

India and Thailand: Soft Power Ties¹

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Abstract

India and Thailand have had a long relationship since ancient times. This relationship commenced through trade and later Indian religion and culture followed. Thailand remains influenced by Indian elements which mixed with the local beliefs and culture. There was no hard power used directly from India towards Southeast Asia or Thailand in particular. Rather, it was soft power that India used to forge ties with Thailand. Soft power means the ability to combine hard and soft power into a winning strategy. Diplomatic relations between India-Thailand in modern times started since 1947 after the independence of India. With India's 'Look East' policy in 1992, and the 'Look West' policy of Thailand, India has implemented many collaborative works with Thailand. Nye's concept of Power as Resources can be summarized that religio-economical-cultural resources are power through Look East and Look West Policies as its strategies. The preferred outcomes are the close relation between India-Thailand. Another Nye's concept of Power Defined as Behavioral Outcomes: Power affects others through religio-economical-cultural resources by reward and attraction to better understanding between two people for further constructive collaborations as the preferred outcomes.

Keywords: India; Thailand; Soft power; Tie

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Introduction

Indian civilization came to Thailand through trade. When traders brought goods, they had to meet with the local rulers to offer presents and to please them. This led the rulers to become interested in Indian culture. Later, there came invitations to Brahmans from India which had an influence on the rulers with respect to Devaraja concepts, language and culture in the court. These ideas spread to the common folk and mixed together with the beliefs of the local people. (Kusalasay, 2000: 14-15)

The reference above indicates that trade encourages Indians to travel to Southeast Asia which has been a primary characteristic of Indians in Thailand since ancient times up to the commencement of general migration in the post-colonial period. But the Indian migrants arriving in Thailand differ from those choosing to go to neighboring countries such as Burma or Malaysia as Thailand offers them greater freedom in their life. Trade is the key factor in Indians success in Thailand. This paper will present a brief historical overview of trade between India-Thailand since ancient times, the development of other socio-religio-cultural issues including other policies related to India-Thailand which serve to establish soft power which is based on Joseph Nye's Soft Power concept.

For 3,000 years, Thailand has been at the centre of Southeast Asia bounded by the Andaman Sea in the west and the Sea of China in the east, both strongly influenced by seasonal monsoons. It was ideal for agriculture and fishing with rich biodiversity. Moreover, monsoons were useful for long distance shipping. Thailand is a trade 'hub' for goods exchange linking countries in the Far East with these in the near east and west such as India, Persia and Europe.

Moreover, in the west of Thailand there is the Salween River in Burma and in the east, the Khong River. These two rivers were places with diverse environments and ethnic groups who moved around making contact with others. Therefore, cultural mixing occurred. These people

were ‘ancestors’ of Thais today. (Wongthet, 2006: 11-12)

Around 2,500 years ago, some Jambudvipa people (today called India) travelled via Bengal-Andaman sea-coast to Southeast Asia, then known as Suwannabhumi. There was exchange and trade with the local female leaders in the communities of the “Mae Klong-Thaceen river basin”. In the past, there were two routes from India to Thailand as follows:

1. Sea route: There were two directions:

1.1 From India to Takuathung, then by land to Nakhon Si Thammarat.

1.2 From India by boat; to Melayu peninsular and embarking at Champa Kingdom to Khmer and to Thailand

2. Land route: There were three ways through Burma to the western border of Thailand:

2.1 Mae Lamo border near Tak province

2.2 Phra Jedi Saam Ong border and to Karnchanaburi

2.3 Tavoy, Tenasserim and enter to Singkhon border near Prajuab Khirikhan. This route was used the most for migration. (Anamwat, 1985: 20-21)

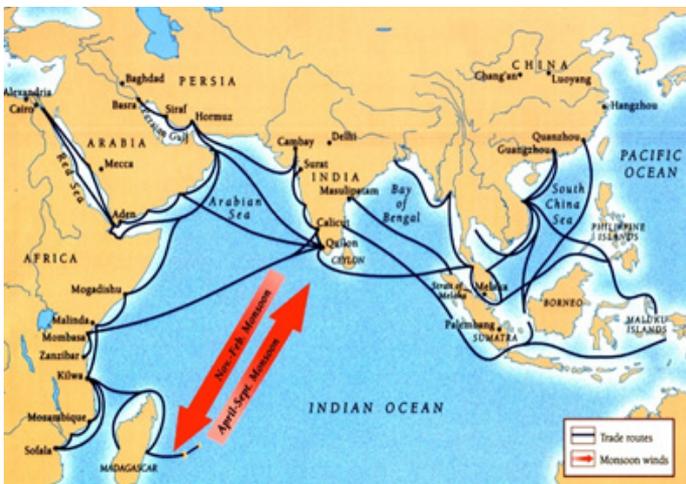


Figure 1: Indian Ocean Trade Routes (Ulowetz, 2015)

The ties between India-Thailand through trade started since the 7-8th centuries of the Buddhist Era (B.E.). The three oldest groups of Vishnu statues in Thailand and Southeast Asia, two of which were found in Tambalinga² (Nakhon Si Thammarat) date back to the 9-10th centuries B.E. which reflects the influence of Mathura and the final period of Amaravati Arts. Later, local beliefs mixed with Brahmanism creating a unique and prosperous society, in evidence up to the present day.

In terms of art and culture in the 11-14th centuries B.E., the northern part of the Malayu Peninsular, especially Nakhon Si Thammarat, was strongly influenced by Indian art and culture. Indian merchants did business and established Brahmanism which can be traced by the ancient artifacts of Shivism and Vaishnavism from South India, found in Nakhon Si Thammarat.

The brief history of India-Thailand trade started from the first kingdom of Siam known as Sukhothai but there is not much evidence remaining. The following kingdom was Ayutthaya which saw the golden era of inter-trade with India. The products exported to India were forest products including elephants and imported goods from India were mainly textiles and clothes. In the following Ratanakosin era, British colonization from India spread to Southeast Asia. Therefore, the Siamese government conducted business through the British raj established in this region. Following a royal visit to India, King Rama V introduced an open policy for welcoming foreigners to do business at an international level. Due to push factors occurring in India - drought and rapid growth of population - Indian emigration increased, with Siam as a primary destination. One reason for this was that Siam was an economic and commercial centre without British occupation. Indian migrants came from many states of India as follows:

- Hindus from Tamil Nadu, Sindh, Punjabi, Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, Ayodhya, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Bengal
- Muslims were from Gujarat, Pondicherry and some were from

2 Tambalinga was an ancient southern city which was established before the 7th centuries of the Buddhist Era (B.E.). Its centre was Nakhon Si Thammarat.

century A.D. according to Nan-chou I-wu Chih, a source from the 3rd century who tells us that southern Thailand practiced Brahmanism as propounded by immigrant Brahmanas. T'ai-ping Yu Lan reported that around the 9th and 10th centuries the natives of the region gave their daughters to marry with the Brahmanas and facilitated them. There were about 10,000 Indian Brahmanas in the kingdom of P'an-p'an in isthmian Thailand as mentioned by Wen-hsieh T'ung K'ao. The Indian Brahmanas helped in royal administrative work in pre-modern Thailand. In the early 7th century, Chinese envoys to another state in peninsular Thailand mentioned the important ceremonial functions performed by the Brahmanas. (Lochan, 2006: 189-190). Although the number of the followers of Brahmanism was small, their services were offered to both the ruler and the ruled.

The Dvaravati Kingdom³ was based in central region of Thailand with Nakhonpathom as its capital. It is assumed that people here were Mons and spoke Mon. In the reign of the Great King Ashoka, when there was war in India, people migrated to live in Siam and shared their knowledge, including Brahmanism, with the local people. They came mostly by sea which was the ancient trade route. The Indians left Moulemein and walked across the mountains to central Thailand and Nakhonpathom. Some historians believe that the Mons were descendants of immigrants from the southern Orissa and northern Andhra Pradesh region of India. The Mon are probably a mixture of all these people (Mishra, 2010: 23). The primitive beliefs of the people before Buddhism were animism and ancestor worship. In the 3rd century BC a Buddhist delegation of Ashoka Maurya, under the command of Sona and Uttara arrived at a point known even now as Nakhonpathom (Lochan, 2006: 189). Some historians such as Mishra (2010: 24) note that Sona and Uttara came to Suvarnabhumi to preach Buddhism. Suvarnabhumi had been identified with the region comprising southern Myanmar, central Thailand, and eastern Cambodia. In this kingdom, the kingship system of succession was an Indian influence.

³ The Dvaravati (ทวารวดี) period lasted from the 6th to the 13th centuries. It was Mon state which was influenced by Indian culture mixing with locality. The Dvaravati spread to the centre, northeast and north of Thailand. The sites in the northeast of Thailand connected the Gulf of Siam with northern Vietnam. (Wyatt, 1982: 18-20; Piyaphan, 1995:48-49)

In the Sukhothai period⁴, the kings established international relations with other countries including India. They adapted Brahminism in their ruling way through relations with the southern kingdom as mentioned above.

At the beginning of the Ayutthaya period⁵, King Uthong decided to have a Brahmanic coronation rite to celebrate his accession to the throne (Hussain, 1982: 32). In addition, the kings of Ayutthaya were treated as reincarnations of the Hindu gods Vishnu and Siva by their names such as Ramathibodi (the name of King Uthong which is derived from Rama, the Ramayana hero, a reincarnation of Vishnu), Ramesuan (Rama-Isvara), Intracha (Intra-Raja) (Hussain, 1982: 34).

Roles of Brahman

In Thailand there are five official religions: Buddhism is the majority with 94.6%; Islam 4.6%; Christianity 0.9%, Hinduism 0.1%, Sikhism and others 0.6% (Hays, 2014).

Brahmans have played a major role along with Buddhism since the Sukhothai period. In Thailand, there are two types of Brahmans: Thai Brahmans and Indian Brahmans. What are the requirements for becoming a Thai Brahman?

- 1) Being descendant
- 2) Willingness to Brahman
- 3) Preceptor's acceptance

4 The Sukhothai Kingdom (ราชอาณาจักรสุโขทัย) existed from 1238 till 1438. Sukhothai, meaning the Dawn of Happiness, was a town founded in the 13th century on the fringe of the Khmer empire by Phokhun Si Intharathit. Along with his capable son Ramkhamhaeng, the kingdom was established by combining the small towns nearby together. It was the first truly independent Thai (Siamese) Kingdom after defeating the Khmers. Under the third king, King Ramkhamhaeng, Sukhothai expanded greatly in area under his shrewd policies. During this period, Sukhothai was prosperous in terms of politics, economy, society and religio-culture. King Ramkhamhaeng also developed Thai scripts based on Khmer scripts in 1283 (Piyaphan, 1995: 58-64).

5 Ayutthaya (อาณาจักรอยุธยา) was a Siamese kingdom that existed from 1351 to 1767 in the valley of Chao Phraya River. Ramathibodi I or U Thong was the first king of Ayutthaya. The port-capital was the center of commerce where foreign traders concentrated. In the sixteenth century, it was described by foreign traders as one of the biggest and wealthiest cities in the East. Ayutthaya was the capital of a Theravada Buddhist state dominated by a royal court, which was in turn presided over by a king who was revered almost as a god. This concept was influenced by Hinduism including the name of the city associated with the epic Ramkien (Ramayana of India). (Kasetsiri, 2001: 139-140; Wyatt, 2003: 52-

With these three qualifications, a person may be ordained.

Brahmans perform rituals for births, marriages, building a new house, worshipping deities, etc. Rituals serve to pass on knowledge about the goodness of gods to worshippers. Brahmans serve to make participants more spiritually conscious. Their wisdom will lead to ultimate goodness which combines as one with the gods.

Nowadays the King regularly allows royal Brahmans to perform royal rituals on his behalf and for the country. Brahmans are government officers under the Bureau of the Royal Household and perform their rituals at Dhevasthan (Brahmin Shrine). (Sansanti, 2015)

As for Indian Brahmans, they are invited from India with the permission of the Thai authorities and perform their duties in Hindu temples, both in Bangkok and in the provinces, and they include Sikh religious preachers.

Buddhism and Hinduism have become syncretized in Thai society. Hindu gods such as Ganesha, Brahma, Trimurti, Naraya and Indra are respected by many Buddhists but Ganesha is the most popular god in Thailand. There are approximately 60 Ganesha statues mostly in the Buddhist temples in the Central provinces and outskirts of Bangkok. Moreover, images of Ganesha have been reproduced many times in various styles and shapes. Ganesha statuettes are imported from India for sale by some Thai businessmen. Some sellers use imported elements and pandits from India to perform production rituals. Links between India-Thailand increase the sacred values of Ganesha and other gods. Two of the biggest Ganesha temples are in Nakhonnayok and Chachoengsao provinces with images set side by side together with Theravada Buddha images and Mahayana deities.

Moreover, other gods and goddesses are located in many government and private places. Hindu gods and goddesses are closely incorporated into Thai life. With globalization, the Ganesha Jaturathi ceremony in Mumbai has become a destination for many Ganesha followers from Thailand.

Thai Buddhists as well as the Indian and Thai, actively

promote Buddhist pilgrimages to the Four Holy Places of Buddhism. Each year, many Thai visitors travel to these places as well as other unseen destinations in India.

2) Language and Culture

Some aspects of Indian languages have been borrowed into the Thai language:

Tamil refers to people from Chola in the south of India or Lanka Island who are also called “Sinhala”. They have had long term relations with Thais especially those in the south. The king named Chantharaphanu, ruler of the Thai peninsula, invaded Lanka twice in the reign of King Parakramabahu II in 1250 C.E. (1793 B.E.) and in 1253 C.E. as stated in Mahawongse⁶ text . Inscriptions found at Nakhon Si Thammarat, were in the Tamil language which shows that there was a relationship between the King of the Thai peninsula and Chola. The Tamil language was popular in the south of the Thai peninsula as there was no other unifying language used for communication at that time.

According to the ‘History of Srivijaya’ by K.A. Nitankanta Sastri, it is mentioned that King Rajendra Chola I attacked the Thai peninsula in 1568 C.E. and camped his army at present day Phuket. He named this island ‘Manig gham’⁷ [lit: glass, city] “Glass city” derived from Tamil ‘Nagaram’ which was derived from Sanskrit ‘nagara’. Moreover, it is assumed that some place names used in the Thai peninsula were from Tamil. Later on, King Chantharaphanu and his father drove the

⁶ Mahavamsa (Mahawansa) is the oldest and longest chronology in the world. It is Buddhist monks of Mahavihara, maintained this historical record of the Sri Lankan history starting from 3rd century B.C., somewhat similar to a modern day diary. These records were combined and compiled into a single document in the 5th century CE by Buddhist monk Mahathera Mahanama. The Mahavamsa is an important Buddhist document of the early history of Sri Lanka, beginning near the time of the founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama. As it often refers to the royal dynasties of India, the Mahavamsa is also valuable to historians who wish to date and relate contemporary royal dynasties in the Indian subcontinent. It is very important in dating the consecration of the Maurya emperor Asoka, which is related to the synchronicity with the Seleucids and Alexander the Great. (‘The Mahavamsa, the Great Chronical of Sri Lank’, n.d.)

⁷ This village still exists in Phuket. The new name ‘Phuket’ is translated from Tamil in Sanskrit form is ‘फ़ुकेत’ /phuket/ > फ़ु /phu/ which means ‘city’; and केत /ket/ which means ‘glass’ = Glass city which has the same meaning as the Tamil name. Later, the Melayu people pronounced it as ‘Bukit’. Southern Thai thought that it was Melayu word meaning as ‘mountain’ then changed the final consonant from क /c/ > ठ /t/ (Phongphaiboon, 1993:52)

Tamils out leaving only the language. (Phongphaiboon, 1993: 51-53)

Because of the influence of Hinduism and both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, as well as Brahmanism, the Pali and Sanskrit languages as well as Indian scripts were transmitted into Thailand. Moreover, the Indian epic, Ramayana was also transferred known as Ramkien. Thai people selected and modified the Indian elements suitable with the local style as Mishra' statement (2010: 29, 32-33)

“It is to be noted that interaction between the cultures of India and Southeast Asia resulted in the spread of Indian culture. The Indian influence was by peaceful and nonpolitical methods. For a long time, the process of Indianization was regarded as an Indian initiative with South-east Asia at the receiving end....Southeast Asians were able to choose which elements of Indian culture they could apply to their own beliefs...”

2.1 Development of Thai Scripts

Before King Ramkhamhaeng's Thai scripts inventory, there were other scripts such as those found in inscriptions in Nakhon Si Thammarat which were assumed by Professor Georges Cedès as being the oldest scripts ever found in Thailand. They were similar to Indian scripts dated between 357 C.E.-557 C.E. (500-1000 B.E.). Moreover, there are Tamil inscriptions found on Narayan hill, Takuapa dating from 707 C.E.-757 C.E. (1250-1300 B.E.). Sanskrit inscriptions were also found at Wat Semamuang in Nakhon Si Thammarat.

Other Tai, such as Tai Ahom also had their own scripts before the inventory in the Sukhothai period. (Phongphaiboon, 1993: 83)

Grantha or Pallava scripts were distributed from south India to Southeast Asia: Thailand, Cambodia, Burma and others around the 12th century B.E. The first inscription of this era was found in Ubon Ratchathani known as “Prince Jitasen or Mahendravarman of Chenla kingdom inscription” using Grantha scripts. Sanskrit inscriptions were found at Khao Rang in Prachinburi province from around 539 C.E (1182 B.E.). Other findings containing Pallava scripts were found in Dvaravati in central Thailand.

Around 12-15 century B.E. ‘ancient Khom scripts’ developed

from Pallava were found in northeast Thailand. Later, it developed into ‘Khom script’.

Around 18th century (B.E.) ‘ancient Mon scripts’ were distributed from the Pagan kingdom of Burma to the Hariphunchai kingdom in today’s Lamphun and Chiang Mai provinces, northern Thailand.

In 1283 C.E (1826 B.E) King Ramkhamhaeng used ‘ancient Mon scripts’ and ‘ancient Khom scripts’ which were developed from Pallava with rearranged vowels in the same line with consonants. He constructed the first stone inscription in 1292 C.E. (1835 B.E.) which serve as prototypes to the Thai script today.

Thai scripts were modified later: In the Ayutthaya period, there were 44 consonants, all vowels and two tones: Ek (falling tone), and Tho (rising-falling tone).

In the Ratanakosin era, there were four tones: Ek, Tho, Tri (rising tone), Jatawa (falling-rising tone). In 1828 C.E. (2371 B.E.), Captain James Low printed Thai scripts in Calcutta, India and by 1935 C.E. (2478 B.E.), the script had developed to what we use today. (Sansanti, 2015b). During the Ayutthaya period, people preferred to use Pali and Sanskrit in books and borrowed more Khmer words, especially using royal vocabularies for the king and royal members.

From the Ayutthaya to Ratanakosin eras, ordinary people named their children with simple words of single syllable. Longer names started from King Rama V’s time in order to make the new names different from others by using Sanskrit. Thai popular naming borrowed from India is called “Thaksapakorn” which means ‘Eight planets’⁸. Sanskrit names are more prestigious than simple Thai names.

As Thailand was influenced by Indian religion, art, architecture, politics and trade, many Thai vocabularies derived from Pali and Sanskrit with Thai modification. Therefore, these two languages are the base for the new words’ formulation.

8 Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Saturn, Jupiter, Venus and Rahu (‘Naming’, n.d.)

2.2 Literature

Ramayana and Mahabharata epics have influenced Thai literature, This is especially evident in the Ramayana or Phra Ram, in numerous versions of Ramkien such as Ramkien Kham Chan, Ramkien Kham Phaak in the Ayutthaya period, Ramkien of King Thonburi, Ramkien in King Rama I, II and IV in the Ratanakosin period, and in other book references. Regarding the Mahabharata, it has influenced various literatures such as Anirutkhamchan in which Krisana instructs her sister. (Lawsunthorn, 1972: 198)

A number of Sanskrit and Pali novels have been translated into Thai such as Mahabharata, Ramayana, Shakuntala, Bhagavad gita, Vetala-panca-vimsati (Vetal in Thai), Hitopadess, etc.

Moreover, renowned Indian items of literature have been translated into Thai such as works by Mahatma Gandhi and these related to Gandhi written by other authors; works by Jawaharal Nehru; Rabindranath Tagore; as well as works by other authors such as ‘khon-khii-sua’ (คนที่เสือ) or ‘He who rides a tiger’ by Bhabani Bhattacharya which is very famous in its Thai version and studied in schools. In addition, some modern novels are also available in Thai such as Slum Dog Millionaire, Babyji, Wings of Fire, etc.

2.3 Indian Films in Thai Society

Around 1965, Deewanchan started to import Indian films from India into Thailand and in fact several other importers joined in conducting the same business. Original films were shown in 16 mm format in cinemas in Phahurat, Yaowarat (China Town) with simultaneous dubbing in Thai. Later the films changed to 35mm.

Two genres of Indian films were imported:

- 1) Drama
- 2) Deva

After 1980, the popularity of Indian films declined. Cinemas eventually closed as the new trend of watching films in cinema complexes replaced the big cinemas. As a result, Indian films all but ceased to be shown publicly.

Between 1983-85, the Ambassador Cinema sought to revive Indian films by showing the film 'Khuda Gawah' with Amitabh Bachchan. It was very popular and lasted three months. Films following it were not so popular and the genre declined again.

From the beginning of the 1990's, imported Indian films on DVD, with Hindi sound-track became available in Phahurat, Little India. In 1995-96, the Indian Association requested descendants of the Deewanchan importer to rescreen Indian films at the Chalermkrung Cinema from Friday-Sunday for the benefit of the Indian community. Soon, Thai dubbed versions became available but the Thai audience did not respond positively. Then, DVD's recorded during cinema screenings, became common. Two types of imported Indian films were available one DVD: popular current films and retrospective films. Most customers were adults, female merchants and out - of - towners.

Nowadays, Major Cineplex screens Indian films in the original Hindi with Thai/English subtitling. Most audiences are Indians - only 5% are Thais.

Reasons for the lack of popularity of Indian films in Thailand:

1) Many big cinemas closed because teen tastes have changed towards Hollywood films.

2) Bollywood fashion styles are different from more popular Korean and Japanese styles.

3) Thais in the south prefer to watch DVD Indian films more than those in other regions, due to the similar culture.

4) Today, Hindi or English scripts are sent from India to be translated into Thai first, then sent back to India for subtitling. But this does not always convey the beauty of the original, so it may not be able to attract the young generation of Thais.

5) Ratings for advertising for Indian films on TV are low. Therefore, Indian films are rarely shown on TV. (Ravinder Singh Thatkar's information)

In this regard, India has to do more PR to attract Thai people, especially the young generation who have not experienced elements of

Indian culture like the older generation. Screenings of Indian films should be more frequent on TV.

However, many Indian films come to shoot in Thailand including documentary films. A number of Thai actresses have acted in Indian films too, and Thai TV games occasionally feature India as a theme or back drop.

3) Arts and Architectures

Some Thai art and architecture found in Buddhist temples and stupa have been influenced by Hinduism. One of the outstanding mural paintings on the balcony of the Emerald Buddha in the Grand Palace was influenced by the Ramayana Epic. In all, there were 178 palace containing depictions of the Ramayana from the beginning until the end according to King Rama I. The mural paintings are classic examples of Thai art and Thai imaginary which differs from that of Indian and other Southeast Asian Ramayana versions.

Moreover, other Indian architectural styles influenced some Thai stupas most notably the “Bell shape” of the Sanchi stupa which was modified and constructed to resemble Thai Chedis such as “Phra Prathom Chedi” in Nakhonpathom.

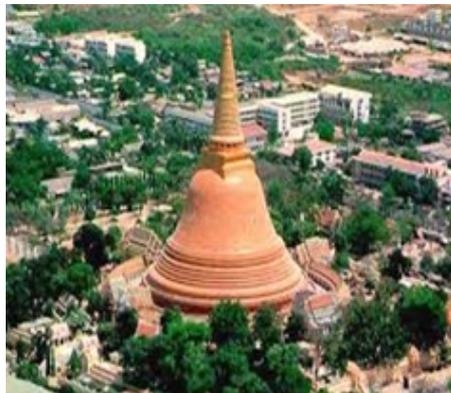
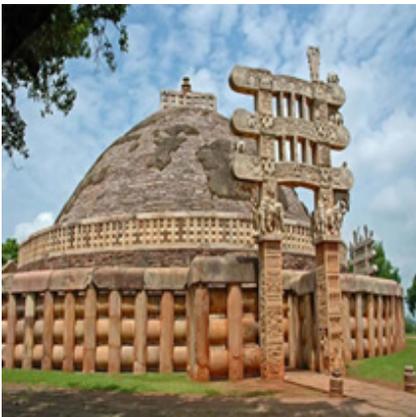


Figure 3: Sanchi stupa, India **Figure 4:** Phrapathom Chedi, Thailand

(<http://www.shunya.net/Pictures/NorthIndia/Sanchi/Sanchi.htm>)

(<http://www.yourthaiguide.com/phra-pathom-chedi/>)

4) Political Development

The Dvaravati Kingdom was characterized by various groups of people living in discrete and disunified communities with no common administration. When the powerful and efficient Indian civilization arrived, people accepted it and formed a collective group in the form of a kingdom. Therefore, the kingship system from India helped create a united nation out of a variety of groups with a common language, Pali and Sanskrit, and common traditions.

The Khmer empire flourished in Thailand between 802 and 1431. Thailand received Indian culture through the Khmer. King Jayavarman of the Angkor dynasty, which was established in 802 C.E., introduced the *Devaraja cult* (King of Gods), a concept that was founded in India. This Indian Devaraja was accepted by the rulers in Campa, Indonesia and China (Mishra, 2010: 26).

During the Ayutthaya period, the kings accepted the Devaraja idea from the Khmer whilst, at the same time, retaining the Buddhist Dharmaraja of the Sukhothai period. The King was the sole and centre of authority. He was as the chief of the land and people's lives. For Devaraja from Hinduism, the King represented the reincarnation of Shiva, therefore, he possessed characteristics and status superior to others, position reinforced by specific royal vocabulary and residence in the palace. Royal ceremonies included coronations and oath-taking designed to ensure loyalty to majesty and government. As Dharmaraja, all kings were expected to behave according to the royal virtues and Buddhist teachings, and their virtue would lead the kingdom towards prosperity and happiness.

The Kings in Ayutthaya applied the Devaraja system according to its suitability for Thais. They did abuse their authority. As Devaraja was used in the Ayutthaya kingdom, strong centralization made Ayutthaya stable and ensured smooth dynastic transition up to the present (Chaiyotha, 2007: 8-9).

King Ramathibodi I introduced a ruling system known as "Jatusadom" : with included four key ministers of the ancient government: Interior Royal (Wiang), Household (Wang), Finance (Khlung), Agriculture

(Na), an innovation adopted from India via Khmer.

During his reign, King Baromatrilokahnaj (1991-2031 B.E. or 1448-1488 C.E.), was the highest sovereign. Others; royal family members, nobles, monks and citizens, were ranked under the “Sakdina grades”⁹ and distinguished by the amount of land that was granted as their salaries such as a prince of high rank could have 20,000 or 8,000 acres (2 ½ rai being equal to 1 acre), while a commoner held only 10 acres. (Syamananda, 1986: 38)

It facilitated in ruling, punishing and penalizing depending on their ‘sakdina’. This system was used, not only in Ayutthaya, but also in the Lanna, Lan Chang, Cambodian and Burmese kingdoms including in India.

The Devaraja system remains in practice today.

5) Juridical System

Traditional Thai society relied mainly on custom for social rules up until the Ayutthaya period during which King Ramathibodi I, the first king of Ayutthaya kingdom, established a juridical system based on Dharma Sastra of India via Mon. Means of testimony in Ayutthaya were borrowed from India mixed with Thai with two groups as jury: *luuk khun na saan luang* – juries of royal court – composed of 12 Brahmins who were experts in laws and received a sakdina rank of Chao Phraya worth 10,000 rai of land. Their role was as legal experts not judges. Judgement depended on Thai nobles who were another group. (Chaiyotha, 2007:208). Brahmin laws later appeared in numerous chapters of “Three Emblems Law”- law books written at the beginning of the Chakri Dynasty (Boonyawan and Pechsiri n.d.)

6) Education

Brahmans taught royal family members and wrote texts and literature such as Samut-thra-khot-kham-chan of Phra Maha Rajkhru and Chinda-Manee - the first Thai textbook composed by Phra Horathibodi

⁹ Sakdina system places a value on every man in the kingdom. If he did something wrong and was fined, the amount of the fine was determined by his Sakdina grade; so too was the compensation to be paid for any injury done to him or for his death. (Syamananda, 1986: 38)

(Brahman) in the reign of the Great King Naraya of the Ayutthaya period.

After the defeat of Ayutthaya by Burmese troops, most texts were burnt, so King Rama I invited Brahmans (possessing sacred ceremonial texts) from the south to Bangkok to participate in royal ceremonies to favour king and kingdom. These texts were written in Thai using Grantha scripts. The languages used were Thai, Sanskrit and Tamil. ('Roles of Brahmans to Siamese Royal Court', 1996)

In the modern era, Indian governments have provided many schemes of scholarships for Thai students over the past 50 years. Many students have gone on to contribute actively in Thai society including many Thai monks. Moreover, there are also Indian students studying in Thai universities and countless other academic collaborations between India and Thailand have been arranged in different fields. India has continuously empowered human resource development in Thailand throughout histories.

In Thailand, there are several public universities which have taught about India such as Sanskrit Studies Centre with its Indian Studies program including Indian languages such as Hindi and Tamil. Mahidol University has established the 'Centre for Bharat Studies' under RILCA and other two Indian Studies Centers in other universities.

Thai studies in India are not popular despite our historic connections, so more needs to be done there to promote a greater interest in Thailand's language, history and culture.

7) Diplomatic and Trade Relations

India and Thailand established diplomatic relations after independence of India in 1947 (68 years in 2015). The Royal Thai Embassy is located in New Delhi with three consuls in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata. In Thailand, the Embassy of India located in Bangkok with consuls in Chiangmai (the north) and Songkhla (the south).

During the Cold War period, the world was divided into two spheres. India had close relations with the socialist regime led by the former Soviet Union, whereas Thailand had a close relations with the US dominated alliance of the west. Political, security and socio-economic

relations between the two countries were suspended during this time. After the Cold War, India changed its foreign policy in terms of politics, security and socio-economics with a “Look East” policy implemented in 1992 to expand relations and co-operations with the East and Southeast Asian regions. In 1996, Thailand responded with a “Look West” policy designed for mutual benefit through multiple schemes of co-operation covering various dimensions: trade and investment; science and technology; defence; agriculture; tourism; religion; culture and education. Moreover, there were many exchanges and high-level visits from both sides including the signing of many agreements.

Moreover, India and Thailand are co-operating multilaterally through ASEAN, the East Asia Summit, BIMSTEC, the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), and the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC). (‘Thai-India Relations’, n.d.)

Trade relations

Trade relations between India and Southeast Asia have developed since prehistory as mentioned above. Indian art, architecture, statecraft, administration, and other cultural features arrived in many forms to create an Indianized kingdom. (Mishra, 2010:25). As an aspect of globalization, trade is one of the most important factors used to evaluate the development of the diplomatic relations between countries. The increasing volume of investments is being promoted by both governments.

“In the past five years, trade volume between the two countries increased by an average of 15 per cent annually, last year it was more than \$8.6 billion ... We expect it to double to \$16 billion by 2015 increase in trade volume,” Thai Trade Centre (Mumbai) executive director and consul (commercial) Adul Chotinisakorn told PTI (The times of India, n.d.).

Moreover, some Indian traders conduct business directly with Indian Thais in Thailand such as exporters in Kolkata who deliver goods ordered by import firms in Phahurat (Bangkok’s “Little India”). In exchange, they deliver goods from Thailand to Kolkata such as TV’s and other appliances.

Trade exhibitions are promoted by both countries including

technical and business gatherings.

From 2007 through 2012, 114 projects by Indian investors were approved and received promotional incentives from the Thailand Board of Investment with a total investment value of 30,203 million baht. Large-scale projects include: Aditya Birla Chemicals (Thailand) Ltd., a rayon manufacturer; Apollo Tyres Ltd. (Thailand) which manufactures radial tires; the N.T.S. Steel Group Plc., manufactured of raw steel products and semi-finished and finished steel products; Polyplex Ltd., producing pet resin and polyester film; Indorama Holdings Ltd., which manufactures wool yarns; Bharat Hotels Ltd; and Tata Motor Ltd., auto manufacturer, etc.

Large-scale Thai companies that operate businesses in India include ITD Cementation India Ltd.; Charoen Pokphand Foods Plc; the Siam Cement Group (SCG); Pranda Jewelry Plc.; Thai Summit Auto Part Industry Co., Ltd.; the Pruksa Group, etc. ('Board of Investment, Thailand to initiate investment services in Mumbai to attract Indian Investors and Urge Thais to Invest in India', 2013).

India and Thailand FTAs were signed in September 2004 covering 82 products. Negotiations for a comprehensive bilateral agreement for trade in goods, services, and investments are currently underway. ('ASEAN, India Reaffirm 20-years Ties,' 2012: 16)

8) Tourism

Tourism is one of the 'goods and services' that governments use to earn revenue. Thai people have usually preferred to visit Buddhist sites in India, but some Thai tourist companies have been trying to promote undiscovered locations in India such as the southern, and western routes and the Kashmir northern route. About 121,362 Thai tourists visited India in 2014. (Statista.com)

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has established offices in a number of states in India, especially Delhi and Mumbai, in order to promote tourism. The number of Indian tourists to Thailand in 2015 was 968,127 (3.61% share) (Department of Tourism) making India one of the top ten countries for

visitors choosing Thailand as their holiday destination.

The Kingdom is keen on services with reasonable prices and standards so the TAT has tried to promote marriage ceremonies in hotels in popular Thai tourist locations such as Phuket, Pattaya and Chiangmai, according to the Indian market demands which put reasonable cost at a premium. Guests from India may be as many as 200-400 in a group. Thailand was awarded “The World’s Best Wedding Destination” by Travel and Leisure India magazine in 2011 and 2012 and by Hospitality India magazine in 2012 and 2013.



Figure 5 and **Figure 6:** Pattaya welcoming wedding parties from India
(‘Pattaya Welcoming Wedding Parties from India’, 2013)

In addition to the revenue derived from tourism, it is the best way for people to learn about each other and adjust services according to standards or availability. Moreover, related businesses are also able to benefit and the local economy is stimulated. The important thing should be

not to spoil the essence of natural resources and the image of the countries.

Some Thai hotels, Thai restaurants and spa have invested in many places in India. There are also many Indian restaurants, Yoga and Ayurveda have been distributed in Thai society too. Connectivity between India-Thailand by air is growing to over 140 flights per week. India and Thailand are cooperating closely on improving regional connectivity through initiatives such as India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, ASEAN Highway Network (under UNESCAP), BTILS under BIMSTEC framework.

9) India and Thailand and India and ASEAN Relations

In 2012, 65 years of India-Thailand diplomatic relations was celebrated. Over the past two decades, India's 'Look East' policy has been complemented by Thailand's 'Look West' policy in bringing the two countries closer.

There have been exchanges by way of high level visits by Her Royal Highness Princess Mahachakri Sirindhorn who is a regular visitor to India; and by HRH Crown Prince Mahavajiralongkorn, accompanied by royal family members and other prominent figures. The Crown Prince even piloted a special Thai Air flight to Bodhgaya to perform a Buddhist pilgrimage in 2010. HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha visited Bodhgaya and other pilgrimage sites in November 2011 and of course there have been numerous prime ministerial visits between India-Thailand.

In the same year, 20 years of India-ASEAN ties were celebrated. ASEAN is an important part of India's Look East policy. Relations with the 10 member countries have gone well. India has participated in many ASEAN framework initiatives ('ASEAN, India Reaffirm 20-years Ties,' 2012).

On the occasion of the 20th commemorative year of India-ASEAN relations, India has demonstrated its use of soft power by organizing the 2nd edition of the ASEAN-India Car Rally from 26 November – 20 December 2012. The rally routes included Yogyakarta, Indonesia; Singapore; Malaysia; Thailand; Cambodia; Vietnam; Lao

PDR; Thailand; Myanmar; and India. The purpose of the Car Rally and the “marker” events was essentially to reinforce, in a very visible manner, India’s proximity to the ASEAN. The rally and the marker events also served to enhance public awareness of the current canvas of the ASEAN-India partnership and further strengthen trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people linkages.

Integration is a process that is being driven today, both by the technological revolution that shrinks distances, and by interconnected populations. Therefore, India has honoured India-ASEAN ties to a higher level. (‘Principal Home Secretary,’ 2012).



Figure 7: ASEAN-India Car Rally Route
(‘Principal Home Secretary,’ 2012).

In this rally, Mahindra, one of India’s major companies, provided its 4WD vehicles to highlight the quality of Indian automobile production.

Another symbolic activity organized by India was the sending of the sailing training ship “Sudarshini” on an expedition to ASEAN Countries, all of which helped promote and raise awareness of the connectivity between ASEAN and India.



Figure 8: Sail Training Ship “Sudarshini”
(‘ASEAN Voyage of INS Sudarshini,’ 2012).

The sailing ship and the routes chosen emphasized the degree to which sea routes benefited by the monsoon’s trade winds secured strong linkages between India and South East Asia. The maritime expedition retraced the sea routes developed during the 10th to 12th centuries, linking India with South East Asia, covering most of the modern and ancient ports in ASEAN countries.

The event, which took place from 15 September 2012 to 26 March 2013, started from Goa and included stops at 13 foreign ports in nine ASEAN countries: Padang, Bali, Manado, Brunei, Cebu, Manila, Da Nang, Sihanoukville, Bangkok, Singapore, Klang, Phuket and Yangon. (‘The ASEAN-Indian Navy Expedition 2012’, <http://voiceof.india.com/features/the-asean-indian-navy-expedition-2012/8083>). It reflects that India-ASEAN can be connected via the historical route from past to present.

These two activities symbolized the soft power that India uses to connect to ASEAN both by land and sea routes, attracting respect and corporation from the countries involved which conveyed a deep appreciation of the long lasting relations between these two regions since ancient times.

Discussion

India is one of the powerful countries in Asia and the world with a rapidly growing economy and a major new market for investments. India is also represented by a robust and profound civilization which has influenced many countries around the world including Thailand. These factors have seen Thailand emerge as a primary recipient of India’s cultural bounty throughout our long history which remains very strong in today’s Thai religio-socio-culture. Kind-hearted acts of generosity can win the heart of the receiver. Careful selection and adaptation of such Indian influences have created a unique syncretism in Thai society. The integration has occurred naturally and inevitably, not by any force. In modern times, negotiation, collaboration and assistance are applied to the inter-relations.

According to Nye’s concept Power as Resources and Power as Behavioral Outcomes, historical and contemporary factors dominating the essence of India-Thailand relations can be schematized as follows:

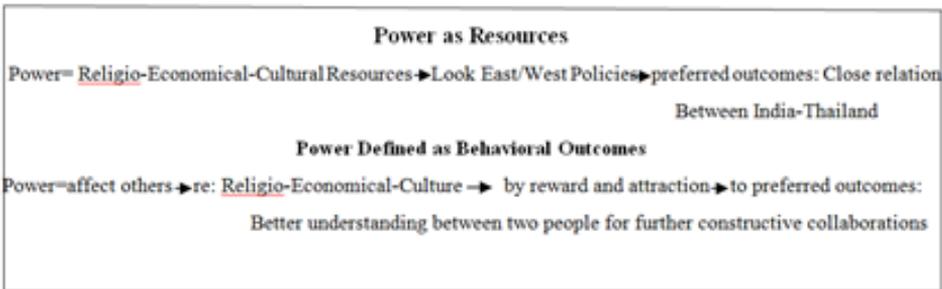


Figure 9: Relations between India-Thailand are based on the ‘soft power’ concept

The questions of Nye (2011: 208-209) are applied to analyse the ‘soft power’ ties between India-Thailand as follows:

The first question that must be answered is: *What goals or outcomes are preferred?*—Thailand’s Look West and India’s Look East policies (now referred to as Act East Policy) aim to maintain the close relationship between our two countries with Thailand acting as a hub of connectivity within the ASEAN Community and between ASEAN and

India. India is the world's second biggest in terms of population, and 3rd largest economy in Asia, therefore, India is clearly a very important neighboring country for Thailand.

A second question is: *What resources are available and in which context?*. The resources mentioned above are religio-economical-cultural elements extending from India into Thailand over history. This background facilitates familiarity today. In modern times, exchange and collaboration between our two countries have occurred in various domains, civil and military. Moreover, India demonstrates its soft power regularly through culture in various ways towards Thailand, but not vice versa. However, each country has tried to exploit its own strengths to attract the other.

A third question is: *What are the positions and preferences of the targets of influence attempts?* Thailand, like India, does not have any aggressive foreign policy towards other countries. Although Thailand is a small country, we are making efforts to unite with other neighboring countries in the region as a unified ASEAN to create a more powerful negotiating and collaborating "bloc" or perhaps even Union in the future. India's Act East policy focuses on the 600 million population of ASEAN as a first priority. Therefore, India has arranged many schemes for ASEAN as a single community and some specific schemes for each country in particular, depending on the state of the diplomatic relationship and the target analysis. Although India is even bigger than all of ASEAN together, it never imposes its military power, but rather seeks collaboration in all aspects. So, India is playing a pacifist role in the world, notwithstanding its own security priorities.

The fourth question is: *Which forms of power behavior are most likely to succeed?* Throughout its long history, India has used soft power - trade, religion and culture - to interact with Southeast Asian peoples. Thailand in particular has gradually and effortlessly absorbed and integrated Indian aspects into its way of life. There was very little hard power experienced between our two countries, except perhaps in the Chola time. However, the remnants of Tamil inscriptions in the south of Thailand are evidence of strong historical relations between these two

regions. In modern times, being united as a single, large community or alliances among numerous countries, are very important for harnessing strength India and Thailand have collaborated on many occasions at regional and global levels to make the most their combined influence.

Finally, the fifth question is: *What is the probability of success?* As our two countries have implemented soft power in our diplomatic relations, the success derives from the close collaboration between our peoples and this will increase as further investment opportunities are targeted. Moreover, appreciation of each country's religio-socio-cultural aspects will encourage the prospects of succeeding in what both countries seek to achieve. When people understand each other better, collaborations are smoother.

Conclusion

Indians first came to Thailand via sea and land routes. The soft power ties discussed in this paper were established from ancient times in terms of influence in religion, language and culture, arts and architectures, political development, juridical system and educational system. They have contributed to significant aspects of Thai socio-culture up to modern times and continue to do so. Some elements of soft power have occurred as a consequence of globalization such as Indian scholarships provided to Thais, tourism, bilateral relations between India and Thailand and multilateral relation between India and ASEAN. The key to the success of the long-lasting relationship between Thailand and India is that at no time was power exercised aggressively. Rather, linkages were based on profound religio-socio-cultural transfer and current relations continue to strengthen in part because of this. As the eminent Thai monk and social reformer, Buddhadasa Bhikhu, once said "There is a combination of Indian flesh and blood in ours. We unconsciously have Hinduism as our mother and Buddhism as our father...we are Thai today because Indians brought traditions, customs, culture, including Buddhism, to us. We should thank India." (Champathong, 2012)

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