

Bay of Bengal Interaction Sphere and the Roman Imitation Coins from Southeast Asia

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This paper addresses the issue of recently discovered Roman imitation coins from Southeast Asia in the perspective of the Bay of Bengal interaction sphere. These imitations are unique and bear evidences of creation and production of hybrids in and around Khlong Thom in Southeast Asia. These coins are in the form of pendants. On the basis of primary sources or empirical data the paper would like to address the broader issue of production, metal trade and cultural interaction between the Bay of Bengal coast and mainly maritime and partially mainland Southeast Asia. The transmission of ideas and trade linkages will be addressed. We shall raise pertinent questions like were the Khlong Thom pendants imported from India or were they made locally in Khlong Thom? Brigitte Borell has identified this coin as a Roman imitation. The present author has identified it as a local manufacture bearing Indian influence. According to present author one of the pendants bears close resemblance with Satavahana style portrait besides this there are four Brahmi letters though very distinct yet making no sense. This is a hitherto unknown combination of hybrid imitation and this is the first of its kind where a Satavahana portrait has been used as an opposed die to a Roman reverse device. In an attempt to situate this pendant from Khlong Thom we shall compare it with parallels from the Bay of Bengal interaction sphere.

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