

POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF PALI AND BUDDHIST STUDIES

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE ANCIENT
SUVANṆABHŪMI WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MALAYSIA

BY

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ABSTRACT

NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMĀ SAMBUDDHASSA

Honour to Him, the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One.

In this research, our aims and objective is to study the ancient culture of South East Asia and its connection with Malaysia. South East Asia was known as Suvāṇṇabhūmi which mean 'Land of Gold'. Many merchant traders travel to South East Asia for gold and spices. References on Suvāṇṇabhūmi from the Pāli source, the Rāmāyaṇa source, the Chinese source, the Arabs source and the European source drawn to present importance of Suvāṇṇabhūmi. Myanmar claimed that Suvāṇṇabhūmi was Lower Burma. The Thai claimed that Suvāṇṇabhūmi was located in Nakhon Pathom. Our focus in Malaysia is on Malay Peninsula which had numerous archaeological evidence of the presence of Buddhism during the ancient times. The geographical location of South East Asia and the influences of its ancient empire such as Funan, Champa, Chenla, Pagan, Siam, Srivijaya and Majapahit, saw that some states in the Malay Peninsula were under their control. The cultural influences of the Indian, the Chinese, the Arabs and the European saw the formation of the unique multi-racial and multi-linguistic pattern in South East Asia and Malaysia as a unique entity which many of its people assimilated and incorporated them in their day-today life style. With the recent 2010 discovery of iron fragments in the Bujang Valley, Merbok District, Seberang Perai, Kedah, and many ancient artefacts like Pallava scripts, Buddhagupta Stone, bronze Buddha images of the Gupta style, Bujang Valley may also be Suvāṇṇabhūmi.