

Rawson vs. Kerlogue: Two Views on Southeast Asian Art History

Authors : Rin Li Si Samantha

Abstract : The arts and cultures of Southeast Asia, particularly ancient or precolonial Southeast Asia, are commonly understood via two distinct theories: Indianisation and localisation. Indianisation takes Southeast Asia as a region to be cultural satellites or even colonies of a great Indian civilisation; Philip Rawson, in his 1967 book *The Art of Southeast Asia*, is to a large degree a proponent of this perspective. Localisation, a theory which has gained much traction in contemporaneous discourse, chooses instead to privilege local continuities and agencies in selectively accepting and adapting foreign influences to give form to new, syncretised traditions. The art historian Fiona Kerlogue's similarly-named *Arts of Southeast Asia*, published in 2004, takes this perspective as its bedrock. This essay compares the many opposing ideological commitments of Rawson and Kerlogue: Indianisation versus localisation, evaluation versus explanation, and antiquity versus entirety. In the end, it reconciles the two as hallmarks of their time periods and is complementary in the pursuit of a holistic study of the art history of Southeast Asia.

Keywords : art history, Southeast Asia, Indianisation, localisation, precolonial, orientalism, comparative analysis, text

Conference Title : ICDTAAT 2023 : International Conference on Art and Art Theory

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : December 25-26, 2023