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Mapping Bengal's factors and Indianization of Southeast Asia

Sharmin Akhtar¹, M Shahidul Islam Khondaker²

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine the strategic factors and capacities Bengal utilized in playing her active role in the Indianization of Southeast Asia since the early period. Migration towards Southeast Asian regions from Bengal came about within the stream of Indianization with carrying ancient Bengal's norms and elements concerning trade, culture, and politics. As a regional entity of India, ancient Bengal contributed to Indianization from 400 BCE to 800 CE by maritime trade, religious and cultural palpitate and political contact. She exposed herself with the richness of the regional cultural solemnity and individuality. From this view point, how Bengal capacitated to contribute to Indianization is a question. In answer to this question, the present study analyzes the capacities Bengal achieved and made herself suit for keeping contribution behind Indianization, and the maritime trade, socio-cultural and political situation prevailed at that period in Bengal. To craft the output, through using the historiographic approach, the ancient Indian texts and archaeological evidence-based literature used as primary sources, and literature published as books and articles have also consulted. The study's result would provide the newest upbringing in fulfilling the literature gap regarding the role-playing strength, capacity, and components of Bengal worked behind taking place the Indianization in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Bengal; Southeast Asia; Indianization; Maritime trade; Culture.

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1. Introduction

Bengal (eastern coastal region of ancient India) and Southeast Asia closely connected to Indianization from the prehistoric period (Glover, 1990). In this connection, traders from early Bengal sailed towards Southeast Asia and built bilateral relationships. By their frequent traveling, Indian culture profoundly impacted the Southeast Asian people that repeatedly referred to the ancient Indian texts, such as Jataka, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Arthasastra, and others. This time, along with the

¹ Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh & Ph.D Researcher, Department of Southeast Asian Studies, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Email: sharmin_history@du.ac.bd

² Corresponding author, Masters' Student, Department of History, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Email: shahidul2112@gmail.com

explorers from the eastern coastal region, traders and preachers from other areas of India made their voyages through using the land and ports of Bengal. Here, Bengal acted individually with its enriched trade and culture and facilitated other Indian people by allowing them to use the Bengal's land on the way to Southeast Asia though it was a small geographical entity of India. As the academic discourse, in the discussion of Indianization, overall Indian relevance has naturally been reviewed in several pieces of literature, and Bengal also featured jointly with other Indian regions (Coedes, 1968, pp. 20-26; Gupta, 2006). Her deserving iconic roles have also discussed in few scholarly writings in strewn (Chowdhury, 1996; Datta, 1999), but how Bengal was capacitated in keeping that tremendous role did not get particular attention, or researchers not conducted full-length research on the aspects of its strength related to Indianization. From this viewpoint, this study aims to light throw on and outline the advantageous factors and capacities she utilized in playing that active role in the Indianization process since before the Christian era.

Indianization was a successful functioning network concerning commercial contact and cultural penetration in Southeast Asia's social arenas in the ancient period. This network created through maritime trade between both of these regions since around 400 BCE. According to Sunil Gupta, the 'Bay of Bengal Interaction Sphere' of the eastern part of the Indian Sub-continent and Southeast Asia connected through maritime trade and cultural notions (Gupta, 2006). In this interactive domain of Bay of Bengal, the Bengal's convenient strategic location worked as a significant component from where the first-ever South-Eastward stream commenced since 600-500 BCE (Glover, 1990), followed by the South Indian movement later, though Indianization's initial contact materialized orbital to Funan of Southeast Asia during 200-300 CE (Petech, 1950). B. N. Mukherjee opined, this time, the Khusan merchants of Ganges Valley (Bengal) made their voyage through using the land and port of Bengal (Mukherjee, 1990).

The Gange Valley was the core area of India's eastern coastal part conceiving a rich culture during the ancient period (Mukherjee, 1987), where Bengal was influential. The province of West Bengal of India and Bangladesh popularly considered Bengal during the British colonial period. In the ancient period, several townships (Janapada) comprised the boundaries of Bengal. Using the term 'Bengal' is convenient for referring to Vanga, Samatata, Harikela, Gauda, Radha, Pundra, Varendra, and Suhma (Majumder, 1971, pp. 1, 6-14).

However, the debate over the emergence of Indianization in Southeast Asia is still overwhelming, and an issue of scholars' immense attraction. This study does not take part in that debate but considering it as a substantial academic discourse. Wheatley's point of view is that the prehistoric archaeological study has approached this subject considering Southeast Asia a blank page fulfilled by the signature of alien Indians. Previously, western Southeast Asia assumed an extension of Indian culture, and later, it has stated that the Indian culture continued from prehistoric to the historical period in Southeast Asia (Wheatley, 1982). Over this scholarly issue, Coedes opined, people from Northwest India and its eastern coast frequently traveled to Southeast Asia through the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal to operate the maritime trade and religious propagation since before the Christian era. Using the established bilateral relationship, Indian people started to extend their staying period in Southeast Asia that aided in enhancing their influence with Indian culture in the people's daily lives in that new region. This alien group built political kingship in the different regions and townships in ancient Southeast Asia in the later period. Various ancient Southeast Asian territories took the Indian names. These are Suvarnadwipa (Malay Peninsula), Balidwipa (Bali), Karpuradwipa (Borneo, land of Camphor), Indradwipa (Myanmar), Yavawipa (Java), Kataha (Kedah), Srivijaya (Sumatra), Ayudhya (Siam or Thailand) (Coedes, 1968, p. 16). Some townships of ancient Southeast Asia cited as Greater India or Further India in the scholars' writing because of the affluent impact of Indian culture in those areas that also considered 'India beyond the Ganges' (Wheatley, 1982). The archaeological reports showed that Indian trade and culture replicated in various Southeast Asia regions, especially Ban-Don Ta Phet, Khao Sam Keo, Oc-Eo, Kedah and Srivijaya (Akhtar & Idris, 2020).

In terms of religious-cultural expansion, since the middle of 300 BCE, Buddhist religious propagation got pace in Southeast Asia (Smith, 1924, p. 164). Buddhism spread in different regions that elicited from various archaeology based literature. Paul Wheatley did not disregard the prehistoric external contact of Indians with this region. He presented Hinduization's theories by referring to Brahman appearance in the royal court in ancient Southeast Asian rulers who showed their skills in the

ritual and consecratory powers to the royal family members around the early fifth century that followed the commercial voyage of the Vaisya and Ksatriya, other two casts in Hinduism. They achieved the opportunities of establishing relationships with the people of Southeast Asia by involving themselves in the marriage relationship with the indigenous women in that region (Wheatley, 1982). In such a way, Indian influence established by its conception of royalty that hugely characterized by the cult of Hinduism and Buddhism and the Sanskrit language-based Mythology of Puran exercised in this area immensely (Coedes, 1968, pp. 15-16).

Most importantly, the magnitude of the Indianization has varied among scholars. As a result, examinations and analysis over this historic issue got a widened canvas on which researchers are still painting, of course, using a range of paintbrushes with searching and presenting the information's authenticity. From that view, the Indianization is sometimes considered the nature of the 'black-box model', where the result is tentative and incomplete, and the reality hidden because of the plentifulness of evidence (Wheatley, 1982). This immense Indianization process sometimes got the status of ordinary cultural syncretism (Alam, 2018, pp. 623-646) that might unconsciously ignored the vastness and profound impact of the Indian culture and political authority and religious supremacy that made the possible transformation of a significant number of the ancient Southeast Asian states into Indianized states (Coedes, 1968, p. 16). Hence, traders from the eastern coast (Bengal, Orissa) of India and South India sailed through the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal to the distant lands of various Southeast Asian regions. Like so, they built their new states, and Bengal was instrumental with its highest possible sorts of ways.

This research has applied the historiographic approach and principles to outline Bengal's strengths and qualities devoted to the Indianization process. The ancient Indian literary sources, archaeological evidence-based literature and excavation reports, and other archival sources have consulted to gather information. Literature related to the subject matter of this study published as books and articles has also been consulted. By examining the sources, this study's core findings are the

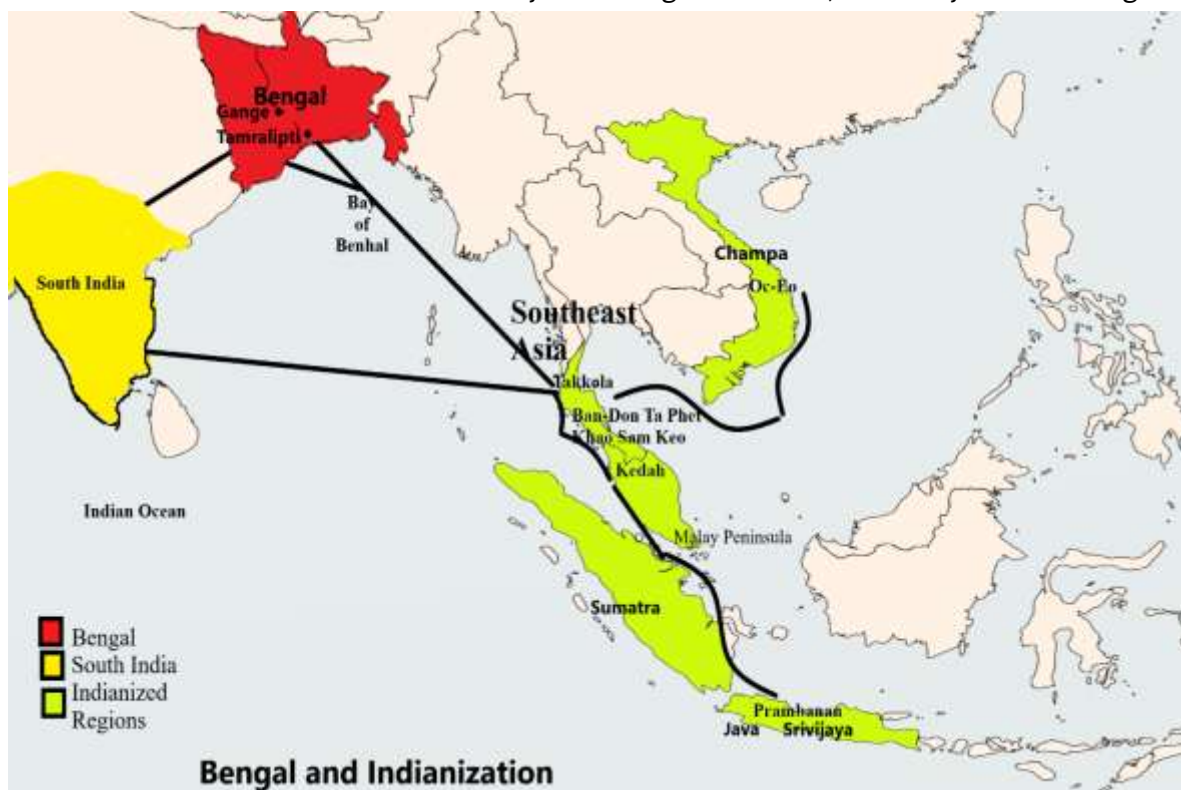


Figure 1. Map, Bengal and Indianization of Southeast Asia. Source: produced by authors.

Bengal's factors and capabilities in its strategic location that was favorable to play a role behind Indianization, establishing early trade and religious connections, making the forces of maritime trade link, building socio-cultural instincts, and the activities of the political linkages with Southeast Asia. This

paper would fulfil the literature gap regarding the role-playing strength, capacity, and components of Bengal that worked behind materializing the Indianization.

The subsequent portion of this study has a short literature review that provides insight into Indianization and the Bengal's connection with this historically significant event, followed by the study's methodology. A section has elaborated the evidence, debates, and authenticity of the information presented the real picture of Bengal's multiple vigors working behind the emerging of Indianization. Finally, the conclusion has incorporated the factual findings, and the narration of the rational impact would make in the literature related to the field of the early history of Bengal and Southeast Asia.

2. Literature review

Examining and reviewing the previous literature on a particular event provides ideas to conceptualize that aspect. Such analysis of literature also offers possible scope to search for new knowledge. Researchers have engaged immense effort in the academic discourse of the Indian influence over Southeast Asia's society through their scholarly writings. Since Bengal contact and relationships referred to as the part of India, this contributory territory gets mere attention separately in terms of its causative strength. Researchers have not been encouraged to conduct many studies regarding the aspects of Bengal's inherent capacities categorically.

The pioneering text and scholarly work over Indianization is by the authorship of G. Coedes entitled 'The Indianized State of Southeast Asia, has drawn the period of Indianization, geographical territories where it happened, and the Southeast Asian societies impacted by its result. It has pictured the commencement of ancient India's political contact with Southeast Asian regions where the new linkages established since before the Christine era. Occasional references of Bengal found in this book as relevant narration (Coedes, 1968). D. G. E. Hall narrated Southeast Asian history from the ancient period to recent in his book *A History of Southeast Asia*. In the discussion on the early period in few opening chapters, Hall described early Funan, Srivijaya, and Java as the territories impacted by the culture derived from Indianization where many other related regions of Southeast Asia did not get attention and did not have any particular discussion on Bengal (Hall, 1966). Another text of K. R. Hall is *A History of Early Southeast Asia: Maritime Trade and Societal Development 100-1500*. The author has presented the concerning reference of Bengal in his discussion over the maritime trade connection of Southeast Asia with India (K. R. Hall, 2011).

The contribution of M. Osborne entitled *Southeast Asia: An Introductory History* focused on the connection of India with the prominent ancient city Srivijaya rather than mentioning any contact of Bengal (Osborne, 2013). Researchers can depend on the *Maritime Trade and State Development in Early Southeast Asia* of K. R. Hall to get some information about Southeast Asia's commercial network with ancient India that happened through maritime trade in the ancient period, and Bengal mentioned in that text merely (Hall, 1985).

A recent publication entitled *History of Early Bengal in Regional Perspectives* (up to c. 1200 CE) has recounted the Bengal's connection with ancient Southeast Asian regions (Chowdhury & Chakrabarti, 2018). This text has contained very few resourceful narrations on the early connection of Bengal during the period Indianization happened, especially the cultural influence of Bengal over the people and society of Southeast Asian regions, but has disregarded the reality and factuality of Indianization.

Over the Bengal's connection with Southeast Asia in the ancient period, few scholars, namely Enamul Haque (Haque, 2001; Haque, 2003), Harunur Rashid (Rashid, 2008), and A.B.M. Hussain (ed) (Husain, 1997), contributed with some informative writings those offer an indication, directly or indirectly, of the role of Bengal behind Indianization. By consulting these noteworthy texts, one can get narration to understand the religious architectural ideas and concepts loaned by several Southeast Asian regions. These writings provide core knowledge about the Bengal originated archaeological remains found from Southeast Asian archaeological sites.

R. C. Majumder has portrayed the chronicle regarding the ancient Indian colony in the Southeast Asian region in his scholarship *Suvarnavdipa: Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East* (Majumder, 1986). *A Sourcebook of Indian Civilization* is a text principally contained the interpretation of ceramics but having a relevant discussion on India's connection with ancient Southeast Asia (Ray,

2000). S. Saran has drawn some references concerning different historical and cultural relations between India and Southeast Asia in *Cultural and Civilizational Links between India and Southeast Asia* (Saran, 2018).

J. Takakusu translated I-tsing's text *A Record of Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and Malay Archipelago AD 671-695* provides narration on ancient India and the Malay Archipelago. I-tsing was a Chinese traveler who has drawn a picture and expressed significant information about these regions' connection (Takakusu, 1896).

Readers find little ideas from some articles that have justified to refer to this study. Contribution of B. N. Mukherjee entitled 'Kharoshti and Kharoshti-Brhami Inscriptions in West Bengal (India)' (Mukherjee, 1990), 'Early trade between India and South-East Asia: a link in the development of a world trading system of I. C. Glover (Glover, 1990) and the article written by S. Tripathi entitled 'Seafaring Archaeology of the East Coast of India and Southeast Asia during the Early Historical Period' (Tripathi, 2017) has been considered value carrying texts to get relevant information on Bengal's connection with Southeast Asia.

Additionally, an illustration of the connection of Bengal with Southeast Asia has illustrated in the article of Monica entitled 'Indianization from the Indian Point of View: Trade and Cultural Contacts with Southeast Asia in the Early First Millennium' (Monica, 1999). 'The Archaeology of Bengal: Trading Networks, Cultural Identities' written by H. P. Roy (Roy, 2006) and 'Crossing the Boundaries of the Archaeology of Sompura Mahavihara: Alternative Approaches and Propositions' has been written by Sen and others (Sen et al., 2014) also offer a little reference to Bengal's contact with Southeast Asia alongside the regional characteristics of Bengal that worked behind Indianization.

However, the literature mentioned above mostly showed the relations of Bengal with Southeast Asia in a line by the discussion over India's relation. In terms of Bengal, authorships have principally been observed in illustrating the role of Bengal behind creating contact with Southeast Asia and Indianization. Hence, in respect of this study, the pros of these literature pieces are that readers get the general information about the promptness of Bengal, and the cons are that authors did not elaborate the strength, capacities, and qualities of Bengal, and in what situation Bengal achieved those, and devoted to Indianization. How and in what condition Bengal made itself fit to be expressive towards Indianization's force and flow. By considering these limitations of the existing literature, this research has been conducted and able to fill the vacuum, specifically about the multifactual suitability, worth, and the multidimensional capacities of Bengal functioned with Southeast Asia and behind Indianization in the ancient period.

3. Sources and methodology

To narrate a historical event or reconstruct history over any event from the ancient period, collecting data and information based on archaeological excavations reports and are significantly required. This study has followed the historiographic approaches and looked up the historical writing principles in outlining the aspects of the several capacities and qualities of Bengal dedicated behind Indianization. The archaeological evidence and excavation reports, ancient Indian texts, and other archival sources have been primarily consulted. Artifacts kept in various museums related to this study's subject matter have observed and collected information from them. Literature published as books and articles have also been consulted as secondary sources. Though reconstructing ancient history is comparatively challenging due to its sources' sketchy nature, found materials have proffered some optimal information to create this narration.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Eloquent early contact

The early annexation of Bengal's culture to overseas has been evident in the text of Shimhale. It presented Prince Vijaya's victory of fourth century BC (Upham, 1833, pp. 28, 168) in ancient Sri Lanka known as a colonization of the island Ceylon by Bengal. In that victory, around seven hundred followers associated with the Bengal's Prince (Mookerji, 1912, p. 19), and such a commandeering indicates that the expansion of the spirit of Bengal to the distant land not an alien.

Similarly, Emperor Ashok sent his nine groups of missionaries to different parts of the world, including ancient Kedah, Ligor, and U Thong of the early Malay Peninsula as part of Buddhism's propagation scheme by affording the facilities offered by Tamralipti (Cunningham, 2014, pp. 515-556; Jermasawatdi, 1977, pp. 16-17). Ashok's religious and diplomatic voyage has been proved by the archaeological remains of the huge stupas of ancient Buddhist antiquities found from Nakon Pathon of Central Thailand (Jermasawatdi, 1977, p. 21). In that period, Bengal port Tamralipti attained international prominence as a hotspot of Buddhist education besides its fame as a large seaport and having maritime trade connection with overseas.

Before starting the formal process of Indianization, Indian people, mostly the inhabitants of Kalinga or Orissa of ancient India, made a stream of traveling to Java and Southeast Asia's various island (Phayre, 1883, p. 24). Orissa and Bengal had the cross border, and sometimes these two regions were under the same geographical border, and sometimes they existed as the separate geographical entity. Through Paloura and Tamralipti ports, Kalinga and Bengal's inhabitants did their outbound and inbound journey since pre-Indianization that much accelerated during Indianization.

Phayre showed people of India's eastern coast (Orissa and Bengal) lived in the Krishna and Godaveri riverbank, who made the primary steps in developing the Indian colonies towards Southeast Asia. They established the habitation in the Delta of Irrawadi River and its elongated areas (Phayre, 1883, p. 24) that later expedited the traveling stream towards Java. Hence, since the prehistoric period, Bengal had the bridging capability making between India and Southeast Asia, or it was a corridor for the people of India's other regions.

4.2 Hegemonize maritime trade

The Ganges Valley-based trading activity was one of the significant components that made the early contacts of Indianization. The Jataka, Arthasastra, Ramayana, Purana, Kathasaritsagara and the Greek-Roman literature frequently referred to this connection. Glover and other scholars conducted archaeological researches to prove that the connection materialized since 400 BCE (Glover, 1990, pp. 1-5). Though the Indianization visible in the first century CE, Bengal contact with this stream of international migration was a fact since before the Christian era (Ghose, 1989; Roy, 1986) that attributed to the evidence of archaeological remains (Bronson & Dales, 1978).

Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW) was a leading Bengal-originated artifact (Ghose, 1989; Roy, 1986) found in Southeast Asia's various archaeological sites. It is aristocratic pottery produced in the middle Ganga Plain of Bengal in 700 BCE and 100 CE. (Lal, 1984, p. 94). Additionally, Bengal produced Red Slipped Ware, and Roulleted Ware exported to Southeast Asia from the Wari-Bateshwar, Gange, and Tamralipti port before the Christian era. (Chowdhury & Chakrabarti, 2018, p. 116). As artifacts it discovered from Tham Sua in La Un district, Kapoe in Kapoe district, Phu Khao in Suk Samran district in Ranong province, Khao Sam Kaeo in Muang district, and Tham Thuay in Thung Tako district of Chumphon province in Thailand in the Southeast Asian region (Jahan, 2002).

Ancient Bengal's prominence in producing the finest-quality cloth was well blowout across the globe. Periplus of the Erythrean Sea noted, fine quality of Muslin (Sindones) exported in first-century CE from the Ganges country (Datta, 1999; Schoff, 1995, p. 48) and Arthasastra (II, 23) also referred to fine-quality Dukula and Karpasika (cotton cloth) that produced in Vanga (Bengal). Thus Bengal was famous for her textile-producing which was exported to several regions, including Southeast Asia, from the pre-Indianized period. Megasthenes was highly delighted with the most beautiful cloth of Bengal, which was ornamented with precious stone and gold (McCrinkle, 1877, p. 69). Archaeological evidence proved such statements by founding Bengal originated hemp and cotton from the burial site in Ban Don Ta Phet and Khao Sam Kaeo of Thailand (Glover, 1990; Glover & Bellina, 2011; Tripathi, 2017, p. 11). Besides, the resemble textile found in the Ban Chiang in Thailand (Srisuchat, 1996). Bengal's originated precious-semi-precious stone, beads also discovered from Ban Don Ta Phet and Khao Sam Kheo in Muang district, Tham Sua in La un district, Kapoe Kape in Kapoe district, Phu Khao in Suk Samran in Thailand. Such items have also unearthed from Oc-Eo in Vietnam, Sembiran in Bali, and other archaeological sites, which prove the connection (Jahan, 2002) between Bengal and Southeast Asia. Bengal's expertise in producing and exporting the same aided happening Indianization.

Moreover, Ivory comb found from Chansen archaeological Excavation Phase (Bronson & Dales, 1978, p. 78), and the Gangetic Valley originated seal and pottery with Kharoshti-Brahmi inscription

found from several Southeast Asia archaeological sites (Mukherjee, 1990). The sites were Oc-EO, U-Thong (Saran, 2018, p. 256), Khao Sam Kheo and Sembiran and presented the early trade relationship between these two regions. Interestingly, these archaeological remains dated between the first century and fifth century reveals the chronicle of the developed exchange system and commercial activities (Bronson & Dales, 1978; Coedes, 1968, p. 16).

Some other references related to these trade activities were Mahanavika Buddhagupta's inscription and the textual reference to Guhasena. Mahanavika Buddhagupta hailed from Raktamritika of Bengal and stayed for an extended period in Kedah (Akhtar & Idris, 2020; Wheatley, 1961, p. 272). Ancient Indian text Katha Saritsagara mentioned Guhasena, the famous merchant of Bengal made a business tour through Tamralipti (Bengal's Port) to Kedah (ancient Malay Peninsula) and able to keep influence over the local people and established a group of followers (Penzer, 1924, pp. XII, 74). Based on this ancient text (Katha Saritsagara), it could identify a strong indication that illustrated the picture of the glory of the merchant class of Bengal, who subsequently established the trading domination over the people of different regions of Southeast Asia. These two pieces of evidence of migration of the Bengal's merchant dated between the fourth and fifth century CE was the classical Gupta age of the Indian Sub-continent (Smith, 1924, p. 164). One most surprising reason Indian people were much interested in and enjoyed the traveling towards Java was, the region of Southeast Asia had been enriched with valuable resources (for which it was known as Subarnavumi or the land of gold) that migrant people can easily afford them. Interestingly, there is a story that, if one travels to Java from India for once he could back with earning a volume of resources for his seven next generations (Glover, 2012).

In this period, the Bengal's merchants established their guild that directly influenced the society and state administration (Basak, 1920). These merchants were well known as the Shresthi and Sharthavaha; the inter-regional and overseas market controller respectively (Ray, 1959, p. 157). Shresthis had their shops in villages and towns and fulfilled the necessity of local people, and Sharthavahas (caravan traders) traveled from one place to another, carrying local and foreign goods. At the same time, they controlled the import-export-trading and acted as whole sellers and suppliers to local Shresthis (Patra, 2008). Additionally, migrated Kushan merchants from northern India to the Gangetic Valley of Bengal was another influential group. They established their habitation in Bengal because of Gangetic Valley's economic and cultural enrichment in the third century CE. They engaged in horse trade and transported the horses to Southeast Asia and China by using the Tamralipti port. Notably, in that period, Tamralipti port of Bengal was used as a transit route for horse trade exported from Northern India towards the different parts of Southeast Asia and China (Mukherjee, 1990). This horse trade operated by Kushan merchants in Southeast Asia (Chakravarti, 1989; Mukherjee, 2001) proved by the archaeological remains like the Bengal originated seal inscribed Kharoshti Brahmi script (Saran, 2018, p. 256). In the ancient period, horses used as the component of defence troops, security issues, and communication mediums that made it massively demandable and costly. The Kushan people made their settlement in the lower Bengal, who brought central Asian horses from north-western India and exported them to Southeast Asia through Tamralipti port (Datta, 1999, pp. 49-60). Hence, Bengal had the quality of being a corridor for facilitating other Indian merchants by allowing them to use itself besides its own maritime trade activities.

4.3 Socio-cultural strength

The socio-cultural influence was a driving force that worked behind the stream of Indianization. Besides maritime trade, Indian people, mostly from Ganges Valley, reached the Southeast Asian region's royal family, especially in Java, and influenced the family members with the Indian conventions. They came into the association of the royal family members with the Indian originated naturally herbal treatment process, humanitarian conventions and the depth of knowledge, and presents amulets. Thus, Indian explorers and merchants managed to get the royal reception (Coedes, 1968, pp. 22-23). Southeast Asia bound entourage also had the association of a class of travelers who got the consecratory power to hypnotize others and attracted favorable attention from Southeast Asia rulers' royal family. Indian migrant people extended their staying in those regions during their early contact, and most of them started to live in these regions and engaged closely with the royal families through

marital relations. By getting married to the royal family's noble daughters, they consolidated their social status and position (Coedes, 1968, pp. 20-24).

The Bengal delta dwellers' speciality was to accept new elements of incoming foreign culture and making fusion with their indigenous elements, which acted as moderating factors (Chowdhury, 1982; Tarafdar, 1978), and they did not swim with the current of new culture rather than making a synthesis to compromise with that (Ray, 1994, pp. 579-580). They could also apply it through peaceful and cheerful penetration by offering welcoming gifts, distributions of curative medicines and preventive charms against all illnesses and dangers, whether real and spiritual or imaginary. The credit of such peaceful entry only went to the Indian that no party can use such procedures better than Indian (Coedes, 1968, p. 22).

Moreover, Bengal architectural influence has also penetrated Southeast Asia through religious establishment. Artists and art critics found in the magnificent sculptures of Borobudur temple, the hand of Bengali artists also worked side-by-side with Kalinga and Gujarat's people to build up its early civilization. From the Buddhist architecture of Mainamati and Paharpur of Bengal, the concept crucified plan of temple loaned by and used in the religious architecture established in Ananda Vihara of Burma, Chandi siva in Java, Borobudur in Palembang in Sumatra that followed the style of 'Sarbatavadra' which was Bengal's patented style used only in the architectural establishment in Bengal (Akhtar & Idris, 2020).

Religious elements that forced behind Indianization were the strongest ones like the aspects of trade and commerce. Before the Gupta period, Bengal was a region that popularly practised the Buddha religion. During the Maurya period, Tamralipti, Pundravardana, and other areas were prominent for enormous activities of this religion. When Emperor Ashoka started propagating Buddhism, these regions of Bengal got priority as the religious center. At the same time, Ashoka sent the royal ambassadors and several missionaries outside Bengal and India to make triumphant the 'Dhamma Vijaya' (religious propagation of the blend ideas of Ashoka and Buddhist faith that newly organized as the humanitarian idea of religion) and promulgate the Buddhism throughout the world through outrebounding from Tamralipti port (Jermsawatdi, 1977, p. 17).

A group of Bengali people devoted to Buddhist ideas had toured throughout the Far-East and Southeast Asian regions during the early days of Christian era. Throughout their traveling, such pilgrimage personalities carried different cultural products like Roulleted Ware, Knobbed Ware (KW), and Beads of various shapes and qualities that discovered in Ban Don Ta Phet (BDTP), Khao Sam Kheo (KSK), Oc Eo (Glover, 1990, p. 9) and several other archaeological sites in Southeast Asia. Besides, Bengal originated Tri-Ratna (Buddhist Icon), Stupas, (Buddhist Icon), status in the illustrated form (Bronson & Dales, 1978) and as artifacts in the sites and architectural establishments in the regions of Kedah, Ligor, KSK, BDTP those were the indication and influence of religious rituals injected in the culture of these areas.

Moreover, several prominent Buddhist scholars acquired name and fame across Asia's Buddhistic world regions like Atisa Dipankara, Sila Bhadra, and others since fifth to eighth century CE (Mookerji, 1912, p. 108). They kept an essential role in learning and preaching of the Buddhist education in Bengal by which Vihar oriented education gained the wide fame that appeared through the Buddhist institutions established in Mainamati of Southeast Bengal, Somapura of North Bengal, and Nalanda in West Bengal along with various Vihar of Tamralipti and Pundravardana. These institutions also had royal patronization in that period. In this area, the two streams of a Buddhist concept, the Hinayana and Mahayana, had been taught along with the subjects Astronomy, Philosophy, Literature and Mathematics, and others.

Interestingly, because of such fame of Buddhist scholars and institutions, several personalities from the far East, especially from China, came to Bengal and stayed here for an extended period to meet their knowledge earning thrust. Among them I-Tsing, Fa-Hien, Huen Sang were notable. Later they returned to their home country with the concept of Buddhist religion and spread them across the East. These Chinese travelers took stopover and stayed for an extended period in various points of Southeast Asia on the way to China when they were waiting for the next sessional monsoon wind that usually helpful for running the ships on the sea voyage (Allen, 1988; Giles, 1953; Majumder, 1971, p. 345; Watters, 1904). At that time, they propagated Buddhism's concept and ideas and distributed the

knowledge they gathered from India and Bengal among the people residing in Srivijaya (Coedes, 1968, p. 84), Java, Kedah, and others. The first inscriptional document of 684 CE found from Srivijaya was Mahayana Buddhism's evidence in further India, and it confirmed the expansion of Buddhist ideas where I-Tsing stated Srivijaya's importance as a Buddhist center (Takakusu, 1896, pp. LVIII & LIX, 184). Simultaneously, these ideas got institutional form and accreditation and patronization by the royal dynasty and ruler in Southeast Asia. The Sailendra dynasty, who migrated from India and was ruling in Java, also welcomed the architectural concept of Bengal, and by their supervision, the Hindu religious establishment the Chandi Sivu built in Java.

By this way, when Buddhism from India and Bengal propagated in various regions of further India, in the 8th century, Bengal's religious architectural ideas also started to be used in the Buddhist and Hindu religious establishments in the areas of Southeast Asia. The size, uniformity, arrangement, rising in receding verandas to a central temple, and the vast central yard enclosed by a monastic cell line are the principal features developed in Southeast Asian religious architecture from Bengal (Chakrabarti, 1992, p. 115). In this way, the religious architectural ideas of Bengal were influenced profoundly in the process of Indianization as a whole.

Since the seventh-century, Srivijaya, Java, Borneo also dominated by Indian power. Various Buddhist schools started to develop there, and Theravada Buddhism took the highest acceptance and position. This branch of Buddhism used the Sanskrit language adopted in different Southeast Asian regions. As a result, by the royal chancellery and spreading of Buddhism, many Sanskrit words entered the local language. Such as raja (ruler), Derhaka (treason), Jaya (success), Negari (district, country), Bahasa (language). Local people accepted this penetration (Andaya & Andaya, 2017, p. 21).

Likewise, during the Gupta period, Hindu religion got much precedence oriented to Brahman ideas that appeared in the flattering part of the copperplate inscription that found different Bengal regions. For example, the copperplate inscriptions of Mahanavika Buddhagupta found in Kedah of Malay Peninsula can be denoted that contained the religious verses of Brahmanical ideas (Nadaranjan, 2011, p. 47). Religio-cultural prominence made Bengal instrumental. Despite a small part of eastern India, this Bengal originated religious force kept a vital role in the Indianization process's prime time that was an example of the glory of Bengal culture. Since the ancient period the economic enrichment, strategic geographical location, fertile land, and skilled artisanship of the people, Bengal emerged as a distinguished territory with its 'regional personality.' The influence of these blend forces penetrated in Southeast Asian regions through architectural concepts and other cultural means.

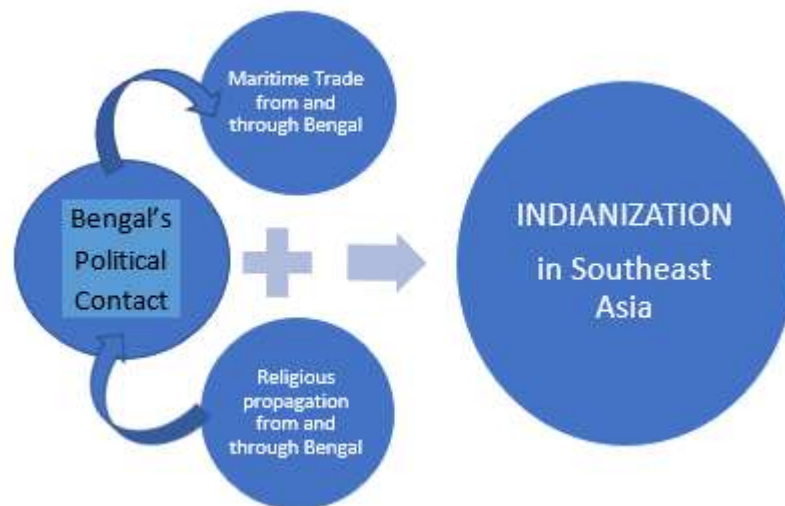


Figure 2. Combined forces from Bengal behind Indianization.

Indianization process's prime time that was an example of the glory of Bengal culture. Since the ancient period the economic enrichment, strategic geographical location, fertile land, and skilled artisanship of the people, Bengal emerged as a distinguished territory with its 'regional personality.' The influence of these blend forces penetrated in Southeast Asian regions through architectural concepts and other cultural means.

4.4 Political contact

Bengal and Southeast Asian regions were associated in political connection in the early days of Indianization. From the middle of the fourth century to the sixth century, the Ganges area and Funan had a remarkable political connection. Even during the 250s CE, the King of Funan sent an Ambassador to Bengal King to do horse trade feasibility between Bengal and Funan. The ambassador returned to Funan with gifts, including four horses that attracted Funan king's attention to Bengal (Mukherjee, 1990). At that period, Tamralipti port was used as a transit route for horse trade exported from Northern India towards the different parts of Southeast Asia and China.

The mighty kingship of Gangaridae and economic richness of Bengal from the prehistoric period with its massive fleet of horses and elephants made Bengal a powerful kingdom, and by hearing such a status, Alexander the Great refrained himself from attacking India and returned to the home (Smith, 1924, p. 42). In the earlier period, the people of Champa of Anam (Cambodia), who might have the ancestor from Champa (Bhagalpur), or might have the dynastic tradition and connection with Bengalis Champa, founded the Cochin-China settlement that showed by the similar name of the town both in Southeast Asia and Bengal. Bhagalpur was the capital of Anga and a part of Bengal (Coedes, 1968, pp. 43-44; Mookerji, 1912, p. 109). Hence, having a strong position in the Bengal's political authority has also a capacity for performing the role behind Indianization.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, some vibrant factors of capacity and individuality have drawn from the multifactual aspects of Bengal that were interrelated with Indianization. Firstly, the by default capacity was the tactical location of Bengal when it used as a corridor for the people of India's other regions besides its own maritime trade activities. The position of this world's largest Delta as an eastern coastal part of India made Bengal strategically significant. Its three sides are surrounded by hills and the only the southern side by the Bay of Bengal. Two ports, the Tamralipti and Gange (Chandraketugarh), made Bengal's strategic location more legendary in ancient times by international connection. Southeast Asia and Far-East bound journey was comfortable directly or sailing through the Indian Ocean using these ports. Secondly, the Bengal's uniqueness in cultural individuality and synthesis (Chowdhury, 1982; Tarafdar, 1978) has expedited Indianization. Bengal originated cloths, potteries, and other products found as artifacts in the Southeast Asian regions were the vital sign of cultural prominence. Besides, the norms of high-class Brahman, Buddhist religious tradition and education, and cultural practices made this region extraordinarily capacitated to influence the Indianization process. Thirdly, the sea and river-based deltaic environment made people skilled in maritime activities and overseas trade that often operated through the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean towards the distant land (Risley, 1908; Risley, 1892). Smith stated that the economic richness and mighty kingship of Gangaridae with its massive fleet of horses and elephants made Bengal a powerful kingdom (Smith, 1924, p. 42). Such outstanding economic, political, and defence strength also the capacitated Bengal that devoted behind Indianization. Finally, the socio-cultural splendors of early urban legacy were adequately strong. The Pandu Rajar Dhibi (around 2000 BCE) is silent evidence (Sur, 1969, pp. 1-2) of a long flourishing legacy of urban life in Bengal. For example, from 600 BCEs, the urban development orbital to Gangetic Valley tremendously flourished, which was the second phase of ancient Indian urbanization (Thakur, 1981, pp. 1-3). During the fifth-fourth century BCE to the eighth-ninth century CE Wari-Bateshwar, Pundranagar, Tamralipti, Monglota, Bangore, and later Devaparvata and other urban centers emerged and flourished with distinctive religious or trade characteristics (Ray, 1987; Thakur, 1981) in Bengal. Hence, the urban-based cultural strength like social norms and religious supremacy were the the qualities Bengal achieved and put to act behind Indianization.

Therefore, the capacity and quality, the dynamic forces, and factors mentioned above were active significantly from Bengal's side. By using these qualities, Indianization conceived in the womb of ancient India where Bengal was its abdomen that helped grow up Indianization smoothly and excitedly, and finally, it delivered with the tremendous support of Bengal's originated commerce, culture and politics. From this viewpoint, Bengal was capable of keeping role in the Indianization process only because it had some extraordinary capacities, whether attained by default and naturally or earned by practice. Hence, this study's utmost and immediate implication is that it would light throw on the diaspora studies of the ancient period that mostly oriented to maritime trade and cultural history. The result would be the new literature over the Bengal's factors concerning Indianization that students, academicians, researchers and general readers could consult for further study and research.

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