

Where was *Suvaṇṇabhūmi* associated with *Soṇa* and *Uttara*: Conclusive Evidence

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Scholars on Burma (Myanmar) as well as on other Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Cambodia, Lao and Indonesia (Sumatra Island) claim that Buddhism was introduced into their countries by *Soṇa Thera* and *Uttara Thera* after the third Buddhist council. Thus, there is a controversy as to the original location of *Suvaṇṇabhūmi*.

Though many scholars - both local and foreign - such as N. Ray, K. L. Hazra, R. Bischoff, G.E. Harvery and Maung Htin Aung accepted that Buddhism was introduced into Burma by *Soṇa Thera* and *Uttara Thera* and that Buddhism was brought to the northern part or upper part of Burma from *Suvaṇṇabhūmi* (the southern or lower part of Burma) during the 11th century A.D, they have not described the religious activities that prevailed in Burma from the time of the two *Theras* up to the 11th century A.D. Therefore, there is doubt among other scholars that *Suvaṇṇabhūmi* or a part of it was in Burma.

The objective of this research is twofold: a) provide geographical and archaeological evidence to locate *Suvaṇṇabhūmi* in the southern or lower part of Burma; and b) confirm through inscriptions and chronicles that Buddhist activities from the time of its introduction by *Soṇa Thera* and *Uttara Thera* were continued by the local people up to the 11th century A.D. Therefore, it is concluded that *Suvaṇṇabhūmi* was the southern or lower part of Burma.

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Apart from the point mentioned above, another interesting point is that there is another name for *Suvaṇṇabhūmi* called *Rāmaññadesa*. Both of them are used by scholars regarding the history of Buddhism in Burma. Similarly, while the southern part is called *Rāmaññadesa*, the northern part is known as *Marammaraṭṭha* of Burma.

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