

UNIT 5 TASK BOOKLET – “MEDITERRANEAN” STYLES IN NEW CONTEXTS



Sphinx seal ring recovered from Pattanam (likely ancient Muziris)

For this online task you will explore imagery and materials that seems to be produced in the Mediterranean, or was inspired by Mediterranean designs, that found their way to parts of India and Southeast Asia. While reviewing the imagery/material culture, consider the wider issues related to the adaptation of ideas, techniques and associated beliefs. For this task you should read: S. Autiero (2017). ‘Bes Figurines from Roman Egypt as Agents of Transculturation in the Indian Ocean’, *Thiasos* 6: 79-89. If you have time, it is also worth taking a look at: B. Borell, B. Bellina, B. Chaisuwan (2014). ‘Contacts between the Upper Thai-Malay Peninsula and the Mediterranean World’, in N. Revire and S.A. Murphy (eds.), *Before Siam was Born: New Insights on the Art and Archaeology of Pre-Modern Thailand and its Neighbouring Regions*. River Books, pp.98-117. For both articles, see Moodle. Having examined the images (below), and after reading the accompanying article (or articles), considering the following questions:

Questions

- 1) Are you convinced by Autiero’s argument that it was not just the imagery of Bes figurines that was adapted for the depiction of yakshas in central India, but that they also proved suitable as models due to their perceived protective/apotropaic qualities, “exoticness” and liminal associations?
- 2) What do you make of the Southeast Asian “imitations” of Roman imagery – is this better described as imitation/close emulation or as adaptation? How easy do you think it might be to determine the difference between “originals” and “imitations”?
- 3) Going in the opposite direction – what do you make of the Roman statue of an armoured man with the cirrus knot? Can we take this feature to imply anything about a potential devotion to Buddhism?

Please post any thoughts you might have on these issues to the unit forum

Bes figures from Egypt and Indian yaksha figurines

[Images from S. Autiero 2017]



Fig. 2. Figurines of Yoninilaya from Ter, Maharashtra, 1st to 2nd century A.D. (SANKALIA 1960, p. 120, figs. 18-19).



Fig. 3. Figurines of Baubo from Alexandria, Egypt (TÖRÖK 1995, tav. C, nos. 186, 187, 188).



Fig. 4. Figurine representing Bes from Egypt (TÖRÖK 1995, tav. III).



Fig. 5. An Indian terracotta figurine representing a Yaksha (BAUTZ 1995, tav. XLc).

Roman (and Pseudo-Roman) objects found in the Thai-Malaysia Peninsula, Thailand and Vietnam

[Images from B. Borell, B. Bellina, B. Chaisuwan 2014; B. Borell 2018; K. Hoppál 2022]



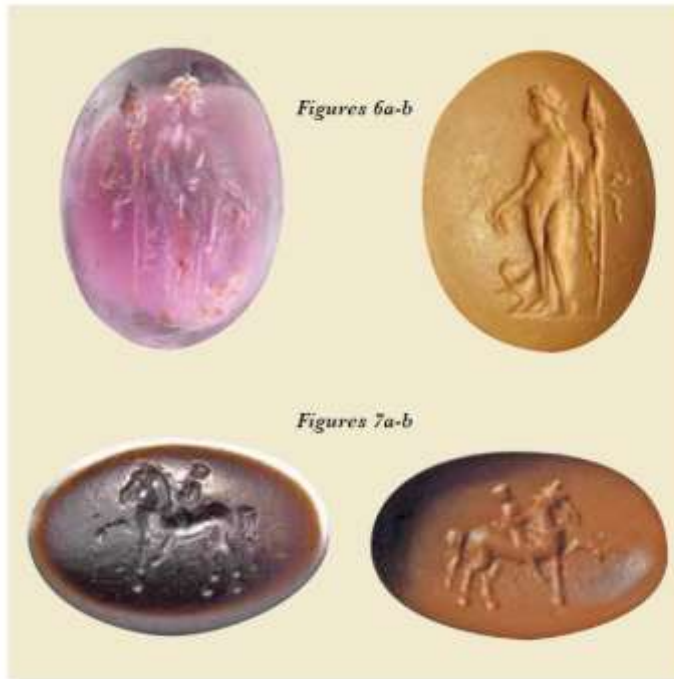
Left Figure 2: Roman carnelian intaglio with two fighting cocks from Khlong Thom, late 1st-2nd century CE, Wat Khlong Thom museum, Krabi province [Photograph by Boonyarit Chaisuwan].

Right Figure 3: Roman carnelian intaglio with Fortuna from Khlong Thom, late 1st-2nd century CE, 15 millimetres. Formerly at Wat Khlong Thom museum, Krabi province [After Bellina 1998: fig. 8b].

Compare the above images with the ones below:



Fig. 4. Engraved gems integrating western elements to varying degrees from Southeast Asia (yet to be re-examined). (All images are in individual size).



Figures 6a-b: Roman amethyst intaglio with Bacchus from Tha Chana, Surat Thani province, ca early 1st century CE, 11.5 millimetres, Suthiratana Foundation, inv. no. TCN 125 (left: original intaglio; right: impression) [Photographs by Bunchar Pongpanich and Brigitte Borell].

Figures 7a-b: Layered sardonyx intaglio with rider on a walking horse from Bang Klui Nok, Ranang province, late 1st century BCE to early 1st century CE, Suthiratana Foundation, inv. no. BKN 333 (left: original intaglio; right: impression) [Photographs courtesy of Karunphol Phanich].

Compare the above images with the ones below:



Fig. 6. Engraved gems integrating western elements to varying degrees from Southeast Asia (yet to be re-examined). (All images are in individual size).

“Roman” coins and pendants



Fig. 1 Bangkok, Suthiratana Foundation. Aureus of Domitian of 86 CE found near Bang Kluai. D. 2.0 cm. Weight 7.07 g. Obverse. Photo: Brigitte Borell.

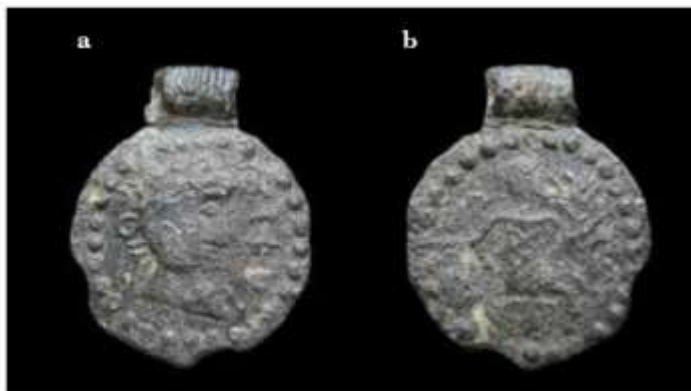


Fig. 2 As figure 1, reverse. Photo: Brigitte Borell.

Figures 12a-b: Gold pendant from Khlong Thom, Krabi province, diameter 19 millimetres, weight 4.86 grams, Suthiratana Foundation (left: obverse; right: reverse) [Photographs by Brigitte Borell].



Figures 13a-b: Gold pendant from U Thong, Suphan Buri province, diameter 19-20 millimetres, U Thong National Museum (left: obverse; right: reverse) [Photographs by Brigitte Borell].



Figures 14a-b: Bronze pendant from Khlong Thom, Krabi province, diameter 18 millimetres, Suthiratana Foundation (left: obverse; right: reverse) [Photographs by Brigitte Borell].



Figs. 8 Bangkok, Suthiratana Foundation. Gold pendant imitating the obverse and reverse of two different coins of Antoninus Pius (reigned 138-161 CE) from Khlong Thom. Obverse showing the draped bust of his daughter Faustina to left, reverse showing the emperor standing, clad in a toga and holding globe in right hand and book roll in left. H with suspension loop 2.4 cm. Weight 5.02 g. Photos: Brigitte Borell.

The cirrus knot



Marble head with cirrus knot, Villa Borghese, Rome (ca. second or third century CE)



Bodhisattiva figure, Gandhara, second to third century CE



Bodhisattiva from Hadda, Musee Guimet



Buddha figurines from Berenike