This article presents a brief survey of the inscriptions from South Thailand, which have provided us with important cultural and religious data ranging from the early historical period till ca. 13th century A.D.

The pattern of the cultural heritage of South Thailand appears to be fairly complex. Archaeological remains testify to the existence and co-existence of many types of cultures in that area during the past centuries. It is generally agreed that certain parts of South Thailand, for a certain period of time, was part of the great cultural complex of Srivijaya, but the Thai-Malay Peninsula, provided with important sea-ports and trading stations, have always been susceptible to many streams of cultural impact from India as well as from the mainland of Southeast Asia and elsewhere. Inscriptions from South Thailand give us a glimpse of the cultural and religious situations in this area.

The earliest inscriptions from South Thailand represent, at the same time, the oldest inscriptions so far known in present Thailand. They were engraved upon stone and metal seals, discovered at many archaeological sites in South Thailand. The majority of these inscriptions on seals are palaeographically related to those found upon similar types of objects and finger rings from Oc-eo in the delta of the Mekong River, and upon a few seals from Malaysia. Many of the specimens from South Thailand belong to the same period as the earliest epigraphical records from Malaysia and Indonesia. All were engraved, in reversed characters, which is a feature typical of inscriptions found on seals. My reading of these - based on the photographs made by Mr. and Mrs. Srisuchart of the Archaeological Survey of Thailand - may not be absolutely correct, while the real and profound meanings of the inscribed texts may have eluded me. I will be most grateful for comments, suggestions and corrections.

Inscription no. 1 is carved upon an oval stone seal found at Khuan Lukpat site in the district of Khlong Thom, Krabi province. In my opinion, this is the oldest inscription so far known in Thailand. It is written in the Brahmi script common for North India, of the type which may be assigned to ca. 1st - 3rd centuries A.D. using Prakrit language, or archaic Sanskrit. The inscribed word reads “rūjjo”, which possibly means “destroy”.

Inscription no. 2 is carved upon a square carnelian seal, discovered at Khuan Lukpat site, Khlong Thom district, in Krabi province. The script can be recognised as closely related to the Pallava script used in the inscriptions of Sivaskandavarman of ca. 5th - 6th centuries A.D. The language is Sanskrit and the inscribed word reads “daśāvyam” which may be translated as “suitable to give”.

Inscription no. 3 is found upon a rectangular seal made of green stone. The script is related to the Pallava script of ca. 5th - 6th centuries A.D. The language is again Sanskrit. The inscribed text reads “apralasanasasya”, which may be translated as “not to be moved”, or “belonging to (a person called) Apralasana.

Inscription no. 4 is carved upon a rectangular seal, also made of green stone, found at the same site, viz. Khuan Lukpat, Khlong Thom district, Krabi province. The script is again related to the Pallava script of ca. 5th - 6th centuries A.D. The language is again Sanskrit. The text reads “vi-
<table>
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<th>No.</th>
<th>inscription</th>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Inscribed Oval Stone Seal from Khuan Lukpat.</td>
<td>rabendhutrasya” which may mean “those who are valiant may proceed”, or “belonging to (a person called) Virabendhutra.”</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Inscribed Square Carmelian Seal from Khuan Lukpat.</td>
<td>Incription no. 5 is found on a rectangular seal, made of quartz, discovered at Khao Si Wichai, Phunphin district, Surat Thani province. The script is related to the Pallava type, palaeographically assignable to ca. 6th - 7th centuries A.D. The language is Sanskrit. The text reads “vrisamudrabodhi”, which can be translated in various ways, such as “enlightenment is the sign of annihilation (possibly of impurities or ignorance)” or “impressed to be known”, or “sealed down to mark.”</td>
</tr>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Inscribed Rectangular Green Stone from Khuan Lukpat.</td>
<td>Incription no. 6 is inscribed on a circular gold seal from the same archaeological site of Khuan Lukpat. The script is again related to the Pallava type, assignable to ca. 6th-7th centuries A.D. The language is Sanskrit. The text reads “sarudharmasya” which can mean “belonging to the Good Law”, or “belonging to the delicate or transcendental Law”, or “belonging to (a person called) Sarudharmma.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Inscribed Rectangular Green Stone Seal from Khuan Lukpat.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 5.  | Inscribed Rectangular Quartz Seal from Khao Si Wichai. | Incription no. 7 is inscribed upon an oval stone seal; also discovered at Kuan Lukpat. The script is again related to the Pallava type of ca. 6th - 7th centuries A.D., while the language is Sanskrit. The text reads “srammano” which may be translated as ‘happiness’, ‘joy’, ‘protection’ or ‘refuge’.

Inscription no. 8 is an inscription from Wat Maheyong in Nakhon Si Thammarat, already published by Coedes in his ‘Collections of Inscriptions from Siam’, vol. 2. The script used is related to the Pallava type, datable from ca. 7th century A.D., while the language is Sanskrit. It records
the donation of food and gifts to the Sangha (community of monks or ascetics) and also to the Brahmin community of Agastya. The text also contains a reference to an uposatha thagara (ordination hall) and possibly refers to the worship of Paramita (supreme wisdom).

Inscription no. 9 on our list is an inscription from Chong Khoi Valley, Nakhon Si Thammarat province, written in the Pallava type of script of ca. 7th century A.D. while the language is Sanskrit. The text begins with a reference to “Sri Vidyadhikara”, believed to be an epithet of Siva, followed by invocations to the Lord of the Forest and the Lord of the Devas, and an utterance of blessings upon

<table>
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<th>Pallava Script</th>
<th>Dewa-Nagari Script</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>part 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>part 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 1</td>
<td>नमो श्रीविद्याधिकाराः</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 2</td>
<td>नमो श्रीविद्याधिकाराः</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 3</td>
<td>प्रोक्तमाच्छलनाभास्</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 4</td>
<td>तद्विविधायज्ञ अविद्वै भवाः</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>part 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line 1</td>
<td>येशार्कर्मदेवकुपमदास्ते मनोहराः</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Line 2         | गुरू तेषा प्रसाददेव गायत्रिेश ोमिति आदि
the worshippers.

Inscription no. 10 is an inscription from Khao Phra Narai, Takua Pa district, Phangnga province, written in the Pallava type of script of ca. 7th century, but the language used is Tamil. This inscription was also published by Coedes in his Collections of Inscriptions, vol. 2. The

INSCRIPTION NO. 11  Inscription from Wat Mahathat, Nakhon Si Thammarat.

Pallava Script

Modern Thai

Modern Mon

Thai Translation

รูปข้างาน | ฟอมาดานหัวเมืองชินฉันอ ตูรามาระสุริตสิภันท์ไฟฟ้ากลางอุดัยชน |
INSCRIPTION NO. 12  Inscription from Wat Semamuang, Nakhon Si Thammarat = Ligor Inscription = Wiang Sa Inscription. Face I
text commemorates the excavation and donation of a tank near a place called Nangura.

Inscription no. 11 on our list is an inscription from Wat Mahathat, Nakhon Si Thammarat province. It was also published by Coedes in his Collections of Inscriptions, vol. 2, together with a tentative reading. Many attempts have been made to decipher and read this inscription and my own reading probably would not be the last. In my opinion the language is Old Mon, while the script is related to the Pallava type of ca. 7th century A.D. The text reads “bha // tamayalan gesvarah” which may be translated as “replica (or image) of Mr. Maya of the rural town,
របៀបការពារប្រយោជន៍ប្រមូលដេញ្ញា។ ការប្រព័ន្ធដ៏អស្ចារ្យប្រសើរអាចបានចេញពីការស្វែងរកព័ត៌មាននិងការស្វែងរកប្រយោជន៍ប្រមូលដេញ្ញា។ តាមរយៈការស្វែងរកប្រយោជន៍ប្រមូលដេញ្ញា។
who is as bright and beautiful as a brilliant lump of coal.

Inscription no. 12 is the famous inscription from Wat Semāmuang in Nakhon Si Thammarat, also known as 'Ligor' or 'Vieng Sa' inscription. Coedes published it in his collections of Inscriptions, vol. 2. The script is clearly based on the Pallava prototype, but shows many locally developed features while the language is Sanskrit. The text on side A begins with praises to the king of Srivijaya who founded three brick sanctuaries for the Bodhisattva Padmapani, the Buddha, and the Bodhisattva Vajrapani, and bears a date of 775 A.D. Side B is unfinished, containing a praise to a Sailendra king.

Inscription no. 13 is found on the base of the large bronze image of the Buddha on Nāga from Wat Wieng, Chaiya, district, Surat Thani province. The inscription was published by Coedes in his Collections of Inscriptions, vol. 2. According to Coedes, the inscription is dated in the year 1183 A.D.. It is written in old Khmer script and language. The characters, however, bear many features which recall those of the script used in Haripunjaya inscriptions of the same period. The text commemorates the foundation of the image in 1183 A.D., by the Governor of Krabi at the command of King Srimat Trailokyarāja Maulihīśanavarmadeva.

Inscription no. 14 is the one labelled 24 and ST 4 from the same monastery of Wat Wieng in Chaiya district, Surat...
INSCRIPTION NO. 14  Incription from Wat Wieng, Surat Thani.
INSCRIPTION NO. 15  Another Inscription from Wat Wieng, Surat Thani.

Thani province. The script is Old Khmer but showing again features similar to those of the script used in Haripunjaya inscriptions. The language, however, is Sanskrit. It bears a date of 1230 A.D. and contains praises to Candrabhānu of the Padmavamsa, also called Sri Dharmarāja, the king of Tambralinga, who was a great patron of Buddhism.

Inscription no. 15 came from the same monastery. It is now labelled 24A and ST 3. The script is Old Khmer bearing features recalling those of the script used in the Haripunjaya inscriptions of North Thailand, but the language is Pāli. It contains no date but the form of the script is similar to that used in no. 14, and may be assigned to the same period. The writing is much damaged and only a few words can be read here and there, telling us of some worshippers of the Buddha, possessing wisdom and piety, being desirous to make merits and glorify the Master.

Inscription no. 16 came from Wat Mahāthāt, Nakhon Si Thammarat. It is partly written in Tamil and partly in Old Khmer, using Tamil and Sanskrit languages. The scripts are assignable to ca. 13th century. The Tamil part, using the Tamil script, mentions a certain Dharmasena and a prohibition for taking lives. The Old Khmer part, using Sanskrit, is not yet satisfactorily deciphered. The text, however, contains a reference to Tambralinga.

Inscription no. 17, the last on our list, came from Viharn Pho Lankā in Wat Mahāthāt, Nakhon Si Thammarat. The script is Old Mon of the type which was obviously derived from the script used in Haripunjaya inscriptions,
but showing at the same time features similar to those of Pagan inscriptions of Burma of ca. 13th century. We may assign this inscription to the 13th century on palaeographic grounds. The language is Old Mon and the text contains a praise to two excellent nāgas who are perpetual worshippers of the sun.

These inscriptions, besides being interesting palaeographically, also provide us with informations on the cultural and religious spheres. The data which can be drawn from those inscriptions on seals nos. 1-7 in our list are admittedly quite vague. The inscribed words or texts are too short to tell us about the lives, thoughts and religious inclinations of the makers of these seals. They are datable palaeographically, and we can trace the Indian sources of the scripts which are used, but we have no way of knowing when and how these inscribed seals were brought to South Thailand. Being portable objects, we may argue that they could have been brought to that area by trade, and thus do not necessarily represent direct cultural links between South Thailand and the country of their origin. They have been found at the archaeological sites which have yielded abundant evidence of overseas trading but these objects were presumably personal seals, used by Indian merchants to seal their documents or merchandise and may be cited at least as evidence to indicate the presence of Indian merchants in South Thailand.

The earliest inscription (no. 1 in our list) is written in the Brāhmi script, typical of North India during ca. 1st-3rd centuries A.D. It can not be regarded as evidence of an early cultural contact between Thailand and that part of India, since we do not know how and when it arrived at the present finding spot. However, the inscription itself is most interesting, since it is one of the earliest - if not the earliest - inscriptions found in Southeast Asia including Indonesia. The Brāhmi script, moreover, has never been found in the inscription of maritime Southeast Asia.

The majority of the inscriptions on seals from South Thailand (nos. 2-7) are written in the script which is closely related to that used by the Pallava dynasty of Southeast India during ca. 5th-7th centuries A.D. Though we have no way of knowing when these seals were brought to Thailand,
it seems possible that there was already a cultural contact between South Thailand and South India during that time, since the Pallava type of script was evidently used in locally inscribed stone inscriptions in Malaysia and Indonesia as early as in the 5th century A.D. Sanskrit - which is constantly used in these inscriptions on seals - was presumably understood by a number of people living in South Thailand at that time. It is not possible to learn from these short inscriptions about the prevalent religious systems. A number of uninscribed seals found in the same area bear symbols, such as a śrīvatsa and śāṅkha, which could have been used by the Buddhists and Hindu alike. Sculptural remains from South Thailand, which are assignable to this period of ca. 5th - 7th centuries A.D., also consist of Buddhist as well as Hindu figures.

The 7th century lithic inscriptions of South Thailand (nos. 8-11) testifies to the popular use of the Pallava type of script during that time. The fact that these inscriptions were undoubtedly locally made tells us that South Thailand must have had a close cultural contact with South India already at that time. Sanskrit was probably a sacral language which is widely used and well-understood during this century as is attested by the fairly long Sanskrit inscriptions of Wat Maheyong and Chong-Khoi Valley (nos. 8 and 9). The use of the Tamil language in Khao Phra Nārāi inscription (no. 10), and Old Mon in the Wat Mahāthāt inscription (no. 11), however, indicates that there must have been some Tamil and Mon communities in this part of Thailand at that time. We possess no evidence of the usage of the Malay language, such as found in the contemporaneous Srivijaya inscriptions from Indonesia, in these 7th century records from South Thailand. The religious sphere of the time, according to the reading of these epigraphical records seems to have been predominantly Hindu, though there
may be allusions to Buddhist practice in the Wat Mahayong inscription. The reference to Agastya in the same inscription reminds us of the popular worship of that great ascetic which once prevailed in South India and Indonesia. Sculptural finds which are assignable to this century are preponderantly Hindu, and show artistic influences from the Pallava region of South India. The possible relationship with the Mon Kingdom of Dvaravati in Central Thailand is suggested by the use of Old Mon in the Wat Mahathat inscription (no. 11), and also by the sculptural style of some Buddhist antiquities found in South Thailand.

**SRIVIJAYA AND SOUTH THAILAND**

Side A of the Wat Semamuang inscription (no. 12) tells us of the involvement of Srivijaya with South Thailand while Side B of the same stele gives reference to the Sailendra dynasty which we know from many 8th - 9th centuries inscriptions from Central Java. Sanskrit probably remained a sacral language in South Thailand during this time, and the script which was widely used in the area maintained its association with the Pallava script. In relation to Srivijaya and the Sailendras, we should mark that Side A of the Wat Semamuang inscription contains the only lengthy Srivijaya inscription which uses Sanskrit instead of Old Malay, and Side B of the same bears the only known Sailendra inscription (besides that of Sojomeruto in Java), written in the South Indian type of script instead of in the North Indian Nagari script. The predominant religion in South Thailand at that time was probably Mahayana Buddhism, the main religion of Srivijaya and of the Sailendras. The fact that sculptural finds from South Thailand during this period are predominantly Buddhist gives support to this supposition. The sculptural style appears to be closely related to that of Sumatra and Java of the same period.

We possess no epigraphical record of the 10th and 11th centuries. The inscription on the Mucalinda Buddha from Wat Wieng (no. 13) reveals a high degree of Khmer influence in South Thailand. This region may still have had some political and cultural relations with Sumatra, but the impact of the cultures of the main land apparently began to predominate. The Old Khmer script and language are used in this inscription, while some elements of the culture of Haripunjaya of North Thailand are detectable in the form of the script.

Khmer influences remained strong in South Thailand during the 13th century, as is attested by the use of Old Khmer script in the 2 inscriptions from Wat Wieng (nos. 14 - 15) and in that of Wat Mahathat (no. 16). The use of Pali in one of the Wat Wieng inscriptions (no. 15) suggests cultural and religious influences either from Sri Lanka or Pagan, while the occurrence of the Tamil script and language in the Wat Mahathat inscription (no. 16), points to the continuing contact with South India. The use of Old Mon script and language in the Viharn Pho Lanka inscription (no. 17) may have been due to the lingering influences of Haripunjaya, or the contact with Burma during the Pagan period. Sanskrit still appeared in two inscriptions (nos. 14 and 16), but its significance as sacred language apparently decreased. Inscription no. 15 tells us that Theravada Buddhism, using Pali as its sacred language, was already
established in South Thailand during the 13th century. This tallies well with the information given by the famous inscription of King Rāmkamhaeng of Sukhodaya that the king invited 'learned teachers and preceptors, well-versed in the Three Pitakas from Nakhon Si Thammarat'. Tambralinga, mentioned in two of these 13th century inscriptions (nos. 14 and 16) was probably an important cultural and political culture at that time. In the inscription no. 14 from Wat Wjeng, Candrabhanu, King of Tambralinga, bears the little of Sri Dhammarāja which connects him and his dominion with Nakhon Si Thammarat or Nagara Sri Dhammarāja referred to in Rāmkamhaeng's inscription.