

THE ART OF ŚRĪVIJAYA

Edited by M. C. Subhadradis Diskul



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ห้องสมุด
ร.ม.จ. สุภัทรดิศ ดิศกุล



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อธิบดีมหาวิทยาลัย
ศาสตราจารย์ ร.ม.จ. สุภัทรดิศ ดิศกุล

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Professor M.C. Subhadradis Diskul

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Preface

WHAT is Śrīvijaya art? What was the kingdom and who were the people who produced it? Many questions concerning Śrīvijaya history and art still remain unanswered. Although scholars in general agree that the kingdom, which is believed to have been powerful, politically as well as culturally, embraced the southern part of South-East Asia, comprising southern Thailand, Malaysia, and the Indonesian island of Sumatra, the site of its capital is not yet known for certain. Some scholars are inclined to think that it was situated near the modern town of Palembang in Sumatra, or elsewhere on that island, while others prefer to locate it at Chaiya in southern Thailand.

The term 'Śrīvijaya art' has different interpretations also. Drs. Satyawati Suleiman, who wrote the chapter on Indonesia, thinks that Śrīvijaya art in Indonesia belongs only to the island of Sumatra and suggests that art in southern Thailand should be labelled as Śailendra art because it more closely resembles the central Javanese art of the period from the 8th to the 10th centuries. On the other hand, the arts in southern Thailand and Malaysia at this time belong more or less to the same style and are considered in both countries to have come under Śrīvijayan influence. They show their various prototypes from India (Gupta, post-Gupta, Pallava, and Pāla) and also from central Java. Only in southern Thailand from about the late 12th century did the art begin to be homogeneous. As for the Philippines, so far only one art object has been found and one cannot be sure of any Śrīvijayan link with those islands.

Thus it is clear that research on Śrīvijaya history and art is far from complete. Many scholarly works refer to the Śrīvijaya kingdom, but no study devoted wholly to Śrīvijaya art exists. These considerations led Unesco's Advisory Committee for the Study of Malay Culture to recommend in 1974 that a study on Śrīvijaya art should be produced in book form, with the co-operation of scholars from South-East Asia.

For the reasons explained above, I would not claim that this publication offers any solution to the complex problems of archaeological and cultural research on the period extending from the 7th to the 13th centuries in the history of South-East Asia. But I believe it presents, with ample illustrations, an important aspect of the culture which was enriched through contacts with southern Asia and developed in various localities of South-East Asia, permeating deeply and widely into the life of the people and surpassing even the kingdom's political strength and boundaries.

I am interested in the study of Śrīvijaya art and I agreed to be the editor of this book because that art testifies to the dynamics which had reinforced it through the intermingling of various cultural traditions and because those dynamics, indispensable to the proper understanding of the history of South-East Asia, could be highlighted in the book.

The Unesco project on the study of Malay culture embraces a variety of activities in such fields as oral traditions, traditional visual and performing arts, music, languages, literature and social institutions and their contemporary development. All these activities are planned and carried out at the regional level in consultation with the

Advisory Committee, whose membership comprises specialists, including myself, from Member States of the Malay region. The project aims to increase knowledge of Malay culture by studying it from within, through broad regional co-operation rather than through separate individual or national efforts; to raise the standard of scholarship through the participation of scholars and research institutions in the region; and to present the results to a wider range of the general public in the region as well as in the rest of the world. This album, which has been prepared by a group of South-East Asian scholars as part of the Malay project, therefore represents an attempt, however modest, to contribute to the general objective of Unesco's cultural studies programme, including the Malay project, to participate in the search for, and confirmation and further enhancement of, the cultural identity of the people of the region.

Considering the complexity of the still controversial problem of identifying Śrīvijaya art, I have deliberately avoided writing a synthesized text. Instead, after having given much thought to this problem and in conformity with the advice given at an editorial meeting of specialists from the region, held in Bangkok in February 1975 with the co-operation of the Thailand National Commission for Unesco, I decided to keep the original manuscripts contributed by the various authors, keeping my editorial changes to a minimum. Thus a geographical approach has been followed and the album includes chapters on Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The glossary and the index were prepared by me, but a chronological table of the history of the Śrīvijaya kingdom was not included in order to avoid any misleading statements on the controversial problems of the kingdom. In spite of this method of presentation, I hope the reader will obtain a coherent knowledge of what Śrīvijaya art is and what it has given to South-East Asia.

I have also followed the advice of the editorial meeting concerning the illustrations. It was agreed at the meeting that the text should not be unduly long and should be amply illustrated in order to facilitate further research by scholars and for easier understanding by the public. The photographs were provided by the authors. However, I have faced difficulties in ensuring the high quality of some of these photographs. In spite of our efforts some were not up to the desired standard and I have been obliged to omit them. Nevertheless, even though their quality is not satisfactory for an aesthetic appreciation, certain photographs have been retained, as they were considered indispensable to the proper understanding of Śrīvijaya art. I have however to admit that because of the lack of time and the impossibility of local study, it has not been possible to include the influence of Śrīvijaya art which might have reached the south of Kampuchea (Cambodia), Champa, Giao-châu (northern Vietnam) and even Yunnan in southern China. Those who are interested might find the description in Professor Jean Boisselier's article, 'Un bronze cham inédit d'Avalokiteśvara', in *Arts Asiatiques*, IV, 1957, and in his book, *La Statuaire du Champa*, 1963, especially in chapters IV and V.

My sincere thanks are due to the authors of the various chapters,

Drs. Satyawati Suleiman, Mr. Syed Ahmad bin Jamal, Mr. Othman bin Mohd. Yatim, and Dr. Juan R. Francisco. The authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this book and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of Unesco and are not the responsibility of the Organization.

I am also very much indebted to Professor Jean Boisselier who took the trouble to read and check the text and the illustrations and gave valuable comments and suggestions concerning the accuracy and relevance of these materials.

My gratitude also goes to the Unesco staff members without whose untiring assistance the editing and the publication of this work would not have been achieved.

M. C. SUBHADRADIS DISKUL
Editor-in-Chief

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