of the subcontinent.[17] He emphasized the fact that the pre-eminence of certain ports was often accountable to their respective hinterlands and forelands. The forelands of the ports of eastern seaboard were located in Sri Lanka and regions of Southeast Asia. Though there were quite a number of ports in the east coast, the focus here will be on the port of Samandar located in Chattogram (Chittagong), Bangladesh (ancient Harikela). I have already discussed the thriving economic network of this port.[18] However, the cultural network was also significant, which could be seen in the adoption/adaptation of sculptural styles, paintings, etc., of Harikela in eastern Java, Peninsular Thailand and Myanmar.[19] The port of Samandar in Harikela was the only port in the vicinity with a vast hinterland in the Ganga and Brahmaputra valley. People from Southeast Asia visiting these areas or vice versa had little choice but to use the port for their journey across Bay of Bengal. This is because after eighth century we have no reference to the port of Tamralipta, which was once the premier port, much evidenced by the writings of Chinese Buddhist monks, from where one could embark on a journey to Southeast Asia. In the first half of the ninth century, Srivijaya sent a mission to the Pala court in Bengal in a move to expand the Srivijayan network. Western Bengal did not have any port at that time, so it must have been the port of Samandar through which the network was to connect. To gain a sense of Harikela's interwoven past, , I will draw upon two verses from a *Manjusriyamulakalpa,* a Sanskrit Tantric text, datable to around the eighth century CE that mentions Harikela (Chittagong), Karmaranga (Arakan) and Kalasapura (Martaban) together, thereby indicating a kind of connection between the regions.

Verse 22:

> It is said that Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, ghosts, serpents and goblins, siding with the demons, take refuge in Vanga (present day Dhaka area in Bangladesh) and Samataṭa (Comilla and Noakhali in Bangladesh), in Harikela (Chittagong in Bangladesh), the best [city called] Kalasa (Martaban area in lower Myanmar) and Carmaraṅga (recently identified with Arakan). [20]

Verse 31:

> And then Tārā is realized, with the Yakṣa-king Mahābala, in Harikela, Karmaraṅga, Kāmarūpa (present Assam) and [the city] called Kalaśa.[21]

A reading of these two *slokas* bring home clearly that Kamarupa (ancient Assam), Harikela (Chittagong), Karmaranga (Arakan) and Kalasa (Martaban) were connected. [22] Kamarupa was an important hinterland of the port of Samandar in Harikela while Arakan and Martaban were important forelands. Connected history of Arakan and Harikela can be studied from coins and epigraphs. But these *slokas* also bring in the connection between Chittagong and the port of Martaban, presently Mottama, on the west bank of the Thanlwin river which was once an *entrep*ôt of international repute. The name has been identified by P. Pelliot and G. H. Luce as Kalasapura, 'city of pots', mentioned in the eleventh-century text *Kathasaritsagara* as a coastal town of Suvarnadvipa. One may note that Martaban is famous for its ceramic tradition, particularly the jars known as *kalasa* in Sanskrit. Martaban as an important port in southern Myanmar developed and the nature of the ceramics produced in the area gave the Martaban jar its name. Martaban jars are difficult to date, because they have been made for thousands of years with minor variations. Broadly similar jars are still being made in Myanmar and used for water storage. They are now produced at Kyaukmyaung near Shwebo in Upper Burma. The potters are Mon who were brought there as captives from the south in the mid eighteenth century. These potters trace their origin to the Gulf of Martaban region south of Mawlamyne.[23] It is possible that the terms *Martaban* or *Maritanao* were used, during this period at least, to describe the coastal region from the Salween River to the Isthmus of Kra. It is interesting to note that the place name Martaban, where the pots were made, finally came to denote the pots themselves. Thus, in 1350 CE Ibn Batuta

mentioned that a princess of Kaylukari (in Southeast Asia, not identified) gave him four "Martabans or huge jars, filled with ginger, pepper, lemons and mangoes, all of them salted, prepared for sea voyages."[24] This is narrated in the section where Ibn Batuta describes his travels from India to Sumatra and Java. Southeast Asia serves as the geographical environment in this case. This evidence clearly indicates the utility of these jars for long-distance trade network. Ibn Battuta's textual references and travel tales of point towards a connected history of the ports in the Bay of Bengal. The two verses from the text are clear indicators of the socio-cultural nearness that was possible within a Buddhist ecumene where Tara was propitiated.

'Convergence' through Buddhist relics

'Convergence' would also be seen from the circulation of clay tablets, which carried images of Buddha and Bodhisattvas at times. These were ritual objects and at times also used as a talisman. Among the Bodhisattvas, the representation of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara could be seen in large numbers on clay tablets from both South and Southeast Asia. He was very popular across the Bay, not only for his compassionate activities, but also for his role as a protector from oceanic voyages. Of the various categories of Avalokitesvara images, one is the pensive Avalokitesvara. A plaque from the site of Kutilamura, Mainamati, Bangladesh, dating roughly to the eighth century CE, depicts a four-armed Avalokitesvara, seated on the principal lotus with attendants of the deity on smaller lotuses. This Avalokitesvara is distinguished by *Jatabhara* (matted hair) and a three-quarter profile of the face.[25] Here the Avalokitesvara seems to be in a pensive mood. An oval-shaped tablet from Nalanda housed in the Asutosh Museum bears more or less a similar iconographical composition. It shows a figure of Avalokitesvara seated in *maharajalila* posture on a lotus and with six arms. His hair is tied in a chignon and a pearl necklace is the only ornament adorning his otherwise bare torso. His head is inclined to the right and rests against the palm of the uppermost right hand. The second right hand seems to carry the rosary and the lowest right hand shows *varada mudra* (the gesture of charity or gift giving*)*. Of the three left hands only one is visible, which rests on the lotus seat. He is bejeweled. A beaded halo can be seen around his head. Two lines of Buddhist creed are engraved at the bottom of the tablet. This tablet has been assigned to the ninth century

CE. A similar tablet, somewhat cruder in execution, is also housed in the Ashmolean Museum. Though the iconography of the pensive Buddha is not emulated as in the above tablet, a contemporary tablet from Yala, Peninsular Thailand, is almost similar to the one from Nalanda, except that it is four-handed and its upper right hand holds a rosary. His head is slightly tilted to the right and a beaded halo also appears around his head. His torso is bare too except for a necklace. Another interesting feature of this tablet is the attempt to make a rim with folds, albeit crude, like some of the molded tablets from Nalanda or contemporary south-eastern Bengal sites. Thus, this could be a case where different models were seen but the craftsman was not an expert, and in this case could not emulate the original icon properly. At Tham Khao Kao, in Thailand, we find a four-armed bejeweled Avalokitesvara, seated in *vajrasana*. The lower right hand performs the *Varada mudra*; the left hand placed on his left thigh holds the stalk of a full blooming lotus flower. His upper right hand holds an *akshamala,* and the upper left hand holds a book. Like the Pala period sculptures, the deity is seen to be depicted with a roll of fat in his abdomen. The tablet has the "*Ye Dharma*" stanza written in *nagari* script, which dates between the ninth and tenth centuries. This tablet bears close resemblance to a tablet found in Nalanda dating to the eighth/ninth century CE, housed in the Victoria and Albert museum in London (I. M.5-1914), though the manufacture of the Nalanda icon is much cruder. These are examples of networks of exchanges that existed throughout the Buddhist world.[26]

Here one may argue that there was a strong connection between Javanese bronze and bronzes from south-eastern Bangladesh during the ninth century CE. Bronzes from south-eastern Bengal were imported into Java. Either way, Bengal was the source of inspiration for Javanese bronze masters who copied them. But within a short space of time icons with indigenous Javanese elements began to predominate. A contemporary pensive bronze Avalokitesvara with two hands is housed in Rongoworsitto Museum, Semarang, Indonesia. This bronze deity seemingly has a strong Pala influence in its facial expression. These images of pensive Avalokitesvara afford evidence to account for the contemporary interaction of styles from different areas of Bengal and Bihar to Thailand and Java, which resulted in certain similar stylistic features being borrowed by one Buddhist centre of worship and production from

another. The key role the coasts of south-eastern Bangladesh played as an important centre of Buddhism, with a network of close linkages with regions of Southeast Asia and participation in the circulation of rituals across Asia, cannot be overlooked.

Role of transnational spaces

Finally, I would like to draw attention to the Isthmus of Kra which was a transnational space coveted by powers both from the west and the east, and a region with complex interaction of human factors in the pre-modern world. It is called 'cross roads of civilizations' as it has seen the presence of communities from India, Sri Lanka, lower Myanmar, northern Sumatra, etc., and it forms a part of the extremely complex trading networks that stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the Chinese coast. The region around the Isthmus not only grew as a viable maritime trading zone, but it was also an important centre of Buddhist network which saw a shift from *Mahayana* to *Theravada* Buddhism in the twelfth century CE. The importance of images in the social life of Buddhism is well known. It will be worthwhile to mention here that a Java Sea in the early to mid-tenth century was recovered in the Java sea in 1997 by Michael Flecker, and its cargo included an assortment of metal molds and ritual utensils associated with Mahayana Buddhism.[27] This shipwreck shows that a locally made vessel traded between Sumatra and Java, between the powerful empire of Srivijaya and the Javanese state of Mataram. She carried bronzes cast in Sumatra, that reflected India's strong Buddhist and Brahmanical influences. According to Flecker, since Bengal, like Java, had no tin, seafarers could have previously transported tin to Bengal where local artisans made the icons, and then shipped these to Java. In addition, the shipment included several molds for local artisans to use to produce bronze and terracotta Buddhist miniature shrines. These Buddhist icons were consistent with the international movement of Buddhist clerics and pilgrims in those times, as Buddhism had been embraced by Java's kings as a means to transcend ethnic loyalties and societal institutions.[28] Numerous artifacts discovered in the wreck were ritual objects associated with Vajrayana (Tantric) Buddhism: bells and a spear-shaped scepter. The types of religious artifacts discovered on the *Intan* wreck outnumber those discovered on another major tenth-century shipwreck, recovered sixty miles (100 kilometers) off the Java

north coast from Cirebon. The Cirebon wreck carried cargo similar to that found on the *Intan* vessel, with the exception that it had significantly more bronze religious artifacts, intended for temple worship, and Buddhist clay molds, for wider public consumption, all of which are thought to have been produced in an unknown Sumatra production centre for export to Java.[29] Instead of just Bengal we would like to specifically identify this region as south-eastern Bengal. Is it possible to think that some of these were produced in the Chittagong region which could boast of a workshop of metal objects? This idea emerges from the fact that, though Bengal did not produce tin, we have a plethora of bronze sculptures. In fact, a hoard of miniature bronze Buddhas and stupas have been found dating from the ninth to tenth centuries CE from the Jhewari area of Chattogram.[30] For this it had to establish links, directly or indirectly with tin-producing areas. As tin was a trading commodity along trans-Asiatic routes, it is possible that south-eastern Bengal received its share of tin from the Isthmian tract. Buddhism provided the ideological grounding for a community across the Bay. One must, however, mention that gradually Brahmanical gods, Vishnu in particular, was making inroads into the secured Buddhist network of Asian interaction. In a site like Khao Phra Neur in the Ta Kua Pa district on the top of a mountain lies a religious monument where a beautiful sculpture of the god Vishnu was found. Tamil merchants frequented the ports of Southeast Asia and inscribed their presence in the ports of the Isthmian tract.[31] The immense significance of the Thailand coastal area for the Tamil merchants' operations is evident from the inscriptions of merchant organizations at Takua-pa on the west coast of the Isthmus. The Takua-pa inscription was written entirely in Tamil language in Pallava script of about ninth century.[32] There are statues at Takua-pa and Viengsra in Chola style and an inscription at Nakhon Si Thammarat indicating continuing contacts between the Isthmus and South India in Chola times. Thus, people of different ethnic origin who inhabited the space of the Isthmus of Kra were bound together by trade and religion, primarily through Buddhism but in some cases Brahmanical religion also.

Based on these case studies, it is possible to argue in favour of the presence of a Bay of Bengal community during the period of our study, however farfetched it might seem in the present times. There were different avenues through which the theory of convergence, which included social

circulation, could work and mutual processes which linked both sides of the Bay of Bengal could operate. The Bay of Bengal community thrived on adoption, adaptation and shared traditions, all of which were possible due to social nearness. These could be the important keywords for gaining a holistic comprehension of the Bay of Bengal network.

Notes

1. Noboru Karashima and Y. Subbarayalu, "Ancient and Medieval Tamil and Sanskrit inscriptions relating to Southeast Asia and China," in Hermann Kulke et. al., eds., *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa, Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2010), pp. 271–91.
2. Ian W. Mabbett, "The 'Indianization' of Southeast Asia: reflections on historical sources," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 8, nos. 1, 2 (1977): 143-161. For a recent perspective see Pierre-Yves Manguin, A. Mani and Geoff Wade (eds.), *Early Interactions between South and Southeast Asia, Reflections on Cross-Cultural Exchange,* Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011.
3. Oliver W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1982.
4. Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men*: *Sanskrit, Culture and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 531.
5. Hermann Kulke, "Indian colonies, Indianisation or cultural convergence? Reflections on the changing image of India's role in Southeast Asia," *Semaian* 3 (1990): 8–32.
6. Hermann Kulke, "The concept of cultural convergence revisited: Reflections on India's early influence in Southeast Asia," in Upinder Singh and Parul Pandya Dhar, eds., *Asian Encounters*, *Exploring Connected Histories*, (Delhi: Oxford university Press, 2014), pp. 3–19.
7. Selva Kumar, "Contacts between India and Southeast Asia in ceramic and boat building traditions," in Manguin, Mani and Wade, eds., *Early Interactions Between South and Southeast Asia, Reflections on Cross-Cultural Exchange,* p. 207.
8. The expression 'Bay of Bengal Interaction Sphere' was first coined by Sunil Gupta to indicate the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent (the country of Sri Lanka; the Indian states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal; and the country of Bangladesh) and the western part of Southeast Asia (Myanmar, coastal Thailand, coastal Malaysia, and the Indonesian island of Sumatra adjoining the Andaman Sea). The Andaman Sea is taken as a contiguous extension of the Bay of Bengal and treated as one with the Bay. See Sunil Gupta, "The Bay of Bengal Interaction Sphere (1000 BC–AD 500),"The Taipei Papers. *Bulletin of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association* 25 (2005): 21–30.
9. Coline Lefrancq, "Circulation of pots and people. Reflections on trade-marked potteries from Bengal to South-East Asia," in Kenneth R. Hall et. al., eds., *Cross-Cultural Networking in The Eastern Indian Ocean Realm, c.100-1800*, (Delhi, Primus Publications), pp. 85–120.

10. Arlo Griffiths, "Early Indic inscriptions of Southeast Asia," in John Guy, ed., *Lost Kingdoms, Hindu-Buddhist Sculpture of Southeast Asia*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014), pp. 53–7.
11. Robert Wicks, *Money, Markets and Trade in Early Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Programme, 1992), pp. 158–59.
12. Wicks, *Money, Markets and Trade*.
13. Nicholas Rhodes, "The Coinage of Samatata, some thoughts," *The Quarterly Review of Historical Studies* 42, nos. 1& 2 (2002): 1–12.
14. M. Mitchiner, *The Land of Water: Coinage and History of Bangladesh and Later Arakan Circa 300 BC to the Present Day* (London: Hawkins Publications, 2000), pp. 74-75.
15. B.N. Mukerjee and J. Acharjee, "A Coin with the Legend 'Samatata'," *Numismatic Digest* 25-26 (2001-2002): 81-83.
16. Guillaume Epinal and Suchandra Ghosh, "On some Recent monetary finds in Vyadhapura-Angkor Borei (Kingdom of Cambodia) and related issues," *Numismatic Digest* 40 (2016): 136-150.
17. Ranabir Chakravarti, "A subcontinent in enduring ties with an enclosed ocean (c. 1000–1500 C.E.). South Asia's maritime profile before European Hegemony," *Journal of Medieval Worlds* 1, no. 2 (2019): 27–56.
18. Suchandra Ghosh, "Crossings and contacts across the Bay of Bengal: a connected history of ports in early South and Southeast Asia," *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 15, no. 3 (November, 2019): 281–96.
19. Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer and Marijke J. Klokke, *Divine Bronze, Ancient Indonesian Bronzes from A.D. 600 to 1600*, Rijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1988 ; Suchandra Ghosh, "Early Peninsular Thailand and Eastern India (including Bangladesh): Understanding the Buddhist milieu through an archaeological lens," in Withaya Sucharithanarugse, ed., *Interpretative Studies on Southeast Asian Culture*, (Institute of Thai Studies, Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 2016), pp. 227–45; Claudine Bautze Picron, *The Buddhist Murals of Pagan, Timeless Vistas of the Cosmos* (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2003).
20. Earlier D.C. Sircar tried to locate it somewhere in lower Myanmar. D.C.Sircar , "Indological notes," *Journal of Ancient Indian History* 9 (1976): 211–13. Recently Arlo Griffiths has identified Karmaraṅga with Arakan and Kalasa with Srikshetra. In view of Karmaraṅga's close association with Harikela and with Samatata; the identification seems plausible. Arlo Griffiths, "Three more Sanskrit inscriptions of Arakan: new perspectives on its name, dynastic history, and Buddhist culture in the first millennium," *The Journal of Burma Studies* 19, no. 2 (2015): 281–340. But for Kalasapura, I prefer to go with Martaban considering the evidence of *Kathasaritasagara* which categorically mentions that the place was near the sea.
21. P.L. Vaidya (ed.), *Aryā Mañjuśrimūlakalpa, (Mahayanasutrasamgraha, part II, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, no.18),* Darbhanga: Mithila Text Society, 1964, p. 508.
22. Pamela Gutman, "The Martaban trade: an examination of the literature from the seventh century until the eighteenth century," *Asian Perspectives* 40, no. I (2002).
23. Brigitte Borell, "A true Martaban jar: A Burmese ceramic jar in the ethnological museum in Heidelberg in Germany," *Artibus Asiae* 74, no. 2 (2014): 257–97.

24. H.A.R. Gibbs (trans.), *Ibn Battuta, Travels in Asia and Africa*, New Delhi: Asia Educational Services, 1997, reprint, chapter 10, p. 280.
25. Gautam Sengupta, "Art of South-Eastern Bengal: An overview," *Journal of Ancient Indian History* 19, parts 1-2 (1989-1990): 125.
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27. Michael Flecker, "The archaeological excavation of the tenth-century Intan shipwreck," *British Archaeological Reports International Series 1047* (Oxford: Archaoepress, 2002).
28. Kenneth R. Hall, "Indonesia's evolving relationships in the ninth to eleventh centuries: evidence from contemporary shipwrecks and epigraphy," *Indonesia* 90 (October 2010): 6.
29. Ibid., 7.
30. Asok K. Bhattacharya, *Jhewari Bronze Buddhas. A Study in History and Style* (Calcutta: Indian Museum, 1989).
31. N. Karashima (ed.), *Ancient and Medieval Trade in the Indian Ocean: Evidence of Inscriptions and Ceramic Sherds* (Tokyo: Taisho University, 2002).
32. Ibid., p. 284.