FULL REPORT

In Search of Tambralinga's Heartland: The Distribution of Archaeological Sites, State Formation, and Cultural Landscape in Central Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat

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Acknowledgement

This research project, entitled "**In Search of Tambralinga's Heartland: The Distribution of Archaeological Sites, State Formation, and Cultural Landscape in Central Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat,**" has been supported by various institutions and scholars. I would like to record my gratitude to all of them here. I wish to thank Thailand Research Fund and Walailak University for providing the research fund for this project. I am grateful to Associate Professor Dr. Thanik Lertcharnrit, my old professor at the Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University, for accepting to be the mentor in this project. I am thankful to Suthira Thongkao and Jantira Rattanarat, lecturers at Walailak University, for their help in analyzing the geographical and environmental data. I would also like to extend my gratitude to SEAMEO SPAFA for supporting the completion of this research report.

Abstract

Project Code : TRG5680069

Project Title : In Search of Tambralinga's Heartland: The Distribution of Archaeological Sites, State Formation, and Cultural Landscape in Central Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat

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Project Period : 3 June 2013-31 December 2016

This research studies the state formation process, cultural landscape, and distribution of archaeological sites in relation to the physical geography in central Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. This area is situated in Peninsular Siam, an important region that opened to Trans-Asiatic Trade and cultural influences since at least the 4th century BCE. Tambralinga, a significant kingdom, developed in this region on the east coast of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province during approximately the 5th to 11th centuries CE. It was regenerated as Nakhon Si Thammarat Kingdom in around the 12th century CE and finally annexed to Ayutthaya Kingdom in around the 15th century CE. Tambralinga was the foundation of greatness for Nakhon Si Thammarat Kingdom which was the most important trade center and political power in Peninsular Siam in the 13th century. Although one of the earliest states in Peninsular Siam and Southeast Asia, Tambralinga has insufficiently been studied by archaeologists. Thus, this research projects examines archaeological remains, historical record, and landscape of Tambralinga in order to put it in the broader conceptual, historical, and geographical contexts. It discovers that Tambralinga Kingdom was formed in the context of Trans-Asiatic social interaction and had complex socio-political organization related to Hinduism, which was demonstrated in the landscape as well. The heartland of Tambralinga was on the coastal land of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province and had 3 main ecozones, including the mountains, the flood plains, and the seashores, between which people commuted and exchanged goods. In this heartland, the central part of Sichon District between the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon Rivers was in the floodplain suitable for wet-rice cultivation which could have produced rice for a large population. Also, this area had the highest density of brick shrines and the largest religious complex at Khao Kha in the Tambralinga period, attesting to the significance of this area in the history of Southeast Asia as well. This area therefore was probably a very important population center in, if not the capital city of, Tambralinga Kingdom.

Keywords : Tambralinga, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Peninsular Siam, State Formation, Early Historic Settlement Pattern, Cultural Landscape

บทคัดย่อ

รหัสโครงการ: TRG5680069

ชื่อโครงการ: "ตามหาดินแดนอันเป็นหัวใจของตามพรลิงค์: การศึกษาการกระจายตัวของแหล่งโบราณคดี การก่อตัวของรัฐ และภูมิวัฒนธรรมในเขตอำเภอสิชลตอนกลาง จังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราช

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          งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ศึกษากระบวนการก่อตัวของรัฐ ภูมิวัฒนธรรม และการกระจายตัวของแหล่งโบราณคดีที่มีความเชื่อมโยงกับลักษณะทางกายภาพของสภาพภูมิศาสตร์ในบริเวณตอนกลางของอำเภอสิชล จังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราช พื้นที่แห่งนี้ตั้งอยู่บนคาบสมุทรสยามที่เป็นดินแดนที่เปิดออกสู่การค้าและการการติดต่อทางวัฒนธรรมข้ามทวีปเอเชียมาตั้งแต่ราวศตวรรษที่ 4 ก่อนคริสตกาลเป็นต้นมา รัฐที่สำคัญเป็นอันมากแห่งหนึ่งในบริเวณนี้คือ "ตามพรลิงค์" ที่พัฒนาขึ้นบนฝั่งทะเลตะวันออกของจังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราชในราวคริสตวรรษที่ 5-10 และต่อมาได้คลี่คลายมาสู่อาณาจักรนครศรีธรรมราชในราวคริสต์ศตวรรษที่ 12 ก่อนที่จะถูกผนวกเข้ากับอาณาจักรอยุธยาในราวคริสต์ศตวรรษ 15   อาณาจักรตามพรลิงค์นั้นเป็นรากฐานที่สำคัญของอาณาจักรนครศรีธรรมราชที่รุ่งเรืองถึงขีดสุดในฐานะศูนย์กลางทางเศรษฐกิจและการเมืองบนคาบสมุทรสยามในราวคริสต์ศตวรรษที่ 13 ถึงแม้ว่าตามพรลิงค์จะเป็นอาณาจักรโบราณรุ่นแรกสุดของเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้แต่กลับไม่ได้รับการศึกษาอย่างเพียงพอทางด้านโบราณคดี ดังนั้น งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้จึงศึกษาหลักฐานทางโบราณคดี ประวัติศาสตร์ และภูมิทัศน์ของตามพรลิงค์ เพื่อจัดวางให้รัฐแห่งนี้อยู่ในบริบทที่กว้างไกลกว่าเดิมทางด้านแนวความคิดทางวิชาการ ทางประวัติศาสตร์ และทางภูมิศาสตร์ งานชิ้นนี้ได้ค้นพบว่าอาณาจักรตามพรลิงค์ได้ก่อตัวขึ้นในบริบทของการค้าข้ามทวีปเอเชียและมีการจัดระเบียบทางการเมืองและสังคมที่ซับซ้อนที่เชื่อมโยงกับศาสนาฮินดูที่ได้ถูกสะท้อนออกมาในภูมิวัฒนธรรมของรัฐแห่งนี้อีกด้วย ดินแดนอันเป็นหัวใจของตามพรลิงค์นั้นอยู่บนที่ราบชายฝั่งทะเลของจังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราชและมีบริเวณทางนิเวศวิทยาจำนวน 3 เขตเป็นหลัก ประกอบด้วย เขตเทือกเขา เขตที่ราบน้ำท่วมถึง และเขตชายฝั่งทะเล ซึ่งผู้คนได้เดินทางไปมาหาสู่และแลกเปลี่ยนสินค้าระหว่างกัน ในบริเวณอันเป็นหัวใจของตามพรลิงค์แห่งนี้ พื้นที่ตอนกลางของอำเภอสิชลระหว่างคลองท่าเชี่ยว คลองท่าควาย และคลองท่าทนมีความสำคัญเป็นอันมาก พื้นที่นี้เป็นที่ราบน้ำท่วมถึงที่เหมาะสมกับการเพาะปลูกข้าวที่สามารถผลิตข้าวเพื่อเลี้ยงประชากรขนาดใหญ่ได้ นอกจากนี้ พื้นที่แห่งนี้ยังมีความหนาแน่นของโบราณสถานอิฐในสมัยตามพรลิงค์สูงสุด และยังมีโบราณสถานเขาคาที่มีขนาดใหญ่และมี

ความซับซ้อนเป็นอันมาก อันบ่งบอกได้ถึงความสำคัญของพื้นที่นี้ในประวัติศาสตร์ของเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ ดังนั้น อย่างน้อยที่สุด พื้นที่นี้จึงน่าจะเป็นศูนย์กลางของประชากรที่สำคัญของอาณาจักรตามพรลิงค์ หากมิใช่ เมืองหลวงของรัฐแห่งนี้ในอดีตกาล

คำหลัก : ตามพรลิงค์ นครศรีธรรมราช คาบสมุทรสยาม การก่อตัวของรัฐ รูปแบบการตั้งถิ่นฐานสมัย ประวัติศาสตร์ตอนต้น ภูมิวัฒนธรรม

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Peninsular Siam or Isthmian Siam, situated between the South China Sea and the Bay of Bengal, occupied a strategic location in the maritime Trans-Asiatic trade network, a web of coastal communities and principalities involving in the exchanges of various resources since the late centuries BCE if not earlier (Figure 1.1). This network also made possible the flow of people who brought with them ideas and cultures from place to place. The isthmian geography of Peninsular Siam allowed it to have the openness of an island to trade and cultural influences (Figure 1.2). A series of rivers on both sides of the isthmus and the low watersheds in the middle were used for the transportations of goods and people from one ocean to the other. Its valuable resources such as tin and forest products attracted foreign merchants. According to the Chinese accounts of the early centuries CE, the indigenous people in the isthmus played a vital role in facilitating the trans-peninsular trading activities. Without them and their intimate knowledge of the environment, foreign merchants could not possibly cross over or establish trading stations in the isthmus.

Having served as crossroads in the trade network and opened to various cultural influences, societies in the isthmian tract had developed remarkable material culture. The isthmian early port-cities, like Khao Sam Kaeo, Phukhao Thong, Khuan Luk Pat, and Tha Chana, dated to around the late centuries BCE to early centuries CE were among the earliest port-cities in maritime Asia. Their material culture broadly includes semi-precious stone and glass beads and jewelry, gold items, and metal tools and ornaments. Evidence from these sites also indicates that they were production centers of such goods, especially of beads and ornaments using Indian techniques. In Southeast Asia, most of early production sites of glass and stone ornaments were found in Peninsular Siam.

Since around the fourth century BCE from the time of the establishments of earliest port-cities like Khao Sam Kaeo and Phukhao Thong, the socioeconomic connections between India and Peninsular Siam considerably increased. Indian religions, including Buddhism and Brahmanism, were introduced in Peninsular Siam and they became significant ingredients, along with other factors, in the state formation process in this region. A number of early polities emerged in this region in around the middle of the first millennium CE. An important one of them was Tambralinga.

Historians tend to write about Tambralinga as if this kingdom emerged in the 12th century CE. This is due to the fact that most textual evidence related to this kingdom was dated to that period onwards. Only few archaeological research has been conducted to study this kingdom on the ground. Tambralinga seems to originally emerged as a trade station in the Trans-Asiatic trade network in the early centuries CE as mentioned in an Indian text and became a powerful kingdom with its peak in the 13th century. Its heartland seems to be situated on the coastal lands of Nakhon Province, Southern Thailand. The late prehistoric fishing-trading communities on this coast were active in the exchange network in the South China Sea, suggested by the fact that this area had the highest density of Bronze Drums in the Malay Peninsula in the late centuries BCE. By at least the 5th century CE, Tambralinga seems to have developed into a state-level polity with Visnu images, lingas, and possible stone inscriptions, all of which point to the existence of Hindu shrines. These may have been rather small and made in part of perishable materials. Its heartland has the highest density of the earliest Visnu images of Southeast Asia, called "the conch on the hip group" dated to c. the 5th century CE and reflected the advanced socio-political development in the area. Tambralinga would seem to have been served as a center of innovation of these Visnu images in maritime Southeast Asia. The heartland also has the highest density of stone inscriptions and Hindu shrines in the isthmian tract in the period between the 5th and 11th century CE. The locations of the shrines suggest the distribution of communities and communication routes along the coast of Nakhon.

Compared to a house, Tambralinga had its gate opened up to the South China Sea and had the mountain in its backyard. The mountains were important to the kingdom's trade and development as it was the source of exotic goods, such as forest products and tin, highly valued by foreign merchants. Situated between the shores and the mountains was the flood plain that produced rice and cattle for the population in the kingdom. Rivers and walking trails provided passageways between ecological zones in the kingdom. They also connected the kingdom to the west coast of the isthmus.

Among the clusters of shrines, dated to the 5th to 11th century CE, distributing throughout the coastal lands of Nakhon, the biggest and densest one is situated in the area between the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon Rivers in central Sichon District. There are 45 sites in this area recorded in my dissertation. This pivotal area may have served as the capital of Tambralinga. However, there have been only a few archaeological research in this important area. This current research, therefore, intends to investigate archaeological sites in

this area to uncover their distribution in relation to the surrounding geographical features and to explore the cultural landscape of this important early kingdom in maritime Asia.

This research project, entitled "**In Search of Tambralinga's Heartland: The Distribution of Archaeological Sites, State Formation, and Cultural Landscape in Central Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat**" has 3 objectives including:

1. To study the process of state formation in Southeast Asia in general and in Tambralinga Kingdom (c. the 6th to 11th centuries CE) in particular, to put Tambralinga in a broader historical and conceptual contexts

2. To explore the various aspects of cultural landscape of Tambralinga in the coastal plain of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province

3. To examine the distribution of archaeological sites (brick shrines) in relation to the physical geography in central Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, to give evidence to the human-environment relationships in this area which may have been a very important center of Tambralinga

This research project mainly uses archaeological methodology which involves the studies of documents, interviews with local people, field surveys, technical processing, and dating techniques. I first reviewed and examined the documents related to the state formation process, the cultural landscape, and the studies of Tambralinga. Next, remote sensing investigation and field surveys were conducted to study archaeological sites and their geographical contexts. Some brick samples were also collected from the ground surface for the Thermoluminescence (TL) dating purposes. We could not have TL dating for every site because of the budget limitation in the project. We could not also conduct excavations at the sites because of the bureaucratic complication with the Fine Arts Department.

This research report has 6 main chapters. The first is the introduction to the research project, while the second is the discussion on the state formation process to put Southeast Asia and Tambralinga in the conceptual framework. The third chapter deals with the historical context and mechanism of social interaction which led to the rise of Tambralinga. Chapter 4 explores various aspects of cultural landscape of Tambralinga. Chapter 5 examines the distribution of sites in relation to the physical geography in Sichon area which was probably a very important center of Tambralinga, while Chapter 6 is the conclusion.

Chapter 2
Concepts Related to State Formation and Southeast Asian Evidence

Introduction

> …[T]he state is the most powerful organizational structure ever developed in the history of the planet. It literally moves mountains and redirects rivers, and it has on occasion sent untold thousands, even millions, to their deaths. How did such a thing happen? Why?
>
> Ronald Cohen (1978:1)

This chapter will fulfill Objective I in this research project, which aims to review and explore the process of state formation in Southeast Asia in general. We shall start with the scholarly discussions of state formation and then go into details using evidence from Southeast Asia later. The content of this chapter will be important in providing the conceptual and historiacl contexts of Tambralinga Kingdom which will be discussed subsequently in details.

We may be quite familiar with "the state" because most, if not all, people on earth now live in it or have a relationship with it; it is now a significant part of their lives and we do not usually question its existence. However, if we consider the history of mankind, we will realize that the state is a relatively new invention, a new socio-political phenomenon. What we call "the state systems" appeared only around 6000 years ago (Feinman and Price 2001:351), while human race and our close ancestors had lived in relatively more egalitarian societies for over several million years. Although many human groups are still living their lives in less stratified societie, the state has since its origin absorbed more and more people to its structure, become more and more influential to people's lives, and literally changed the face of the earth. It is probably undeniable that the state is the most powerful organizational structure that can channel people's energy to build the world's biggest temple or to send millions to their death in its name, as Ronald Cohen (1978:1) proposes. Possehl (1998:268) even calls the state "the organization for survival" and adds that the non-state type of complex society may not have developed in many places or lasted for a long period of time. He posits that despite internal conflicts among its various groups and institutions, the state is

a highly successful form of socio-cultural organization that can effectively govern large numbers of people, fund its needs, handle divisive forces of cultural and ethnic diversity, and protect its own interests against those of others (1998:267-268). Whether we agree with his perspectives or not, it is still our important task to ponder on the questions: How did the state happen? Why? Yet, before attempting to answer these questions, we should first have a sense of the definitions of the term "state."

What Is the State?

The state has been variously defined by many scholars (e.g. Claessen and van de Velde 1987; Claessen and Oosten 1996; Cohen and Service 1978; Feinman and Marcus 1998; Haas 1982; Possehl 1998:268). Thus, its definitions vary considerably and it seems that more definitions would continue to show up in the future. The term "state" is then as dynamic as the actual states themselves. This fact obliges us to define the term "state" every time we use it in each work. It should be useful to sketch briefly some definitions developed by previous scholars.

Haas summarizes the different conceptions of the state into three groups (1982:2-3). In the first group, the state is seen as representing the discrete complex of social institutions that operate together to govern a particular, highly evolved society; this rather Marxist perspective views the state as an organ of class domination and oppression of one class by another. This perspective on state resembles that of Clastres (1987) in which the state brought violence to the societies and forced commoners to work more than they needed to so that the elites can live; this is the reason why some primitive societies rejected the state and prohibited the accompanying inequality. In the second group, the state is perceived as referring to a particular kind of society characterized by specific attributes. For instance, the state is used as a label to classify societies that have reached a specific level in the cultural evolutionary continuum, just as the terms tribe or chiefdom are employed. Third, closely associated with the second notion, the state is utilized to simply identify individual bounded societies that are characterized by a state level of organization (e.g., the Aztec *state* or the Egyptian *state*). Haas then offers his own definition of the state as "a society in which there is a centralized and specialized institution of government" (1982:3). Although his definition of the state seems to be too general and vague, as some might ask how centralized and specialized "the institution of government" should be, I personally believe that unconfined definitions of the state tend to be better than rigid definitions that might contain many

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generalized criteria into which actual states are forced to fit. We shall come back to this subject later.

More related to our topic are the definitions of the archaic or early state[1]. Claessen and Oosten (1996:3) succinctly postulate that an early state is "an independent socio-political organization with a bounded territory and a centre of government." In a more recent work, Marcus and Feinman (1998:3-4) summarize that, in contrast to the modern nation-states, archaic states arose early in the history of their particular world regions and were characterized by, at least, two class-endogamous social strata with a professional ruling class and a commoner class, usually including royal families, major and minor nobles, and commoners. They had governments that were both highly centralized and internally specialized and should include first-, second-, and third-generation states in their region. Archaic states were regarded as having more power than the rank societies (e.g., chiefdoms) that preceded them, particularly in the areas of waging war, exacting tribute, controlling information, drafting soldiers, and regulating manpower and labor. For some well-known states with historical texts, one may add that they were ruled by kings rather than chiefs, had standardized temples implying a state religion, had full-time priests rather than shamans or part-time priests, and could hold on to conquered territory in ways no rank society could (1998:4-5). Possehl also adds that the state as a form of political organization developed among peoples with large-scale economies, having considerable specialization in craft and career tracks, and showing the ties between the state political apparatus and state ideology which are involved with the idea of political legitimization (1998:264).

One may see that the definitions of the state and archaic states previously mentioned seem to be circulating around the ideas of centralization, specialization, and territory-oriented mentality. These ideas about archaic states have been challenged in more recent work (e.g. Schwartz and Nichols 2006; Stein 2001; Yoffee 2005). Stein implies that early states in the Old World may not be so highly centralized, omnipotent entities and the heterogenous model that recognizes variability in state/urban organization and explores the limits of state power within the broader society should be more applicable and deserve more attentions (2001:356). Centralization, specialization, and territory orientation are very much questionable when applied to the Southeast Asian cases as well (see Geertz 1980; Reid 2008; Wolters 1999).

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[1] Smith (2003a) suggests that the term "early states" may be more appropriate to denote the states that developed early in their specific regions. However, considering the similar definition of the term "archaic states" provided by Marcus and Feinman (1998), I use these two terms interchangeably in this chapter.

Southeast Asian early states may better be described as decentralized rather than centralized, diversified rather than specialized, and prestige- rather than territory-oriented. These aspects would be valuable contributions to the construction of the concept of early states, and they will be discussed in detail later.

As mentioned earlier, it seems better to use unconfined core concepts to define early states rather than to attempt to establish criteria that will clearly distinguish all states from all non-states (Following Cowgill 2004:526). Although it will become more obvious how early states can be defined (particularly in the Southeast Asian context), it may be possible to point out one significant character that early states seem to possess. It is the process of institutionalization of power and ideology of the state leadership and even the state itself. An early state can thus be defined as a polity with a process of institutionalization and materialization of leadership, social stratification, and religious organization. The institutionalization is the core feature of early states because it represents the unique quality that distinguishes the state system from other forms of political systems. Through the process of institutionalization, a kin-based chief becomes a godly king, or a chief's house becomes an administrative office. Institutionalization makes the political statuses and organizations more permanent, at least formally. It makes the ruling body of a polity a governing institute, at least at the official level, although it may be still based on interpersonal relationships among the elites in reality[2]. The effort to institutionalize the government and the leadership is also related to the establishment of religious institutions and the use of writing to commemorate and increase the power of the kings and their supporting institutions. This relationship between the ruling class and the religion can be seen in the materialization of several kinds of religious architecture, sculpture, and activity under the elites' names. One may see more attempts of the leaders to centralize political ideology than to monopolize the economy in early states, in which the process of institutionalization played a vital role. One would hazard an assumption that the degree of the investment in such processes can be what differentiated early state kings from chiefs.

Early States vs. Chiefdoms

One enduring question that has constantly challenged archaeologists of early states is how to distinguish early states from chiefdoms. According to Earle (1997:5), chiefdoms are

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[2] The contradictions between the formal appearance and the reality of the nature of leadership in Southeast Asia are remarkably illustrated by Geertz (1980) and Wolters (1999).

normally characterized as kin-based societies, meaning that a person's place in a kinship system determines his or her social status and political position, and an individual's rank and privilege are measured by the genealogical distance from a senior line of descent. Depending on this genealogical nearness, chiefdoms can be highly non-egalitarian societies, and individuals can claim their hereditary prestige in a society, even for the highest status of the paramount chief (Service cited in Possehl 1998:265). In a broader scale, a chiefdom can be seen as an autonomous political unit comprising a number of villages or communities, out of which a multi-community political unit emerged for the first time (see Manzanilla 2001:382).

Marcus and Feinman (1998:6-7) clearly suggest the differences between rank societies (e.g., chiefdoms) and states as including:

> "(1) change in the settlement hierarchy from three to four levels; (2) a change in the decision-making hierarchy from two to three (or more) levels; (3) a fundamental change in the ideology of stratification and descent, such that rulers were conceded a sacred supernatural origin (establishing their divine right to rule) while commoners were seen as having a separate descent of nondivine origin; (4) the emergence of two endogamous strata, the result of severing the bonds of kinship that had once linked leaders to followers in a branching continuum of relationships; (5) the evolution of the palace as the ruler's official residence; (6) the change from a single centralized leader (e.g., a chief) to a government that employed legal force while denying its citizens the use of personal, individual force; and (7) the establishment of governmental laws and the ability to enforce them."

Marcus and Feinman's description is very helpful for students of early states, although in reality one may find it very difficult to discover all these aspects in the field, especially in Southeast Asia where the impermanent nature of architectural material greatly obscures archaeological reconstruction. These authors' description, particularly number 3, reaffirms our point that the ideology and institutionalization of social stratification is a significant difference between early states and chiefdoms. However, does it matter at all to categorize societies or polities into types, sometimes in an evolutionary fashion?

Critiques of Social Evolutionism

Social evolutionism assumes that societies are progressively[3] developing from one stage to the next in the evolutionary scale and in response to their external worlds. For focusing on creating typologies that categorize prehistoric and modern traditional societies together into pre-existing, universal types (e.g. bands, tribes, chiefdoms, states), social evolutionism has received many critiques. Yoffee (2005:4-9) states that social evolutionism, especially neo-evolutionism, is the attempt to create categories for human progress and presents a theory of how history is a continuation of biological evolution, in which societies advance from lower to higher forms. It creates *factoids*, or "a speculation or guess that has been repeated so often it is eventually taken for hard fact" (Yoffee 2005:7-8), in the studies of human societies and cultures.

Although many schools in social evolutionism emphasize different evolutionary pathways of societies (unilinear, multilinear, parallel, convergent, divergent) and credit the social transformation to different mechanisms (from cultural to ecological forces), Smith (2003:33) carefully categorizes the main characteristics of social evolutionism into three aspects:

> "First, there is a necessity to social evolution that propels us from simple forms of association to more complex societies that are larger in scale and more differentiated in internal structure… Second, social evolution may move at a different rate in different parts of the world, but the shape and mechanism are universal… Third, priority in the determinants of social transformation is ceded to material dimensions of life – adaptation, relations of production, demography – that then shape the "non-recurrent" particulars of belief, thought, and performance."

These social evolutionary assumptions rip societies out of their cultural contexts, discern the wide variability of cultures in each place, and strip away most of the interesting and significant features of the societal dynamics in the life of particular state. They provide a

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[3] The idea of progress can be prominently found in V. Gordon Childe's classic work, namely *Man Makes Himself* (1951). He proposes that the "progress" of human society is proved in the history of mankind since human population has increased through time, confirming our successful adaptation to the external world with our cultural creativity in the evolutionary sense.

rather static and restrictive picture of the cycles of societies. From the evolutionary viewpoint, it is difficult to see or conceptualize the devolution or regeneration of societies from higher to lower stages.

Nevertheless, it is also possible that the evolutionary theories look radically rigid to us because we have false perceptions about them. Marcus and Feinman (1998:5) note that evolutionary stages were not uniform, static, or inevitable. For instance, the biological evolutionary stage "reptile" is not uniform and includes many types of animals. They add that evolutionists are aware of heterogeneity within categories and use typologies because the creation of such categories facilitates general comparisons and contrasts (Marcus and Feinman 1998:5).

Marcus and Feinman's point is important. Although particularism, derived from Boas, should certainly be emphasized, archaeological research should allow the possibility to compare societies and generalize, to certain degree, the trends of social development and change. Generalization is perceived as the hallmark of science but it is highly questionable (if not wrong) if we try to force this concept into social sciences, especially anthropology, since each society is unique. Cultural particularism is one of the most influential concepts in anthropology perhaps since the beginning of the field in North America; it allows us to overcome ethnocentrism and social evolution that can be used to justify colonialism. However, it does not allow us to compare cultures and conceptualize the trend of social development. A better concept would be one that facilitates a combination between particularization and generalization that creates balances between the two, not over-particularizing or over-generalizing. Applying this notion to early states, I believe we should see an early state as a kind of polity or a form of socio-political organization, not a rigid type in the social evolutionary scale, using loose definitions as suggested earlier. The definitions and the concepts of early states should encourage us to study the unique characteristics of each of them in detail, while also allowing us to make comparisons among them and between them and other forms of polity or society. In the end, it is far better to think of early "states" or "an" early state but never "the" early state (see Cowgill 2004:526).

From State Formation to State Dynamics

How did the state happen? Why? These are classic questions on the subject of state origins that have been widely asked through much of the 20th century in western academia. These questions concern the emergence of the pristine states, or the states that first independently developed in their specific world's regions without any contacts with the states

that might be established before them in other world's regions. Although they always are important questions to think of and it is actually a significant task of archaeology to make contributions to the studies of state origins in which there are usually few documentary evidence for historians to work on, archaeologists since the 1980s seem to have moved away from the subject of state origins toward that of state dynamics, because the former focuses heavily on the rise of "the state" and assumes that social evolution was complete when states (and cities) emerged and that there were little else to learn about complex societies once they had appeared (Schwartz 2006:3), while the latter emphasizes the operation and the whole dynamic life of states as well as their regeneration afterward. This approach implies that there is much more to learn about complex societies and states once they emerged; it focuses on what they did rather than what they were.

Stein (2001:355) calls this shift away from attempts to generate and test explanatory models for the origin of pristine states "the most significant theoretical trend" to have emerged since the mid-1980's. He posits that the studies of state dynamics underline the specific factors that account for variation in the ways these polities were organized; it is a theoretical development closely connected to the critiques of social evolutionism and processual archaeology due to its emphases on systems theory, cultural ecology, and cultural evolutionary/adaptationist perspectives seen as ahistorical, unilineal, functionalist, and environmentally deterministic. Related to this new trend, post-processual archaeology focuses on a more historically oriented approach, either with emphases on Marxist/materialist perspectives or ideology, or else viewing state societies as heterogeneous functionalized entities where culturally specific patterns of ideology, power relationships, and competition among socio-economic groups play key roles in defining the fundamental organization of the polity (Stein 2001:355). The issues on state dynamics will have their own section later in this chapter.

Organization of the Chapter

The purposes of this chapter are to review theories related to state formation and state dynamics, to test them against archaeological, historical, and ethnographical evidence in Southeast Asia, and to suggest the contributions that Southeast Asian archaeology can offer to the studies of early states. This chapter comprises of 5 major sections. The first is an introduction that provides theoretical background on various issues related to early states, while the second section outlines the Southeast Asian earliest states and their geographical and archaeological characteristics, a group of states located both in continental and insular

Southeast Asia, and ranging from Vietnam to Burma, and from Java to Sumatra. These earliest states are the examples that will be drawn on principally for the discussions in the third and fourth sections. The third section reviews the traditional theories of state formation and their possible applications in Southeast Asia using the evidence given in the second section, whereas the fourth section discusses several issues of state dynamics in Southeast Asia employing a wider range and variety of evidence over the long period ranging from the earliest states to the early colonial period. The fifth section summarizes the chapter's major points and provides conclusions.

Encountering Theories with the Ground Truth

Perhaps as a result of the effort to make archaeology as scientific as possible, or even to make it a field in natural sciences, archaeologists have invested much energy in theory- and model-building endeavors. The reason for this may be because generalization is the hallmark of science in Western academia, in which accepted models must have superior quality sufficient to explain every specific case. Although generalizing attempts are useful, as suggested earlier, serious problems can occur when scholars ignore the ground truth and overemphasize model-building. Sometimes, the actual evidence from the field is distorted to fit into pre-existing models in an attempt to claim that the models are effective. This is a critical problem that will impede, or even ruin, the credibility of our field. It is crucial not to forget that exploring the ground truth honestly is the hearth of the hypothesis-testing process vital in the scientific research. I agree with the argument of the post-processual approach in archaeology that we should keep our focus on the historically specific cultural approach (Stein 2001:355) in which the characteristics of each locality and culture will be more truthfully examined. The results of this kind of examination will be more useful in the comparison studies and enhance our understanding of the similarities and differences in human cultures in general.

One may call the approach employed in this chapter "inductive," in that the evidence from the field will be examined first; next, the results of the examination will be discussed against theories; and at the end, a meaningful dialogue between the evidence and theories will occur in hopes of making contributions to the studies of early states. It is the reason why we should examine the evidence from Southeast Asia first in the second section. This exploratory approach intends to enrich the world with the ground truth from the local level in the same vein that this chapter aims to transport you over the smooth surface of the modern

state to the rugged terrain of archaic states operated by the fledging kings of the remote, misty past of Southeast Asia.

The Southeast Asian Earliest States

When it comes to the subject of state formation, Southeast Asia has been perceived as a backwater region in Asia, since there was no single pristine state developed independently, whereas East Asia had the Shang State (1600/1570-1045 BC) (Fiskesjo 2001:51) and South Asia had the (Mature) Indus Civilization (2500-1900 BC) (Possehl 1998:261). Concerning chronology alone, the earliest states in Southeast Asia emerged only in around mid-first millennium AD, thousands of years later than those in East and South Asia. Although we believe that numbers are not the answer to everything, this is actually one of the several reasons why the discussions of state formation (as well as of state dynamics, surprisingly) have given little attention to Southeast Asia relative to other geographic regions (e.g., Cowgill 2004; Feinman and Marcus 1998; Stein 2001). We believe that there are more stories to tell from Southeast Asia that can contribute to the progression of the archaeology of early states in general. This agrees with the viewpoint of Miriam Stark (2006a:2), who bravely contends that Southeast Asia has been underutilized, even though it has a lot to offer to the studies of early states.

Southeast Asian early states have been labeled as "secondary states." Price (1978) suggests that secondary states can be formed through two distinct sequences: the first is via historical succession from a pre-existing states and the second is as part of the expansion of an existing state into areas inhabited by populations not heretofore state-organized. We may add to this quite traditional view the notion that secondary states can develop in the process of social interactions between non-state and state societies that allow flows of politico-ideological concepts of state formation toward the non-state societies. This is probably the process that best accounts for the origins of most of the earliest states in Southeast Asia (see Wheatley 1983). We shall come back to this topic in detail later. However, first we should succinctly sketch the geographic, historical, and archaeological characteristics of Southeast Asia and her earliest states, to enhance our understanding of the region and its contexts[4]. This section describes the earliest states of Southeast Asia that first developed in their

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[4] The details of the cultural characteristics of these states will be discussed in the state dynamics section when appropriate.

specific regions[5] during around the second half of the first millennium AD. These regions include: (1) the Bac Bo region of northern Vietnam, (2)coastal central Vietnam, (3) the lower Mekong delta, (4) the area around the Gulf of Siam, (5) the Siamo-Malay Peninsula, (6) the Irawaddy river valley, (7) southern Sumatra, and (8) western Java.

Overview of Geography of Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia has been generally separated conceptually into two parts, namely continental (or mainland) and insular (or island) Southeast Asia. The distinction between them, which is based on their locations in relation to the Asian landmass, can perhaps also be perceived as arbitrary in some respects, because both of them have some similar geographic and topological areas. For instance, some of the coastal areas in both the mainland and island parts of Southeast Asia are rather alike in terms of physical and cultural features. People in this area have close relationships with each other through maritime activities, and they also play a vital role in connecting the inland groups with the sea through the riverine and overland routes. It does not matter much whether these people live in mainland or island Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, to simplify the discussion, we will continue to use the conventional terms mainland and island Southeast Asia as we briefly describe the geography of these regions.

Southeast Asia is situated between the Indian subcontinent in the west and the landmass of China in the north (Figure 1.1). While mainland Southeast Asia is appended to the Asian landmass, island Southeast Asia with its large number of islands and islets is located amidst the vast body of the South China Sea. Southeast Asia experiences two major seasonal monsoons – northeast monsoons and southwest monsoons (see Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002). The northeast monsoon brings dry-cold wind from Siberia and inland East Asia to mainland Southeast Asia. This begins the dry season or winter in this region around January to April. The southwest monsoon, in contrast, carries large amounts of rain to mainland Southeast Asia from July through December making this the rainy season. Meanwhile, the island part usually remains permanently wet all year long (Bulbeck 2001:82). These seasonal monsoons influence the rhythm of life and the agricultural cycle in this region. The monsoons

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[5] Here I follow the regional classification made by Stark (2001) for most of the regions; however, some new regions are added including the Siamo-Malay peninsula, southern Sumatra, and western Java. See Stark (2001), Bulbeck (2001), and O'Reilly (2007) for comprehensive reviews of these regions.

were significantly used by merchants and sailors in maritime trade, particularly since the late prehistoric period.

Many natural resources characterize Southeast Asia. Forest products and metals are valuable resources in this region's maritime trade network. The Indians perceived Southeast Asia as the realms of Gold, called *Suvarnabhumi* and *Suvarnadvipa* (Wheatley 1983:264), a term that probably suggests the richness of metals (not just gold) in the area. Copper is clustered in central Thailand and central Vietnam. In addition, tin from Southeast Asia was highly valued by merchants from the Indian subcontinent, where tin was quite rare. Tin is concentrated in the tin belt, which is 20-100 km wide and 1200 km long and runs from the eastern side of central Burma down into peninsular Siam (Bronson 1992; Stark 2001: 163). Island Southeast Asia and the Siamese-Malay Peninsula had also been especially famous as the sources of spices and forest products that were very valuable, and sometimes irreplaceable, in the cosmopolitan trade network from the late prehistoric to the colonial periods.

Perhaps one the most notable differences between mainland and island Southeast Asian is the riverine systems. The mainland consists of several large river basins created by long rivers running mostly from north to south, extending from the Himalaya mountain ranges to the Indian or Pacific Oceans. Major rivers include, but are not limited to, the Irawaddy, Chao Phraya, Mekong, and Red rivers. These rivers create large flood plains for lowland rice (*Oryza sativa*) cultivation, an important food source for the mainland populations, alongside the produce from upland agricultures (Ng 1979; Stark 2001:162). Although the island area of Southeast Asia lacks large river basins, a large amount of rice can be produced in some inland areas of island Southeast Asia, such as those in Java and Bali,that have very fertile volcanic soils. Other sources of subsistence include fishing, farming, and hunting (Bulbeck 2001).

In sum, we can see that the diversity of geographies of Southeast Asia seems to be a twin sister of the diversity of economies and ways of life of people in this region. Diversification rather than intensification seems to be the pattern in most areas. Furthermore, both the land and sea seem to play a vital role in the development of early states. Products from the land, such as metals, minerals, forest products, and rice, truly supported the maritime trade that provided opportunities for people in this region to connect and expose themselves to the much wider world of unlimited sources of wealth and knowledge that would prove significant in the process of state formation.

The Bac Bo Region

The Bac Bo region surrounds the Gulf of Bac Bo in northern Vietnam and includes the Red river (Song Hong), the Black river (Song Ca), and the two major plains—Thanh Hoa and Vinh—that these rivers have created. This region consists of a vast area of deltas that are frequently subjected to flooding. The deltaic environment of this area is also reflected in the iconography of waterbirds on artifacts, suggesting that people in this area were familiar with coastal, deltaic, and/or lake environments (Stark 2001:169; Higham 2002:176; Bellwood 1997: 277). The most important culture in the Bac Bo area in the late prehistoric period (500 BC-AD 500) was the Dong Son culture (c. 500-0 BC) of the Iron Age. Dong Son is the name of a location, an archaeological culture, and an art style that succeeded the Dong Dau and Go Mun phases of the Bronze Age (Stark 2001:169). This period in Bac Bo witnessed intensified wet-rice cultivation with plows, high-quality production of bronze items, and the far-reaching distribution of the famous Dong Son bronze drums throughout Southeast Asia (Bellwood 1997:270; Higham 2002:177; Stark 2001). It is in the Dong Son period that we see the evidence of high-status burials and the first appearance of iron (Bellwood 1997:269). However, most scholars usually perceive Dong Son societies as chiefdoms[6] (e.g., Higham 1989:290) whose hierarchical systems relied on the manufacture and circulation of sumptuary bronze goods in an age of iron (see Stark 2001:171).

It has been believed that the earliest state system in the Bac Bo region happened when it was taken over by the Chinese army, which then founded commanderies in the region. Paul Wheatley (1983:5) suggests that the type of urban genesis, as related to the process of state formation[7], in this region is what can be called "urban imposition," which reflects an extension of symbolic and organizational patterns developed in one territory into another. Chinese historical records mention that the Chinese court had interests in the Bac Bo region and the areas around the Gulf of Tonkin as a window for maritime trade, and it was these

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[6] Higham (1989:289) mentions that these chiefdoms were part of the kingdom of Nan Yue whose founder was a Chinese administrator in Guangdong region, perhaps in 191 BC before they fell into the hands of the Han Empire. Some Vietnamese historians, however, believe that the Bac Bo area in the early historic period (and Dong Son) had already witnessed the earliest state formation before 200 BC, with Van Lang and the 18 Hung Kings ruling by a royal dynasty and a professional administrative class, bound together through hereditary privilege, mutual obligation, and personal loyalty (see Stark 2001:171). Nonetheless, this hypothesis needs to be examined further.

[7] Wheatley believes that urbanization and state formation are related to each other. The state is the extended system, while the city the limited system that function together. He writes "it was the institutions of state which were aggregated" (1983:9).

interests that led the Chinese army to conquer these regions. The Qin Dynasty (255-206 BC) was interested in trading with these regions in order to gain prestige goods and rarities such as rhinoceros horns, ivory, kingfisher feathers, and pearls (Yu 1967: 182). However, there is no evidence of large-scale settlements of Chinese people in the Bac Bo region in this period. The principal interaction between the Chinese and this region at this time was in the form of trade. The evidence of this contact can be found in the earliest Chinese artifact assemblage in the Dong Son area, which can be dated to the Qin dynasty in 255-206 BC (Janse 1947:xxiv). The excavations at Thanh-hoa in Northern Vietnam also reveal some artifacts of the Qin dynasty in the Hui Valley style, such as spearheads (Janse1947: xvi).

The Han dynasty, which succeeded the Qin dynasty, increased its interest in the South Seas trade for both exportation and importation. The Han silk trade with India and the Roman Empire was also conducted along the sea routes, the same routes that were believed to carry the first Roman envoy to the Han court (Yu 1967: 175). It seems that the Han dynasty used northern Vietnam and Tonkin as its window to the outside world, especially whenever the overland route to the Mediterranean was interrupted by unstable political circumstances. The desire for prestige goods and the strategic geography in the maritime trade of Thanh-hoa led the Han dynasty to conquer it by military force in 111 BC (Janse1947: xv). The Han armies established three commanderies in Bac Bo, including Jiaozhi, Jiuzhen, and Rinan (Higham 1989:290). From the perspective of the Han, the area of Thanh-hoa as well as Dong Son in Northern Vietnam belonged to the southern babarians called "*Yueh*" (Higham 2002: 171, Yu 1967: 182). As noted by the Chinese chronicles (Janse1947: xvii), the territory of primitive *Yueh* was covered with swamps and forests with various kinds of animals. Higham (2002: 178) assumes that the socio-political and technological development in this area was motivated by the interaction with Chinese culture; for instance, the development of plow agriculture. At this time, we see population nucleation and the first well-dated moated and walled settlements in the Bac Bo region where the Dong Son culture had faded immediately after the Han invasion (Stark 2001:170).

The Dong Son area, however, had never been without indigenous resistance and was not really under complete Han rule until AD 43. However, the great rebellion of AD 40 encouraged the Han military general, Ma Yuan, to supress the *Yueh* again in AD 43 (Janse 1947: xx). This event led the Han dynasty to carefully control the region and to support the Chinese immigration into the area. The large-scale Chinese occupations in Thanh-hoa and Dong Son are witnessed by the increase of Han tombs and various artifacts of Han origin, including seals, coins, mirrors, and halberds dated to the first century AD (Janse 1947:xxiv).

The Bac Bo case is the rare case in Southeast Asian state formation where a state system was forced into the local societies by a foreign colonizer. The establishment of centrally administered commanderies suggest that the Chinese brought their ready-to-use organizational system to the region in an attempt to resolve the local systems. This organizational imposition was also accompanied by large-scale demographic immigration and these two developments inevitably created immense effects at the local level. However, it should be noted that the networks and systems of local chiefdoms were still in place even after the Han occupations, suggesting local resilience as well (Higham 1989:290).

Coastal Central Vietnam

The area of coastal central Vietnam in the early historic period has been referred to as Champa, a generic term used to describe a series of small coastal kingdoms that developed primarily from trading communities in the maritime trade network (Southworth 2004: 209). A prosperous polity known as Linyi developed in this area beginning in the third century AD. This polity had close social, political, and commercial relationships with China, especially with the southern-most Han commandery of Rinan, and also with Funan in the Mekong delta (Higham 1989: 298). Southworth suggests that "the political structure of Linyi [during the fourth to fifth centuries AD] was probably based around a loose confederation of coastal polities, each maintaining trade and kinship ties with neighboring centers and the villages and mountain tribes of the interior" (2004: 220). This political structure may have been retained throughout the history of Champa.

Although, in Champa, both Buddhist and Brahmanic material culture can be found in archaeological record, Saivism seemed to be prominent in the early historic period, especially in the court, since most royal inscriptions were dedicated to and most kings were named after Siva (Southworth 2004). Most Cham kings, thus, seem to have associated themselves with Siva and established Saivaite temples in their centers. However, they supported other religions as well, such as Mahayana Buddhism, which flowered considerably in Champa during the eighth and ninth centuries AD when the Dong Duong monastery complex was built (Po Dharma 2001: 14).

The Lower Mekong Delta

Based on the Chinese documents, the area of the lower Mekong delta seems to have been the homeland of a polity named Funan, which thrived around the first to early seventh centuries AD and was succeeded by Chenla thereafter (Vickery 2002: 3). It has hitherto been

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believed that the kingdom of Funan was defeated by the kingdom of Chenla from the Dangrek area in the north; however, Michael Vickery, based on his examination of local inscriptions in the period from the sixth to the middle of the seventh century AD, recently suggested that Funan and Chenla were not separate kingdoms, arguing instead that the kings of Chenla were successors of the kings of Funan and, indeed, that instead of an attack southward on Funan there was an attack northward by the Funan princes, Bhavavarman and Citrasena-Mahendravarman, who were grandsons of Rudravarman—the last king of Funan known to the Chinese. The two princes then retreated southward again to establish a new capital at Bhavapura-Isanapura, currently known as Sambor Prei Kuk (Vickery 2002: 21). This idea indicates a political continuity in this area rather than a radical change.

According to Vickery (2003-2004), Funan consisted of a number of ports and was considerably prosperous in the maritime trade network. However, the pattern of trading routes between China and maritime Southeast Asia changed around the fifth century AD when ships began sailing directly from insular Southeast Asia to Vietnamese coasts and South China, bypassing the Mekong delta. As a consequence, the trading economy of Funan declined and the kingdom shifted its economic base to agriculture in the inland area, a short distance from the coast (Vickery 1998: 326).

This historical description is supported by the archaeological record found in the Mekong delta, in which we see a network of ports or trading communities on the coast interlinked to the agricultural communities situated a short distance inland through canal systems (Bishop et al. 2003). Archaeological study of settlement patterns of sites in "the Oc Eo culture" in Vietnam's Mekong delta demonstrates that there were as many as ninety groups of sites, distributed in different geographical zones. Some of them are large and have temples and this may perhaps represent the sites' pre-eminent status in their groups (Miksic 2003: 11; Vo Si Khai 2003: 47-68). One prominent site in this area that has yielded a large number of archaeological items related to the international maritime trade network is Oc Eo, which was highly probably one of the most active ports in maritime Southeast Asia at least during the mid-first to mid-third centuries AD, when it may also have acted as an urban and industrial center in this area (Manguin 2004: 291-292; Miksic 2003). Recent study at the Oc-Eo/Ba The area also suggests that during the fourth to sixth centuries AD there existed a large religious complex (Manguin 2004: 298-300). Having considered the importance of the Oc-Eo complex, it is therefore possible to assume that it may have represented an economic, religious, and political center in the lower Mekong delta, which may indeed have had multiple centers.

In the Cambodian part of the lower Mekong delta, we also see settlements scattered into several groups in the large flood plain, which may have been used for flood-recession rice cultivation ever since the prehistoric period, just as it is today[8]. Recent archaeological studies in this area suggest that satellite settlements of Angkor Borei, a significant center in this area, may have been distributed along the Takeo River, and some of the monuments found in these sites have been dated to the seventh to tenth centuries AD by luminescence dating techniques (Stark et al. 2005: 6) (Figure 2.1). The area within the city wall of Angkor Borei (luminescence dated to the first to sixth centuries AD) has yielded a number of the earliest dated Khmer inscriptions, religious artifacts, and monuments. Nearby the city there is also the Phnom Da religious complex, which contains the earliest Vishnu images in Khmer art (Stark 2003: 93-94; Stark et al. 2005). This suggests that not only was Angkor Borei an urban center but that it was also a crucial political and religious center in this area in the early historic period.

According to the archaeological and historical records, Buddhism and Brahmanism coexisted in the lower Mekong Delta in the early historic period (Vickery 1998; Vo Si Khai 2003: 78). Paul Lavy (2003) proposes that prior to the seventh century AD the rulers in the lower Mekong delta employed the image of Vishnu to express their style of rule, whereas those in the northern Cambodia used that of Siva. He suggests, furthermore, that during the seventh century AD there existed an attempt to unify these political ideologies of Vishnu and Siva together by the creating Harihara image (a half Vishnu-half Siva image) by the defeating rulers in the north. However, although we see a good number of Vishnu images that suggests the popularity of Vishnu in the lower Mekong deltaic area, we also observe in this area items and inscriptions of the sixth to seventh centuries AD dedicated to Siva or referring to elites who had Saivaite names (Vo Si Khai 2003; Vickery 1998: 99-136). If we believe that Rudravarman was a king of Funan in the early sixth century who resided in the deltaic area and who (and/or whose family) was Saivaite (since he bore the god Siva's name "Rudra"), then we may have to accept that Saivism must have been important in this area at that time as well. Also, if we believe that Bhavavarman and Mahendravarman, the two Saivaite princes from Funan who moved northward to rule in Sambor Prei Kuk, were successors of Rudravarman from the south, then it is probable that the Saivism (and other Indic ideology) in the north had, in fact, its root from the south.

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[8] See van Liere (1980) for flood-recession agriculture in this region.

These clues imply that the cults of Siva and Vishnu were both significant in royal institutions in the lower Mekong delta and that the rulers in this area may have associated themselves with both Siva and Vishnu. In fact, a king could support the creations of architecture and sculpture of both Siva and Vishnu, whether he was a Saivaite or Vaishnavaite, if there ever was such a distinction. This hypothesis is supported by Inscription K. 549 from the Angkorian period found at Phnom Da, which refers back to the time of King Rudravarman and indicates that he set up an image of Vishnu in a cave, probably at Phnom Da hill (Vickery 2002: 11).

The Areas around the Gulf of Siam

It has been believed that the area around the northern end of the Gulf of Siam housed a polity (or polities) named "Dvaravati", which was multi-centric in nature, consisting of a number of political units, and flourishing between the sixth and the eleventh centuries AD. Unfortunately, little is known about the polity, and there still exists debate regarding its political system due to the lack of historical records from the area's early historic period (Saraya 2002, Skilling 2003: 100). However, archaeological records from the early historic period demonstrates distributions of *muang* (towns) sharing similar cultural traits (i.e., art styles, belief systems, language, and city construction) which may collectively be assigned to the so-called Dvaravati culture (Saraya 2002: 15-18). These Dvaravati cultural traits, which show an emphasis on Buddhism, can also be seen in other regions in Thailand as well. The Dvaravati sites had been participating in the long-distance trade networks and interrelated to each other economically, socially, and politically since the late prehistoric period through a network of land, riverine, and maritime routes (Saraya 2002). The demographic and political centers of the so-called Dvaravati polity in the area around the Gulf of Siam include (but are not limited to) U-Thong, Nakhon Pathom, and Khu Bua on the west side of the Chao Phraya basin, and Si Mahosot and Dong Lakhon on the east.

The moated towns of the Dvaravati culture normally had Buddhist stupas as centers and satellite communities and temples around them (Saraya 2002: 16). Dhida Saraya (2002:19-20) points out that, according to historical evidence, in Dvaravati culture the king was venerated as a Bodhisattava whose power was based on personal meritorious practices valued by people in the society, whereas the political leader in the local community level could be elders or ritual specialists who also had accumulated merit.

The religions of Dvaravati culture were not limited to Buddhism, however. The availability of Brahmanic remains, such as lingas from U-Thong and a group of monumental

Vishnu images from Si Mahosot, suggest that Brahmanism also played a vital role in the socio-political development of polities in this area. The Sanskritic copper-plate inscription found at U-Thong, epigraphically dated to the sixth to seventh centuries AD, mentioned a king named Harsavarman (probably a king in the Dvaravati political network) making meritorious offerings to Siva lingas (Skilling 2003: 102). Brahmanism, therefore, seems to have been of social and political significance in Dvaravati polities, especially in the royal courts.

The Siamo-Malay Peninsula

The Siamo-Malay peninsula is part of the Asian mainland mass and runs southward from the flat plain of the Chao Phraya basin in central Thailand in the north. The peninsula is delimited by large bodies of water, including the Indian Ocean in the west and the South China Sea in the east. Mountains and hills divide much of the length of the peninsula and rivers generally run in an east-west direction and provide passageways across the low watershed linking with the river valleys that flow down to the opposite coast (O'Connor 1986a:1).

One of the most important states in this peninsula was Tambralinga, evidence for whose existence can be found in a number of documentary and archaeological sources, unlike other early states in the peninsula around the mid-first millennium AD, none of which have left local inscriptions. The place-name of Tambralinga actually first appeared in Mahaniddesa during the second or third century AD in its Pali form, Tamali, as has been pointed out in the work of Sylvain Levi (cited in Wheatley 1983: 237). Tambralinga was a destination of Indian merchants who came to Southeast Asia in search of wealth (Wheatley 1966: 184). Previous scholars assume that Tambralinga was situated near modern Nakhon Si Thammarat (a.k.a. Ligor) on the east coast of Peninsular Siam (i.e. Coedès 1968: 39, Wheatley 1966: 67, Wolters 1958: 587). Their assumptions about the location of Tambralinga seem valid since Tambralinga is the only place-name mentioned in the Indian and Chinese sources of the first millennium AD that has its own inscriptions at the site. One of those inscriptions is inscription No. 28, found at the deserted Phra Derm temple in the area of Phra Mahathat Monastery at the center of the modern Nakhon Si Thammarat City. Several scholars had read this inscription but sometime came to different interpretations. For example, according to Dr. Preecha Noonsuk (2001b: 264), this inscription is engraved in the Sanskrit language rendered with Palava scripts dated to around the fifth century AD, and may refer to "*Tambralingeshvra*", meaning "the Siva of Tambralinga" or "the Lord of

Tambralinga." This inscription and the inscription of Hup Khao Chong Koy indicate the existence of a polity that was prosperous and complex enough to require the commemoration of its affairs on stones in the later half of the first millennium AD (O'Connor 1986b: 134). Another inscription that contains the name Tambralinga dates to a significantly later period. It is inscription No. 24 found at Hua Vian temple in Chaiya, Surat Thani. This inscription is also inscribed in the Sanskrit language and it dates to AD 1230 (Wolters 1958: 588). This inscription mentions a king named Candrabhanu Sri Dharmaraja who was the Siva (or Lord) of Tambralinga (*Tambralingeshvra*).

On the basis of Indian records and local inscriptions, it can be therefore assumed that Tambralinga had existed in the isthmian region since the second or third century AD, and that it continued into the early centuries of the second millennium AD. It is also possible that Tambralinga was later transformed or regenerated into Nakhon Si Thammarat, as suggested by the name of the king, Candrabhanu Sri Dharmaraja, who also identified himself as the Siva (or Lord) of Tambralinga. Also, in AD 1292, sixty-two years after inscription No. 24, the placename Sri Dharmaraja or Si Thammarat was mentioned again in the inscription of Ramkhamhaeng found at Sukhothai, in lower northern Thailand (Wolters 1958). It is likely that Nakhon Si Thammarat is related to the development of Tambralinga and that both were centered at the modern town of Nakhon Si Thammarat (P. Noonsuk 2001b).

Tambralinga at the end of the tenth century was likely to have been very strong politically and economically, since it sent several missions to the Chinese court and, according to Wolters (1958), even sent troops to conquer Angkor in Cambodia, which was one of the great states in that period. Therefore, on the basis of historical records, it is possible to assume that Tambralinga was a political unit at the state level which, over a long history of approximately ten centuries, possessed a complex sociopolitical structure, and strong religious, political, military, and economic power, at least periodically.

There are a number of early historic artifacts and archaeological sites mostly associated with Saivism found in Peninsular Siam and especially in Nakhon Si Thammarat (W. Noonsuk 2005: 99-127) (Figure 2.2). These Brahmanic (Hindu) sites demonstrate similar cultural elements and such sites in Nakhon Si Thammarat alone can provisionally be divided into at least five groups which connected to each other via networks of rivers and land routes (P. Noonsuk 2004: 21; W. Noonsuk 2005; W. Noonsuk 2013). This patterned distribution of sites reflects the existence of a network that connected sites on the coastal sand dunes with those inland near the mountain areas, supporting the regional organization and the circulation of goods and people. P. Noonsuk proposes that the spatial distribution of such

sites represents the mandala politico-symbolic landscape in which each community settled around and supported its Brahmanic temple, which established its sacred geography (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 195). We will come back to these points in details later as Tambralinga Kingdom is the focus in this research project.

The Irawaddy Valley

The Irawaddy Valley is in central Burma. It is a 400 km-long region sandwiched between the Shan plateau in the east and a mountain zone in the west. The Irrawaddy and Sittang rivers flow through this region providing water sources and passage ways to the sea at the Gulf of Mataban to the south. This region has been called "the dry zone", as it lies in the rain shadow created by the Arakan mountains during the Southwestern monsoon season (Stark 2001:181-182). However, it is also recognized as the heartland of Burma, because it was the home of significant polities in Burmese history. The lack of rainfall seems to have been substituted for with irrigation systems (including fortified fields, tanks, canals, and weirs) and sufficient sunlight; consequently, the dry zone was able to possess a high level of productivity and supported sizable populations (Aung-Thwin 2005; Stargardt 1990:349).

The earliest complex polities that could be called ancient states in this region are labeled under the Pyu tradition[9] (Stargardt 1990). Their political system of these states, according to the documentary evidence (mostly Chinese), was based on a monarchy, which may once have unified this region under a single administration (Stark 2001:184). There are several Pyu sites[10] believed to have been political centers between the first and ninth centuries AD, including Binnaka, Mong Mao, Beikthano, Sriksetra, and Halin (Stark 2001:182). Stargardt points out that "the Pyu sites were undeniably urban in character . . . with their vast monuments in durable materials, their fortified inner citadel-palace areas, their massive outer fortifications, and the abundant evidence they provide of the presence of a complex society of rulers, priests, traders and craftsmen (as well as irrigation experts and cultivators) within their walls, and also of the role of each city as a unique ceremonial centre within its region" (1990:346). The religions of the Pyu culture may have included Hinduism and Buddhism, with the latter seeming to have been more prosperous not only in the Pyu

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[9] Based on Radiocarbon dates, the Pyu period began between the 4th and 1st centuries BC to the 9th century AD (Stark 2001:181).

[10] The Pyu settlements are found along side valleys of the Irawaddy, Chindwin, and Mu rivers, representing a shift from earlier settlement in river valleys (Stark 2001:182).

period but also throughout the history of Burma. The Buddhism of the Pyus derived from the Satavahana and Iksvaku traditions ranging from Andhra to the sites on the Godavari and Krishna Rivers. The Iksvaku capital, Nagarjunakonda, played an especially significant role in this religious transmission in the early 4th century AD (Stargardt 1990:347). This early date of the religious transmission is not surprising when considering the fact that the communities in central Burma had participated in the cosmopolitan (India-Rome-China) trading network very early on, at least starting during the 1st century BC to the 4th century AD, as suggested by the discovery of imported pottery and some semi-precious stone beads (Stark 2001:184).

South Sumatra

According to historical records, the area of south Sumatra in Indonesia was the homeland of an early historic kingdom named Srivijaya, which flourished in the trans-Asian trade network between the seventh to thirteenth centuries AD (Wolters 1967; Manguin 1993a: 23). Although how far the boundaries of Srivijaya's power extended is still a subject of debate, this polity was probably "an alliance of harbour principalities under the leadership of a ruler based initially in the seventh centuries at Palembang and after the eleventh century at Jambi" (O'Connor 1996: 596). In a competitive atmosphere of peer polity interaction in the international maritime trade, the Maharaja (king) of Srivijaya was encouraged to amass followers and vassal entities against his neighboring kingdoms, and to flaunt the number of his vassals to the Chinese court in order to insist on his superior status among China's vassals and to attract Chinese traders to the ports of his kingdoms (Wolters 1999: 132).

Wolters (1999: 129) and Miksic (2004: 239) propose that the political structure of Srivijaya was characterized by the mandala political system in which political management was based on personal relationships between rulers and subjects and with a political landscape that may have represented "a gigantic mandala, a replica or cosmos, with Mount Meru at its center", a model that is echoed in this chapter. This model of organization of space is also demonstrated in Kulke's article on "Kadatuan Srivijaya", based on his structural analysis of Srivijayan inscriptions found in various sites in south Sumatra (1993). Kulke suggests that there were several spatial concentric circles of political authority surrounding the *kadatuan* (royal center or palace) of the *datu* (ruler) of Srivijaya including (from inner to outer), *vanua* (kadatuan's immediate surroundings), *samaryyada* (surrounding neighborhood), and *mandala* (outlying tributary chieftaincies), which together constituted the *Bhumi* (land or country) of Srivijaya (1993). This mandala model of Srivijaya's political landscape proposed by Kulke is rather similar to the mandala model described earlier in this

chapter. However, it is important to note that the definition of the term "mandala" in Kulke's article is different from that in this chapter. Mandalas in Kulke's context only mean outlying tributary chieftaincies which were rather independent but ruled by local datus who were loyal to the datu of Srivijaya residing at the kadatuan, while the term mandala in this chapter refers to a specific type of political system and landscape in general.

Previous archaeological research on settlement patterns in south Sumatra found a number of early historic sites distributed along major rivers and their tributaries, especially those of the Musi and Batang Hari Rivers, exhibiting a pattern that appears to McKinnon as "a dendritic mandala with its roots set well back into the hinterland among the rich sources of alluvial gold and valuable forest products" (1985: 36) (Figure 2.3). Some of these sites provide major statuary and bricks which, according to McKinnon, indicate religious centers linked to the establishment of political power by local chiefs who presumably played a crucial role in the upstream-downstream exchanges between hinterland groups and coastal centers, with rivers as the major means of communication (1985: 36). Although there still exists a debate about the location of the capital of Srivijaya, archaeological study at Palembang somewhat supports its candidacy since the site yielded a massive amount of Chinese and local ceramic sherds in an amount that has never been discovered at other sites in this area, together with Buddhist statues and monuments (i.e., possible stupa structures) (Manguin 1993a). This definitely signifies its status as a crucial urban, trading, and religious center, if not the capital of Srivijaya.

It has been broadly accepted that Buddhism was pre-eminent in Srivijaya, as suggested by the Chinese sources and local inscriptions (Wolters 1967; Manguin 1993a: 31). Kulke states, based on the historical record, that the datu of Srivijaya may have claimed Bodhisattavahood while also associating himself with local or ancestral deities to legitimize his rulership and establish the position of his status and his political center as *primus inter pares* amongst the other datus and centers (1993: 166-167). However, Brahmanism was also regularly practiced in this polity, since a Saivaite temple complex dated to around the ninth to tenth centuries AD was discovered at Tanah Abang on the Lematang River, some 80 km upstream from Palembang. Slightly upstream from this site another site, now vanished, also provided a Vishnu statue (Manguin 1993a: 29, 31). We should also note that a Brahmanic community has been found at Kota Kapur, on Bangka Island across the Strait of Bangka from south Sumatra; this site has yielded a Srivijayan inscription, a stone temple, four Vishnu images, and a statue of Durga Mahisasuramardini (a form of Uma) that can be dated to the late sixth to early seventh centuries AD, predating Srivijaya (Soeroso and Manguin 1998: 77-

78). This community may have been a part of the Brahmanic influence in Srivijaya in the later period.

West Java

Western Java has been believed to be the location of an early historic polity known as "Taruma", or "Tarumanagara", which probably developed from the Buni complex which had existed in the same area around the last centuries BC to early centuries AD. This polity actively engaged in the maritime trade network, as witnessed by a variety of artifacts such as routed wares (Manguin 2004: 288-289; McKinnon et al. 1994: 1-2). It has been said that the successor of fifth-century Tarumanagara was attacked by Srivijaya in the late seventeenth century AD (Manguin 2004: 305).

Five mid-first millennium AD inscriptions regarding this polity and the King Purnavarman have so far been found at various locations, including Desa Tugu, Desa Muara, Pasir Kolenangkak, and Pasir Awi (McKinnon et al.1994). These sites with inscriptions are situated along the rivers that may have been the main channels of communication between the coast and the hinterland settlements that possessed natural resources valued by the coastal centers and international maritime traders (McKinnon et al. 1994) (Figure 2.4). Another two sites that were of importance in the early historic period in this region are Cibuaya and Batujaya. The deltaic site of Cibuaya located on the bank of the Tarum River has yielded a variety of Brahmanic evidence, including three Vishnu images dated to the fifth to sixth centuries AD, brick architectures, and two lingas (one large linga found *in situ* with a brick platform and one small linga with its base) (McKinnon et al. 1994: 10-11). At Batujaya, also situated on the north bank of the Tarum river, a short-distance from Cibuaya to the west, there have been found a number of brick structures, presumably Buddhist monuments and stupas, and Bodhisattava votive tablets dated to the seventh to eighth centuries AD. These items have been found in the layers on top of earlier settlements in which rouletted wares have been discovered. Recent radiocarbon dating of one lower level suggests the period from the mid-second to fourth centuries AD (Manguin 2004: 302; McKinnon et al. 1994: 7-10). These sites, although providing archaeological evidence of different time periods, indicate a social development in this area in the early historic period in which both of both sites may have served as religious (and perhaps political) centers that were connected to hinterland settlements to form what McKinnon called "the dendritic mandala."

Based on the evidence provided above, it is possible to assume that Brahmanism was prominent in the Taruma polity in the fifth to sixth centuries, while Buddhistic remains

started to be seen from the seventh to eighth centuries. This evidence coincides satisfactorily with the Chinese text written by Fa Hsien who came to this area in the fifth century AD and recorded that "Heretic Brahmans flourish there, and the Buddha-dharma hardly deserves mentioning" (cited in McKinnon et al. 1994: 1-2).

Although the body of the Taruma inscriptional texts makes it clear that the King Purnavarman identified himself with Vishnu, just as he identified his own footprints with the Vishnupada (Vishnu's footprints) (Manguin 2004: 320), Saivaite beliefs and rituals were also practiced and performed. On the Desa Tugu inscription, which announces the digging of a canal and describes Purnavarman as the king of kings, there clearly exists a Saivaite "trisula" emblem (McKinnon et al. 1994: 2). Both Vishnu images and Siva lingas appear at the very same site of Cibuaya. Collectively, this evidence strongly indicates that the beliefs of Siva and Vishnu were coexisting in the time of King Purnavarman, who associated himself with both Siva and Vishnu.

Theories of State Formation

This section reviews both traditional theories of state origins and scenarios of the rise of complex societies and states in Southeast Asia. It examines these theories and scenarios against the evidence from the region. A possible scenario for the rise of the earliest states in Southeast Asia will be offered at the end of this section.

Traditional Theories of State Origins

Many of the traditional theories of state origins are no longer fashionable or deal mostly with pristine states. Nevertheless, these theories still offer some instructive responses to the questions of how and why states happened or how and why people submitted to the rule of a governing authority. These considerations can be useful when we think about the emergence of non-pristine states both in Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

The most important conversation about the origins of states in the second half of the 20th century may perhaps be the "conflict vs. integration debate", whose fundamental disagreements can be traced back not only to the work of Enlightenment thinkers of the 17th to 18th centuries, the direct antecedents of modern Western theories, but also to the early Greek and ancient Chinese philosophers[11] (see Haas 1982:19-25). Regarding the basic

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[11] Haas (1982:21) notes that Thucydides, an early Greek philosopher, writing of the Peloponnesian War in the fifth century BC, said that there were two basic kinds of state constitutions, democratic and oligarchic, represented by the Athenian and Spartan states respectively. While Athens was seen as a model of the

arguments, the conflict school suggests that the governing institutions of the state initially developed as coercive mechanisms to resolve intra-societal conflicts arising out of economic stratification, while the integrative school argues that the governing institutions of the state first developed as integrative mechanisms to coordinate and regulate the different parts of complex societies (Haas 1982:20). The following sections discuss these schools of thought a bit more.

Conflict Theories

Theorists who use the conflict approach focus on change and instability rather than on stability in society; they see dissidence, not consensus, and conflict, not cooperation, as the fundamental features of social systems (Cohen 1978:5). This school of thought may also be called "coercive", "class", or "radical" theory (Haas 1982:20). Although this approach has descended from that of the conflict theorists of the Enlightenment period (e.g., Jean-Jacques Rousseau), the modern conflict school on state origins derived largely from the Marxist tradition, especially from Engels. Morton Fried, a leading figure in this school, proposes the notion that the state evolved in response to conflicts between unequal social classes and served a basic function of protecting the privileged position of a propertied ruling class (see Haas 1982:34; Service 1978:25). Instead of promoting integration and adaptive functioning,the state addresses the fear of increasing disintegration by means of coercive forces of social control (Cohen 1978:5).

Wright (1978) outlines two approaches in this school, namely internal and external conflict theories. First, the internal conflict theories, as mostly summarized above, entail differential access to wealth, conflict, or threat of conflict, and posits the subsequent emergence of the state as a mediating and dominating institution; it is also implied that the increased wealth of the ruling classes is invested in the means of production (Wright 1978:50). Second, the external conflict theories, with Robert L. Carneiro as a leading figure, focus on conditions that enable and require one society to control the means of production in another society; in this approach, the state, originating inexorably from the area's population growth, functions as an autonomous territorial and political unit with a central government and with coercive power over men and wealth (Wright 1978:51).

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integrative type of state, Sparta stood for the conflict model. These models also appeared in Plato and Aristotle's work, in which the former seems to prefer the integrative model, the latter stresses the conflict model. Haas (1982:25) emphasizes similarities between the Chinese Confucianist school of the 5th and 6th centuries BC and the philosophy of Plato, and between the Chinese Legalists school and the philosophy of Aristotle.

Integration Theories

The integration theories of state origins, with Elman Service as a recent leading figure, can also be called "contract", "benefit", "consensus", "conservative", or "managerial" theory, employing a common premise derived from 17th and 18th century theorists that men join together under a mutually agreed upon "contract" in order to enjoy the benefits of an organized society (Haas 1982:20,26). This traditional view was taken over by structural-functionalism, which displayed the assumption that all societies are generally stable (mostly unchanging) systems of structured parts which are integrated to form functioning wholes based on a widespread consensus of values (Dahrendorf cited in Cohen 1978:5). More to the point of state origins, Service stresses the importance of factors that counter the normal centrifugal forces threatening societies, and he believes that these factors can be called integrative devices used by the state, the supreme integrative apparatus above the level of kinship institutions, to hold the societies together, not by repressing them as in the conflict theories, but by doing other things that will benefit society and thereby indirectly foster integration (Service 1978:28). While the conflict theories see the state as an entity that repressively counters the disintegrative forces, the integration theories think that the state does not counter the disintegration directly. In this spirit, "one is tempted to suggest parallels such as the contrast of punitive with rewarding 'sanctions,' or negative with positive 'reinforcements'" says Service (1978:28). Protection and security, machinery for settling disputes, and access to sustenance are offered by the centralized government in exchange for loyal acceptance of an overlordship that satisfies new needs in a changing situation; it is these kinds of benefits that bring people into this new form of political organization, the state, and lead people to accept its legitimacy and live under its authority (Cohen 1978:7). Trade and irrigation systems seem to be popular benefits that centralized governments can offer as the effective coordinating bodies of such systems (Childe 1951). Karl Wittfogel's theory of Oriental or hydraulic societies, in which the ruling class and the managing bureaucracy are identical and are controlling the irrigation system, can be grouped into this integration category, although evidence discovered in recent years may already have disputed the efficacy of his theory by showing that the irrigation systems can be conducted at a village level or in the context of cooperation among villages (see Lansing 1991).

Synthetic Theories

Both the conflict and integration theories alone have proved insufficient to explain the origins of states. Consequently, some scholars have suggested synthetic theories

in which validity is granted to both the conflict and integration theories. As Cohen strikingly points out:

> The formation of states does result from competition over scarce resources when different groups have unequal access to the available supplies. States do clearly create benefits for their citizenry, who are in turn obligated to support a ruling class. People do also resent inequity and may even rebel against invidious privileges that deprive them of access to resources while granting access to others. (1978:7)

Synthetic theories involve the interrelated operation of several processes at once and the interaction of a number of variables; although one of these variables may be specified as a prime mover, the actual focus is on the relationships among management, internal and external conflicts, and other processes (Wright 1978:52). Both managerial problems and conflicts (and other forces) can be explicit factors underlying state origins. For example, the organization of trade by a ruling body can be perceived as a managerial benefit to citizens, while the resulting unequal access to the trade goods can be seen as creating conflicts in the society at the same time; nevertheless, they both can be factors of state origins in the synthetic view. This multicausal theory may be more convincing when applied to Southeast Asian cases, where several factors seem to contribute to the development of statehood.

Scenarios of the Rise of Complex Societies and States in Southeast Asia

Traditional scenarios[12] explaining the emergence of Southeast Asian early states involved such processes as diffusion, migration, or simple military imposition (in case of Bac Bo) from other civilized societies (i.e. India and China) to this region without any inquiry about indigenous socio-political and technological developments (e.g., Coedès 1968). The agency of local communities were taken away and put into the hands of foreigners. Some historians now convincingly stress that this bias was created by scholars who consciously or unconsciously served colonialism by seeing indigenous Southeast Asian societies as primitive and powerless and needing to draw their civilization from somewhere else more civilized (e.g., Vallibhotama 2008a). This notion served very well in the colonial period, when the

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[12] Bayard (1992) uses the term "scenario" instead of "model" to describe the attempts to explain the emergence of states in Southeast Asia. He agreeably points out that a model should refer to a set of relationship between variables and that the term has scientific connotations, for models in this sense need to be numerically testable while a scenario suggests a looser explanation of events.

colonizers had to convince people that they had the right to conquer, as it legitimated them as righteous authorities in the civilizing project. However, this kind of historiography has obscured local developments in early Southeast Asia for long time.

The Rise of "Complex Societies"

Scholars today reject the above view and agree that there have been indigenous socio-political and technological developments toward social complexity well before the rise of Southeast Asia's early states (see, e.g., Bayard 1992, Higham 1989, O'Reilly 2007; Stark 2001). Drawing from the archaeological work in Southeast Asia, Bayard (1992) lists several factors underlying the rise of complex societies (i.e. complex chiefdoms) in the first millennium BC, including agricultural intensification, population growth, trade, technology, external influence, and war.

In the first group, food and land pressures and population density have been emphasized as the crucial causal factors for increasing social complexity. This idea is similar to the explanations of the rise of stratified, urban societies offered by V. Gordon Childe (1951), who believes that surplus production was the most significant foundation of the urban revolution in which food producers became capable of feeding other non-food producing specialists such as administrators, soldiers, merchants, and craftsmen, thereby also supporting the operation of centralized governments. However, Bayard (1992:21) does not think that these can in themselves be the causal factors of complexity in Southeast Asia, since the region has appeared to be sparsely populated (by Asian standards) throughout its history; furthermore, there hve been no historical signs of nutritional stress nor pressure on suitable rice lands, especially not since wet-rice cultivation was introduced as means of subsistence that required less land while providing higher yields.

The second group of factors includes trade, technology, external influence, and war. It is widely accepted that trade and links between communities were important factors in the rise of complex societies, but, again, these were not the key factors according to Bayard (1992:24). Extensive trade networks seem to have been in place long before the emergence of complex societies, as evidenced for example by the exotic stone and shell items in basal Non Nok Tha contexts that date at least 1500-200 years prior to the centralizing trends in northeast Thailand that arose sometime between 300 and 400 BC. A prestige good exchange model, which implies a concentration of power in the hands of those local groups ("lineages") who had access to the luxury imports made available by the expanding state-level society, also does not seem to work in Southeast Asia, since the centralizing trends happened before local communities had contacts with state-level societies in India or China

(Bayard 1992:25). Furthermore, there is no firm evidence of warfare that would suggest its causal impacts on social complexity (Bayard 1992:27). Although Bayard does not pinpoint any particular factor as the cause of complexity, he tends to believe that multicausal scenarios (as appearing in synthetic theories above) would best explain the rise of the complex societies and he argues therefore that archaeologists in Southeast Asia have to focus more on the ground-truthing projects rather than on building models (1992:30).

The Rise of Early States in Southeast Asia

It should be remembered that this chapter defines the early state as a polity with a process of institutionalization and materialization of leadership, socio-political stratification, and religious organization. In the Southeast Asian context, archaeologists should realize that they are dealing with early states, not complex chiefdoms, when they encounter in archaeological record, for instance, a large differentiation in site size hierarchy (i.e., the emergence of cities), an abundance of more permanent religious architectures, and an appearance of more immobile inscriptions related to the affairs of a polity in a specific place and time period. Although some scholars would not associate the emergence of cities with that of states (e.g., Smith 2003b), I believe that relatively, distinctively large cities emerged in a state environment in Southeast Asia, with some rare exceptions of port-cities such as Khao Sam Kaeo and Phukhao Thong in peninsular Siam. Relatively larger and more complex cities like Ankor Borei in the Mekong delta or Sambor Prei Kuk to the north can represent the larger differentiation in the regional site size hierarchy in which large settlements tend to be increasingly much bigger than small settlements[13]. Stark (2006a:11) notes that the earliest large nucleated communities appeared rather abruptly in mainland Southeast Asia and were similar in scale to the world's earliest cities, including some found in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

However, in our opinion, in order to be read as evidence of early states this trend needs to be accompanied by an abundance of more permanent religious architectures and more immobile inscriptions. We include the religious architectures and inscriptions as part of identifications of early states because we believe that they support the process of

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[13] A larger differentiation in regional site size hierarchy should not be mistaken for an increase in site size in the region. The former, on the one hand, suggests the relative differentiation in a regional site size hierarchy only, no matter how big or small these sites would be. The latter, on the other hand, denotes merely an increase in size of the sites in the region. Bayard (1992) suggests that we see the increase in size of settlements in northeast Thailand in the first millennium BC but the differentiation in a regional site size hierarchy is not obvious. Thus, this trend is not exactly what we suggest in the descriptions of early states here.

institutionalization of leadership, socio-political stratification, and religious organization itself. As suggested earlier, the institutionalization is crucial in early states; it makes a leader a godly king. It increases the power of the king and his administrative office[14]. Although scholars of Southeast Asia now seem to dislike the term "centralization", we must not forget that centralization can be used as a relative term comparing degrees of control earlier and later. We would like to suggest that the early Southeast Asian states demonstrated a higher degree of centralization than the complex societies that came before them. A king had relatively more centralized power in the process of decision making for his polity than the chief had enjoyed. He simply had more power to make things happen. The institution of kingship also became stronger over time, as we witness in the political structures of Southeast Asian classical states such as Ayuddhaya. One can even see supporting evidence in the ethnographic record in Thailand, where the *Phuyai Ban* (official village leaders)[15] have difficulties convincing members of their communities to build relatively minor public architectures like a small dam, while the kings in early Southeast Asia were able to order the constructions of large scale temples and canal networks.

The issues related to the relationship between kingship and religions will be discussed in a subsequent section. Now we shall move on to explore the rise of early states, as just defined, in Southeast Asia. The most famous debate on this subject is perhaps the Indianization versus Localization issue. Coedès (1968: 15) proposed the concept of Indianization. It viewed state formation in Southeast Asia as a consequence of the expansion of Indian organized culture and the associated conceptions of royalty and religion through the migration of Indian people to the Southeast Asian region. This concept was elaborated on by Wolters (1999), who rightly suggested that the Indic elements actually tended to be fractured and restated, and that they were adopted by indigenous people through a process of local selection. He coined the term "Localization" for such a process.

It seems that whether one believes in the concept of Indianization or that of Localization, one cannot refute the idea that the process of acculturation and socio-political development in the region was closely associated with the maritime trade networks (Bellina and Glover 2004: 68). Wheatley (1975: 238-240) explained that political development in

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[14] There is considerable evidence of the existence of administrative organizations in Southeast Asian early states in documentary record. See Coedès (1968), Vickery (2002), and Wheatley (1966).

[15] *Phuyai Ban* literally means the elder of the village. Although the term technically refers to the position of village chief, we must not forget that a heterarchical, rather than a single hierarchical, structure of power exists in Thailand; thus, the chief does not have absolute power.

maritime Southeast Asia in the late centuries BC was related to maritime trade between the West and China, in which the rulers of local chiefdoms—who controlled the trade activities between their local communities and foreign merchants—developed new perceptions of the world, set new life goals, and acquired organizational skills from foreign countries. In the early centuries AD, these local leaders adopted Indic ideologies to extend their power by institutionalizing their god-king statuses and dynastic traditions. Parallel ideas were taken up by Hall (1985: xiii), who stated that the selected items of Indian statecraft acquired through maritime contacts were used to consolidate the leaders' rule both locally as well as into the hinterland.

Although trade between India and Southeast Asia seems to have been closely related to the socio-political developments in this region[16], things may have been more complicated in reality than most scholars might have thought earlier when considering the rise of the region's states. If we believe that trade and Indic cultures were the cause of state formation in Southeast Asia, then we must answer the question why early states emerged at least several hundred years after the trade with India began. Regular, intensive long-distance trade between India and Southeast Asia seem to have emerged in the second half of the first millennium BC, but the earliest states seem to have emerged in the mid-first millennium AD. Why? We believe that multicausal scenarios would be the best way to explain this. We shall therefore attempt to answer this complex question step by step.

How did early states emerge in Southeast Asia? Based on archaeological records discovered so far, we can see that internal factors, such as agriculture and technological advances, alongside local and regional trade, helped pave the way to social complexity in Southeast Asia. External factors, such as transfers of foreign ideas and population movements via the long-distance trade routes, also contributed to this process. Although some scholars in the past have tended to overemphasize the external factors, it is now widely agreed that agency for change should be recognized in local factors as well. Needless to say, complex societies cannot emerge without sufficient population and food production; consequently, the internal factors can be seen to have been very crucial in state formation, especially when we recognize the important role that indigenous people played in maritime trade. According to some scholars (e.g., O'Reilly 2007:199; Saraya 1995:22), it was the

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[16] The relationships between trade, Indic religious beliefs, and socio-political development in Southeast Asia are discussed by many scholars (e.g., Bellina 2003; Bellina and Glover 2004; Glover 1989, 1996; Smith 1999; Ray 1996). This chapter will not summarize all of them, but will use only key points relevant to the rise of early states.

indigenous people who initiated and operated the long-distance trade between Southeast Asia and other regions as maritime adventurers who mastered the maritime navigation, constructed effective ocean-faring vessels (e.g., Manguin 1993b), traveled from coast to coast, traded with different communities, and distributed new goods and ideas around the South Seas[17]. These new goods and ideas were certainly very significant in the process of state formation.

O'Reilly (2007:198) writes, "[E]arly Southeast Asians were competent mariners who ventured far, encountering different cultures and returning with new ideas. It is also becoming clear that the process of political development was well underway in Southeast Asia prior to encounters with Indian culture." This perspective obviously gives agency back to the people and communities of Southeast Asia in the process of state formation (see also Wolters 1999). However, before going too far, it should be noted that, despite the complex socio-political and technological developments in Southeast Asia, early states according to our definition did not emerge until after contact with India[18]; thus, the external factors, especially Indic cultural elements, were crucial in the process of state formation as well.

Why did early states happen in Southeast Asia? The answers to this question depend on the standpoint one takes for understanding Southeast Asian statecraft. Traditional conflict and integration theories may be relevant here. As mentioned previously, the answers to this question may include, for example, the aggrandizing nature of the chief who adopted Indic ideology to heighten and perpetuate his status and to control more people and land[19], the necessity to provide benefits and protections to people, and the need to have a more effective managerial organization (Wheatley 1975). All these answers are reasonable, and there seem to be more than one answer; however, we need more case by case research into the topic before offering clearer answers. It is therefore unfortunate that the issues of earliest cities and

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[17] This chapter is emphasizing maritime Southeast Asia, because it seems that most early states in emerged in this region, except for the Indianized Pyu states in the dry zone of inland Burma. However, the Pyu states also had close relationships with India, albeit via overland routes rather than maritime ones (see Stargardt 1990:347).

[18] This author focuses on India, not China, as the most important external source of state formation, because all early states, except for the Chinese commanderies in northern Vietnam, were under the influence of Indic cultures. According to Wheatley, there were two kinds of urban genesis in Southeast Asia: urban imposition and urban generation. As he notes: "[W]hereas the first of these processes reflects an extension of symbolic and organizational patterns developed in one territory into another, the latter signifies a progressive differentiation of autonomous institutional spheres and the emergence of specialized collectivities and roles as a response to societal pressures generated internally within a specific region" (1983:5).

[19] For Southeast Asia, see, e.g., Hall (1985) and Wheatley (1975); for the general concept of aggrandizing strategies, see Hayden (2001:258).

states have been neglected in archaeological research in this area for long time (see Stark 2006a).

       Why did early states emerge when they did in Southeast Asia? We are coming back to the question we asked in the beginning of this sub-section. As pointed out previously, neither trade nor Indic culture seems to have been sufficient causal factors for the rise of states in Southeast Asia, as regular, intensive long-distance trade across the Bay of Bengal had emerged several hundred years earlier than the early states did[20]. This trade carried a variety of Indic religious symbols from India to Southeast Asia. As some scholars have suggested, Indic religions cannot be separated from political ideas[21]; therefore, one would be able to assume, at the very least, that the indigenous people in Southeast Asian ports may already have been familiar with Indic political concepts in the late centuries BC. However, these early ports, such Khao Sam Kaeo and Phukhao Thong, do not seem to have developed into states. It seems that other forms of complex socio-political organization (e.g., complex chiefdoms) were sufficient for the organization and management of these ports, so that they did not need to develop state systems of organization.

       There may be several explanations for this phenomenon, but we would like to suggest one interesting possibility. The reason that early states in maritime Southeast Asia developed around the mid-first millennium AD may have been because most early states around the Bay of Bengal, the immediate sphere of interaction in which maritime Southeast Asian communities participated, also were developing in this period, and not before that. This idea was first proposed by Kulke (1990). He not only suggests that there existed complex pre-Indianzed polities in this region prior to the Indianization of the first millennium AD, but he also postulates that the centralization of polities in India and Southeast Asia took place at approximately the same time in the mid-first millennium AD (1990: 28). He calls his proposal a "convergence hypothesis" which emphasizes the importance of circulations of knowledge and political concepts among petty states of the same size, not the transfer of such knowledges from large empires (i.e., India) to primitive societies (i.e., Southeast Asian societies). The emphasis is on social nearness, not cultural distance.

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[20] This argument is based on evidence from the early ports of Khao Sam Kaeo and Phukhao Thong in the Isthmus of Kra in Peninsular Siam, which have been studied by the author. Also see Bellina and Silapanth (2005).

[21] Tambiah (1976) treats Buddhist and Brahmanical political ideas as parts of the religions themselves.

To explain the simultaneous socio-political and cultural development of principalities of equivalent scale and status around the Bay of Bengal and in Southeast Asia, Kulke (1990: 22, 32) proposes that the first millennium AD saw a very similar trajectory of the process of state formation on both sides of the Bay of Bengal, in which rulers of the maritime polities sought solutions for similar challenges to legitimize and strengthen, with the assistance of Brahmins, their claim to superior authority and power, a kind of power that could not be acquired from older tribal political traditions. According to Kulke (1990: 22, 28), the advanced chiefdoms in Southeast Asia therefore acquired their Indian models of politics and royalty not from the truly imperial Gupta of Northern India but from princely states of comparable scale in Southern and Eastern India, doing so via a complicated network of relations facilitating the convergence of their social evolution.

Kulke clearly suggests that the cultural and socio-political similarities among maritime polities in Southeast Asia and around the Bay of Bengal were made possible through patterns of social interaction that had deep roots dating back to at least the protohistoric period, starting no later than around the fourth century BC. Although there is no doubt that the Indian influence encouraged social change in maritime Southeast Asia, we should keep in mind that the Indic cultural elements were adapted to fit into the local ecological circumstance, technological practice, and human experience of this region (O'Connor 1986a: 8). Southeast Asian people, indeed, had abilities to develop their own art schools. Only few centuries after the first spread of Indian temple architecture to Southeast Asia, people in this region were already creating monumental temple architectures, such as Borobudur and Angkor Wat, that have no equal in India, a development suggesting mastery by the local people of Indian-inspired art (Kulke 1990: 31).

Monica Smith, working in line with Kulke's convergence hypothesis while disagreeing on some details, believes that systematic contact between South Asia and Southeast Asia was not established until the fourth century AD, after the emergence of the strong state and administration of the Gupta dynasty (1999: 11)[22]. According to her, prior to the fourth century AD, India lacked sustained large-scale political and economic organization (Smith 1999: 3). Although the empire of the Maurya dynasty had been prosperous in the

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[22] We do not agree with this portion of her argument, because the archaeological record suggests regular, intensive trade between the two regions since the late centuries BC. The evidence includes, and is not limited to, the remains of foreign (probably of Indian origin) finished and unfinished trade items (mostly semi-precious stone and glass jewelry), the Indic religious symbols, and the Indian technology of bead production that are found in Southeast Asia (see Bellina 2003). That having been said, the rest of her argument merits attention.

third century BC, it had had a relatively short life. There were only small polities after the Maurya. These unstable polities were able to produce only minimal surpluses, which were inadequate to support strong administration or economic investment by central agencies (Smith 1999: 4).

Similarly, in the same spirit as the convergence hypothesis, Sunil Gupta (2003) proposes that, in the BC-AD changeover, we see similar developments in art and religion across the Bay of Bengal. He notes that similar kinds of glass and semi-precious stone beads and auspicious symbols were distributed throughout the Bay of Bengal interaction sphere. He believes that this social interaction was significant to the process of Indianization that developed later on in the second half of the first millennium AD (Gupta 2003).

Kulke's convergence hypothesis is also similar to the concept of peer polity interaction proposed by Colin Renfrew (1999) for the studies of socio-political change and development. According to Renfrew (1999: 114), peer polity interaction included imitation and emulation, competition, warfare, and the exchange of material goods and information among autonomous socio-political units within a single geographical region. He used the term "peer polity" in an effort to avoid models that emphasize core-periphery relations or secondary state formation. The socio-political and economic development of peer polities must not be considered in isolation, he argues, since they always interacted (Renfrew 1999: 114).

Renfrew is interested in comparing specific aspects of peer polities, instead of focusing on their generalized structures. Aspects of particular interest include, for example, specific architectural forms, symbolic systems, and numerical systems (Renfrew 1999: 121). Change is conceptualized as emerging from a constellation of interacting polities in a region. Because of this interaction, uniformities in cultural features may emerge and have a significant role in influencing patterns of future development, such as the processes of ethnic group formation that in later centuries would become the foundation for the emergence of the modern nation-state (Renfrew 1999: 124).

The value of the concept of peer polity interaction is not that it simply explains distributional patterns of material culture or traits across the region, but that it explains changes in the degree of complexity within and among societies. Renfrew (1999: 125) suggests that when one polity is identified in the archaeological record, other polities of comparable scale and organization will be also found in the same region. When one polity undergoes an organizational change and an increase in complexity, or when it creates new institutional features and innovations, we can also expect to see similar kinds of change in

neighboring polities. Thus the transformation of any particular society is not only a result of internal processes tending towards intensification, but also a result of peer polity interaction. Such interaction may include warfare, competitive emulation, symbolic entrainment, transmission of innovation, and an increase in the exchange of goods (Renfrew 1999: 126-130).

As mentioned above, maritime Southeast Asia is a significant region for the study of peer polity interactions and the convergence of socio-political developments. With the exception of the region of upper Burma that had direct overland contacts with North and Eastern India, the maritime coastland regions were the thresholds through which exotic goods, technological knowledge, and Indic passed ideas passed to the inland areas of Southeast Asia, and they were also the regions that initially developed the so-called "Indianized" political systems of the area, developing Buddhist and Brahmanistic polities probably from the first half of the first millennium AD onward (Kulke 1990: 24). However, it is not surprising to see the development of inland complex polities with organizational characteristics similar to those in the maritime region, since these inland polities would have interacted with and received Indic ideology through the maritime polities even without direct participating in the South-Southeast Asian maritime network. In maritime Southeast Asia, we see the emergence of various autonomous political units probably since the late prehistoric period. These polities were comparable in scale and degree of complexity. They developed through time and did not develop in isolation. Instead, they actively communicated with one another through an interactive set of long-distance exchange networks that had begun functioning by at least the late prehistoric period. This vast network formed a single interaction sphere across maritime Southeast Asia, and it created a new regional identity that was shared by a number of politically independent groups. This identity was noted in early Chinese accounts that refer to the region as "the kingdoms of the South Seas" (Wheatley 1966).

As a result of peer polity interaction, we can see cultural similarities not only in material terms but also in organization. The organizational homologies were encouraged by the process of competitive emulation among maritime peer polities which faced similar challenges (Kulke 1990: 22; Renfrew 1999). They participated in similar trade networks and competed with one another to elevate their power and status. In the competitive atmosphere, each polity tried to develop its organization so that it could succeed in the region. Therefore, if there are more sophisticated organizational concepts or more advanced technological innovations created or adopted by one polity, other polities in the same region will also adopt

and improve them, or if there are or more advanced styles of art and architecture created or adopted by one polity, other polities will also adopt and refine them. Chinese records also suggest that this process transpired when the Fununese selected Kaundinya, a person from *Pan-pan* with sophisticated political knowledge, to be their king and thus improve their socio-political structure to conform with that in India[23] (Wheatley 1966: 48).

These examples may explain the adoptions of Indic religions, political ideologies, writing systems, and art styles in maritime Southeast Asia during the late protohistoric and early historic periods. They may also be seen as the characteristics of present-mindedness that is one of the important features of Southeast Asian cultures (see Wolters 1999: 114-115). It is not the Indianization, but rather it is the adoption of more sophisticated cultural and socio-political features that enabled the new Southeast Asian polities to compete with other polities in the interaction sphere. It seems that Indic cultures were the most appropriate ones since local people and Indians had had close relationships for a long period of time, and the Indian rulers of princely states were facing similar challenges similar to those of the Southeast Asian elites as they sought to establish their authority, enhance their power, and domesticate their people (Kulke 1990: 28). Therefore, this peer polity interaction may help explain the emergence of the earliest states in Southeast Asia, in a process that had deep roots extanding back into the late prehistoric period.

State Dynamics

Traditional theories of state origins focus on the quest for prime movers of the emergence of states and place less emphasis on how early states operated and regenerated. In recent years, scholars have opposed this approach and asked new questions, taking the assumption that there is more to learn about states after they emerged. It is the state's dynamics that they are after now. Although the subject of state dynamics is not directly of relevance to the issues of state origins, this chapter believes that it is a significant subject in archaeological inquiries not only in Southeast Asia but in general. Explorations of this subject will surely provide numerous useful insights for the field of Southeast Asian archaeology as it seeks to better understand the pre-modern states of this region. However, due to the lack of fine-grained archaeological evidence from Southeast Asian early states, this chapter will attempt to suggest the directions the future research should pursue, rather than attempting to provide detailed interpretations on the issues of state dynamics. This section

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[23] This case also demonstrates the idea of stranger-kingship discussed in the subsequent section.

includes some major issues of state dynamics covering heterogeneous models of state organization, leadership, political landscape, economic organization, and collapse and regeneration.

Heterogeneous Models of State Organization

Since extensive archaeological explorations of early states are quite limited, models of state organization in Southeast Asia have been proposed mostly by historians. These models are useful in help providing guidelines for archaeological research. However, archaeologists need to critically test these models against their data to assess their applicability to actual archaeological cases. This sub-section includes discussion of only some of the most influential models.

The Mandala and Galactic Polity Models

Oliver Wolters (1999) posited the concept of the Mandala as a framework to support the cultural matrix that he proposed for the pre-modern Southeast Asian polities, which included such elements as cognatic kinship, present-mindedness, and "men of prowess." He defined the term mandala as entailing circles of kings and involving continuous networks of loyalties between rulers and the ruled (Wolters 1999: 25, 114). Structurally, in each mandala, one king who was identified with divine and universal authority would claim personal hegemony over other rulers in his mandala who were his allies or vassals (Wolters 1999: 25). However, in practice, the mandala model often represented an unstable political situation of a vaguely defined geographic area without fixed boundaries. The smaller centers under the god-king could search in all directions for protection from other god-kings and also tended to build up their own networks and power in hopes of eventually renouncing their tributary status. Mandalas would also expand and contract from time to time. Yet, only the mandala overlord had the right to receive tribute-bearing envoys and he would also send officials who represented his superior status (Wolters 1999: 28).

In Wolters's view, the two most important skills for the mandala overlord were present-mindedness and diplomacy, since all interactions among polities in that period depended on personal ties (Wolters 1999: 30). The sacral power of the overlord or the man of prowess acquired through the Bhakti cult was shared by his kinship group and followers in his administration. This political system was based on inherited cultural traits from prehistory which highlighted cognatic systems, an indifference towards lineage descent, and therefore the importance attached to personal achievement in particular generations (Wolters

1999: 38). The mandala structure was multi-centric in nature, so that there was an enduring multiplicity of centers (Wolters 1999: 39).

Wolters' concept of Mandala can be studied alongside Tambiah's concept of the galactic polity, which he developed from studying the fifteenth-century Ayuddhayan polity in Thailand (Tambiah 1977). This concept has been described as a set of concentric circles originating from an exemplary center based on the centripetal force of kings. The mandala model represents a system that is maintained by the dialectic tension between the core and the surrounding peripheries and flow of social affiliations. Tambiah finds that the system is embedded in an "archaic cosmological mentality," and that it was represented not only in kingdoms or significant polities but also in local villages and small-scale segmentary societies (1977: 69). The mandala model has cosmological manifestations best suited to the Southeast Asian experience, since this Indic system elucidates certain key components of indigenous cosmological concepts (Tambiah 1977: 73).

The concept of mandala polities was adopted by Higham, albeit in rather centralizing fashion, and he applied it to several areas in Mainland Southeast Asia, including the Mekong delta, the middle Mekong and the Tonle Sap plains, central Thailand, the Mun and Chi valleys of northeastern Thailand, and central Vietnam (1989: 239-318). However, Wolters criticizes Higham's application of the mandala model, since Higham overlooks the essence of Wolters's version of the model, which emphasizes the decentralization of state organization, not centralizing trends (1999).

Since the mandala political system is alliance-based and depends on personal relationships rather than on bureaucratic institutions, it is imbued with internal contradictions. One contradiction in this system is the contradiction between symbolic beliefs and political practices. At the level of beliefs and cosmological legitimations, the mandala overlord claimed universal authority through his divine identity and through his symbolic position above his subordinates. In reality, however, he depended largely on personal relationships to convince and attract his followers using his charisma. Therefore, when we study the mandala political system, we must be careful not to equate what appeared in the symbolic level with what happened in political reality. Another important contradiction in the mandala political system was the relational contradiction between the center and its vassals. The center always wanted to retain its vassals under its own power, while the vassals always desired to renounce their tributary status whenever the chance presented itself. In this field of power dynamics, it was always possible for a vassal to become a center. Changes occurring in a vassal in a periphery area would also cause changes to the whole system and cause the center to

reorganize itself. However, the mandala political system required the existences of both centers and vassals, though they had opposite interests. If either of the two were missing, there would be no mandala system. This dialectical relation was an integral part of the mandala institution and meant that the mandala political system was always in flux and full of tension, a dynamic system rather than a static one; the ability of a center to maintain its status therefore relied on the ability of its ruler.

It is tempting to see the clustering pattern of early historic sites as representing the mandala model described by Wolters. In this distributional pattern, each group of settlements seems to have its own center, sometimes represented by a larger size. However, more detailed archaeological regional surveys and excavations must be conducted in each region in order to speak more about this model archaeologically.

City-State Model[24]

The city-state model proposed by Paul Wheatley (1983) described Southeast Asian polities from the second century AD as having a focally situated settlement, or center, within which the organizing institutions were aggregated. This center exercised direct control over a restricted peripheral territory, exacting whatever tribute it could from an indefinite region beyond the area of direct control (Wheatley 1983: 9, 233). Wheatley explained the genesis of these city-states by proposing two types of processes, including urban imposition (or Sinicization) and urban generation (Wheatley 1979). Wheatley defined urban imposition as a process of urbanization related to the political expansion of an empire to peripheral territories. Present-day southern China and northern Vietnam were involved in this kind of process. The Han dynasty conquered and established cities in these regions in 111 BC by means of military force. Chinese officials also brought in a total set of Chinese culture along with Chinese civilians, monks, and scholars. Three commanderies were founded to control indigenous people and coordinate urban activities. The regions of the Red River valley in northern Vietnam therefore became Chinese provinces through the process of urban imposition (Wheatley 1979: 293).

By urban generation, in contrast, Wheatley (1979) meant a process of urbanization that was motivated by the internal forces of a society. Urbanization occurred because the egalitarian solidarity of tribal society was incapable of generating sufficient power and

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[24] Wheatley's term city-states, and his model for how they functioned, were criticized by some archaeologists, as it created, among other things, confusions between city and state altogether. Consequently, some have proposed the terms petty kingdoms or principalities instead of city-states. See Marcus and Feinman (1998:9); Yoffee (2005:44); Smith (2003a).

authority to support the institutionalization of supra-village rule in western mainland Southeast Asia, which included peninsular Siam, and parts of insular Southeast Asia (Wheatley 1979: 295, 1983: 263). As noted earlier, urban genesis in these regions had once been perceived by Western scholars as a secondary process that was effected by the influence of external cultures (Wheatley 1979: 289). Wheatley noted, by contrast, that when societies in this region became more complex and stratified, indigenous chieftains might seek to validate their newly enhanced power on the only patterns of adequate flexibility and authority known to them, namely the Indic religio-political structures connected to the institution of divine kingship (Wheatley 1979: 296). These indigenously-motivated processes led to the development of city-states, or *nagaras*, in which the old tribal principles were replaced by Brahmanical concepts of the state.

Wheatley's concept of the city-state was later adopted by Manguin (2004) to describe early historic states in maritime Southeast Asia, and by Jacq-Hergoualc'h (2002) to explain the nature of the polities in the Malay Peninsula in the late centuries BC to the early centuries AD. Jacq-Hergoualc'h examined several early peninsular polities, such as Pan-pan and Langkasuka, and believed that their centers were prosperous in the maritime trade and that they controlled numbers of vassals around them (2002: 165). Although this model seems to be straightforward, archaeologists need to explore more on the nature of relationships between the city core and hinterland peripheries in each locality in order to improve the efficacy of the model. The so-called peripheries may be more powerful in these relationships that we might imagine, as they may also have power to choose which centers to partner with, and might also have the means to negotiate the nature of their relationships with those centers (see B. Andaya 1993).

Leadership

Leadership is an important issue in state dynamics. In Southeast Asia, we have seen the transformation from chiefs into kings. Kings in early states in Southeast Asia used Indic religions and inscriptions to legitimize their status, and consequently religions and politics were not separate in that regard.

However, some historians suggest that the basic natures of the kings and chiefs may not have been as different as was once assumed. Wolters (1999), for example, suggests that the concentration of leadership and power in the hands of kings in the time of the early states rose out of the efforts of big men, or "men of prowess", whose power was based on their personal achievements. This power was circumscribed and inherently unstable, due to the

indigenous social restrictions existing before the rise of these earliest states. The cognatic kinship organization inherent in the Southeast Asian cultural matrix also guaranteed that the strongest leader in each generation of the ruling clan would be able to claim the throne. Nevertheless, we must also not make the mistake of assuming that there was no change at all in the transition of leadership styles from chiefs to kings. As mentioned in early inscriptions, kings invested considerably in institutionalizing their divine kingship and other claims of legitimacy to rule. Various kinds of the materialization[25] of their power are seen in the creation of temples and inscriptions under their names, in the rituals performed for them, and in the construction of public infrastructures. The early kings certainly had more power over their people than the chiefs had had, even though, in the early Southeast Asian context, the kings' power was neither absolute nor permanent. Following are some important additional concepts related to premodern kingship in Southeast Asia.

Kingship in Theatre States

Geertz (1980) examined the nature of Balinese traditional state. He proposed that unlike European states, where physical forces were vital to the states' existence, Balinese states were rather like theatres where the kings who maintained their families' purity performed rituals prestige and superiority that simultaneously reaffirmed the naturalized hierarchy of their societies by aligning those societies with the cosmological order of the universe. Although the kings were incapable of physically enforcing the acquiescence of their subjects, they created through these rituals links between themselves and the gods, thereby also promoting the systems of clientship and alliance that helped maintain their status and that shaped social relations within the societies over which they presided. Geertz's concept demonstrates clearly how religions were used in traditional Southeast Asian politics. It describes how kings became different from chiefs through the process of institutionalizing divine kingship. In this process, control of territory seems to have been less important than the accumulation of prestige. Such concepts ostensibly help archaeologists from various backgrounds to better understand the nature of leadership in early Southeast Asia.

Stranger-Kingship

Recent work by Marshall Sahlins work focuses on the concept of stranger kingness (2008). Sahlins suggests that traditional societies had stranger-kings who came from the outside and brought the rule of higher culture to the societies in which they established themselves. Sahlins states that all power is foreign in origin, in the sense that the

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[25] See DeMarrais et al. (1996) for detailed discussion of the topic of materialization of power.

spaces beyond the political community are the loci of other-than human subjects—ranging from beasts to gods, by way of extraordinary objects and phenomena—whose more-than-human potencies control the fate of the local societies, for better or for worse. People must in reality depend for their existence on conditions that are neither of their own making nor in their control[26]. People depend on life-giving and life-taking forces beyond human production or domination. Sahlins goes on to suggest that affines are to consanguines as stranger-kings are to the native people. This means that affinity brought external power to kin groups, while consanguinity created relationships with land owners or the owners of productive means. At the end of these processes, we will see the integration of the masculine life-taker (the foreign ruler or affines) and the feminine life-giver (the native) that allowed the stranger-king to have access to the means of production in the native societies. This process was renewed constantly through rituals. Sahlins concludes simply that the elementary forms of kinship, politics, and kingship are one.

In a parallel spirit, Reid (2008) applies the stranger-king concept to cases in Sumatra and other parts of the western Archipelago. He distinguishes two types of stranger-king: (1) the merchant-aristocrats, including both foreign traders and local political players, who dominated the port-states of the region in the 16th to 18th centuries, and (2) magical mediators who were invited to be kings by highland groups who wanted to utilize the cosmic powers of such figures, though these groups were never fully or effectively ruled by them (2008:253). The primary stranger-kings of the period discussed by Reid were European traders, who played an important role in connecting local kingdoms and communities to a larger world. Thus, connections to a larger world (i.e., politico-commercial networks) and to the other world (i.e., the ancestral/cosmic world) seem to have been the preferred qualities of stranger-kings.

Sahlins's concept of stranger-kingship is innovative in the way that it links the natures of kinship and kingship together to show their similarities. Sahlins illustrates his points through the case of a Khmer king of the late 13th century who needed to renew his stranger-kingness every night through a ritual that alluded to his ancestor of the Funan period who had came from afar to rule area by marrying Naga, the daughter of the land (2008:177). Sahlins's concept is therefore directly related to our studies of early states. Unfortunately, we do not

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[26] This point seems to coincide with that of Mary Helms (1993), who stressed that the power to rule has to come from outside of a society, either from a geographical distance or from the spiritual world.

yet have sufficient archaeological and historical evidence to discuss this topic satisfactorily. It is therefore our crucial task to find more evidence related to this topic in the near future.

Political Landscape

Adam Smith (2003) proposed that the study of political landscapes can be a conceptual platform for the examination of the spatial constitution of civil authority, which feels a need to create landscapes for political purposes. Smith focuses on how polities work through landscapes as spaces produced, reproduced, and razed overtime. The creation and preservation of political authority is a profoundly spatial problem. Kings needed to build, and they demonstrated their creativity and the devotion of their subjects through the reshaping of physical spaces. A landscape therefore simultaneously constituted, and was itself constituted by, the political authority. Politics operated through landscapes, and the built landscape was an instrument for establishing physical, expressive, and imagined political relationships.

This concept of political landscapes offers remarkable advantages to archaeologists, since the constructions of such landscape are already part of archaeological record. However, archaeological research in Southeast Asia have so far paid too little attention to the built landscapes of early cities and states (see Stark 2006a). A pioneer work on this subject in Southeast Asia may be seen in P. Noonsuk (2001b). He proposes that the spatial distribution of Brahmanical sites (i.e. temples and communities) represents the mandala politico-symbolic landscape in which each community settled around and supported the Brahmanic temple that established its sacred geography (2001b: 195). This construction of landscape must have helped ensure the prosperity of the state in the eyes of its people, and in turn supported the existence of the state. Future research on this subject will certainly enhance our understanding of how early states operated via the constructions of their landscape.

Economic Organization

This subject of economic organization involves mainly the study of production and trade, the latter as a form of distribution. While trade, especially regional and inter-regional, has been the focus of several scholars (e.g., Bellina 2003; Bellina and Glover 2004; Glover 1989, 1996; Smith 1999; Ray 1996), production seems to have been less studied.

Marxian archaeology has focused on production, however, and has deconstructed it into two parts: forces of production and social relations of production. The two are closely connected to each other and together constitute the economy (Halperin 1994: 42). The forces of production are related to ecological aspects of human settlements and to locational

movements of productive resources, goods, and people (such as work crews) across space. Halperin (1994: 49) highlights this point by referring to Polanyi's concept of locational movements as "the interaction between man and his surroundings." This concept therefore provides a means to study the ecological or material basis of production. As for the social relations of production, these involve, for example, social organization and relations, mobilization of labor, and human decision-making processes in particular societies (Halperin 1994: 42-43). The social relations of production, thus, cannot be seen directly in the material assemblage of the archaeological record, but the ecological and human forces of production should indeed be expected to add traces.

Studies of production and local trade require fine-grained, expensive archaeological research. Nevertheless, we should attempt to investigate these subjects. They will help enhance our knowledge of how early states operated economically and how states guided or intervened in the economic activities of their subjects, all of which was inevitably related to the broader social lives of people in these states. Since all the earliest states in Southeast Asia were participating in trade networks, it would be crucial to learn more about how they produced and traded crafts, forest products, and food for their existence and prosperity.

Collapse and Regeneration

Most research on early states has focused on how they emerged and operated, but not how they collapsed and or on what happened afterward. Recently, however, some scholars have become interested in studying the collapse and regeneration of states (e.g. Bronson 2006; Kolata 2006; Schwartz 2006; Stark 2006b; Yoffee 2005). Schwartz (2006:3) suggests that "complex societies could be unstable phenomena, prone to episodes of fragility and collapse," and that their collapse can be due to both internal and external factors. Attempting to conceptualize regeneration, Bronson (2006:138-139) proposed two types of regeneration: (1) stimulus regeneration involved the revival of historical memories, sometimes based on false facts, which inspired leaders to believe that a higher degree of centralization was possible; and (2) template regeneration, which adhered more closely to a fully understood, well-recorded model. In a vein parallel to the notion of template regeneration, Kolata (2006) and Stark (2006b) have postulated the resilience and stability of village-level communities in states as supporting the process of regeneration. Kolata (2006:209-210) distinguished two kinds of ruling strategies that contributed to regeneration. The first was hegemony with sovereignty, which focuses on direct control of populations. The second was hegemony without sovereignty, which provides a certain limited amount of freedom to local

communities, thereby allowing them to regenerate after the collapse of states. More directly related to early Southeast Asia, Stark (2006b) discusses the cycles of integration and disintegration in the Khmer states, suggesting that continuities in variables such as subsistence economy, ideology, ethnicity, and lower-level administrative structures facilitated the regenerations of these states.

The questions of what enabled the resilience and stability of lower-level administrative structures such as principalities and villages, and how this resiliency related to regeneration of higher-level political units, are intriguing. As just suggested, these lower-level units can be seen as semi-autonomous ones whose resilience may have supported the process of regeneration of early states. This point is worth pursuing in future research. In Thailand, the *Ban*, or individiual villages, had been semi-autonomous and self-sustaining until recently, when economic and administrative modernization took place. If this semi-autonomy were also true in early states, then it should be interesting to see how these lower-level units organized themselves, what kinds of public projects they were able to manage, and what the nature of their relationships with higher-order states looked like. Pursuing these studies will require small-scale investigations site by site.

Conclusion

In order to explore the emergence of states in Southeast Asia, we have journeyed across various issues related to the subject, including the puzzling definitions of the state, the evidence of earliest states in Southeast Asia, the traditional theories of state origins, scenarios concerning the rise of states in Southeast Asia, and the state dynamics in this region. The major contribution of studies of Southeast Asian states to the general archaeology of early states is that it opens our eyes to the possibility that the earliest states may have been less centralized states whose existences depended less on sovereign and bureaucratic powers and more on the personal charismas, abilities, and connections of fledgling kings who were still much restrained by kin-based societal rules and who constantly attempted to legitimize their kingship through imported (but already localized) religions. This complex world may be difficult to be fully understood by modern scholars who live in a rational, scientific world.

This chapter has redefined the definitions of early states to fit the nature of early Southeast Asia, where centralization and territory-oriented mentality were not the hallmark of the states' successes. The early states in this region had different approaches to maintaining their existences and prosperities, allowing a larger degree of local autonomy that resulted in a more resilient nature in the states themselves. Their ruling strategy was generally the one that

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Kolata (2006) has called hegemony without sovereignty, in which states put less investment in higher-level force and bureaucratic structures but could still enjoy control and respect from lower-level administrative structures.

The emergence of the states in Southeast Asia was muticausal in nature. No single factor can account for their origins. Their emergence therefore requires multifactoral historically-based explanations. Events in history happened when all necessary factors weere present, when it was the right time, and when there were internal needs from within the societies to draw on those factors. Although Indic politico-religious ideas had already been available to Southeast Asia's indigenous complex polities in the context of intensive trade, these polities did not automatically develop into states. It was not until there was a need to develop themselves, possibly to compete with other petty kingdoms developing at the same time in the same interaction sphere, that these complex polities turned into kingdoms. However, this scenario is only a possible explanation, and it is one that needs to be further investigated.

If the origins of state is already a difficult subject to conceptualize, then the emergence of states in Southeast Asia must be nearly impossible to understand archaeologically in the current situation, due to the limited amount of archaeological work on this specific topic that has been conducted in this region. What we know about early states in Southeast Asia derives from the historical record much more than the archaeological record. Moreover, the large portion of the historical record is of Chinese origin, in which the real pictures of early Southeast Asia were inevitably distorted according to the Chinese worldviews. This statement may sound quite negative but it is a reality.

However, there has recently been a trend toward increasing archaeological research on early states in this region. We truly hope that the discoveries from future archaeological research will provide explanations on basic questions not only of how early states emerged but also how they operated and regenerated. This chapter has surveyed a number of significant issues related to state dynamics which will enhance our knowledge of early state greatly if explored further. It is the advantage of archaeology to explore the ground truth of state formation and dynamics, in an effort to better explain this critical period in Southeast Asian histories. If we believe that Southeast Asia can make critical contributions to the general archaeological studies, then it is our responsibility to use the evidence from her local grounds to enrich World Archaeology. For the purpose of this research, the review and exploration of the concepts related to state formation process and of such process in

Southeast Asia will contribute to the understanding of the rise and operation of Tambraling Kingdom that will be discussed later.

Chapter 3

Observations on Peer Polity Interaction and Socio-Political Development in Early Maritime Southeast Asia and Tambralinga

Introduction

This chapter will further our discussion on how Southeast Asian maritime polities and Tambralinga Kingdom emerged and was organized. This will fulfill Objective I and part of Objective II, which aims to explore the formation and the landscape of Tambralinga.

It is now widely accepted that the socio-political development of early historic maritime Southeast Asia was closely associated with east-west trade and that social interaction began to flourish around the fourth century BC (e.g. Bellina and Glover 2004; Manguin 2004). This international maritime trade was preceded by the intra-regional Southeast Asian exchange system of the Iron-Age and played a crucial role in the socio-political development of maritime Southeast Asia throughout its history. Trade and social interaction formed a network of communication and allowed maritime Southeast Asian societies to interact with other regions as well as with one another. Archaeological and historical studies reveal that early maritime polities that participated in this network had developed similar material cultures and political systems. However, the relationship between inter-societal interaction and the socio-political development of maritime Southeast Asian polities deserves more investigation and, therefore, becomes the focus of this chapter.

This chapter defines maritime Southeast Asia as parts of the Southeast Asian region that embrace the vast body of the Southeast Asian seas and communities that were situated on the coasts or had easy access to the coasts (Figure 1.1). The Seas of Southeast Asia extend from the Indian Ocean in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east. Maritime Southeast Asia includes communities in both insular and coastal continental Southeast Asia and houses a variety of groups of people. Communities in continental Southeast Asia that had immediate access to the coasts through riverine networks can also be included in this region. Maritime Southeast Asia, in fact, had multiple interaction spheres that overlapped one another but these spheres were connected and formed a single large maritime socio-political and commercial network offering maritime communities an opportunity to participate in it.

This chapter examines inter-regional trade and social interaction as the process that encouraged socio-political similarities in maritime Southeast Asian polities in the early historic period (c. the fifth to the tenth centuries AD) using the concept of peer polity

interaction proposed by Colin Renfrew (1999). This chapter argues that not only did the early maritime Southeast Asian polities share similar material cultures such as artifacts, statues, and architecture, but they also shared similar political organizations, which has been called the mandala political system (Wolters 1999). Archaeological and historical evidence from a variety of localities in maritime Southeast Asia will be examined in order to offer a general overview of cultural and structural homologies in this region.

This chapter contains six sections. Section One is an introduction offering an overview of the chapter. Section Two discusses the development of maritime trade and social interaction from the late prehistoric to early historic period to emphasize the long-standing relationship between maritime Southeast Asian polities which had participated in the same network of communication and interaction. Section Three provides an overview of the concept of peer polity interaction proposed by Renfrew (1999) and offers a possible application of his concept to maritime Southeast Asia. The concept will be employed to explain the mechanism behind the organizational similarities among the maritime Southeast Asian polities. Section Four discusses the concept of the mandala political system and examines archaeological evidence found in Nakhon Si Thammarat on Peninsular Siam, which is used as a case study in this chapter. Section Five discusses the mandalas, kings, and gods. Section Six concludes the chapter.

The author expects that the result of this chapter will help enhance our knowledge in early historic Southeast Asia and demonstrate the relationship between social interaction and political similarities in this region.

Social Interactions in Maritime Southeast Asia

Before examining the mandala structure as a shared socio-political characteristic of maritime Southeast Asia, this chapter will first explore the long-standing trade and social interactions that created a network connecting societies in the region and linked the region to other regions in the world. This maritime network finally became a main factor that encouraged the cultural and organizational similarities in this region.

Trade and social interaction in the region have been intensively studied by several scholars (e.g., Bellina 2003; Bellina and Glover 2004; Francis 2002; Glover 1996; Hall 1982; Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002; Manguin 2004; P. Noonsuk 2001a; Ray 1996; Veraprasert 1992; Wheatley 1966, 1975). The social interaction in the trading network has been discussed in relation to the process of socio-political development in Southeast Asia. Various explanations have been offered for this process. The most famous debate on this subject is

perhaps Indianization versus Localization. Coedès (1968: 15) proposed the concept of Indianization. It describes the process of state formation of Southeast Asia as a consequence of the expansion of Indian organized culture and their conceptions of royalty and religion through migration of Indian people to the Southeast Asian region. This concept was elaborated on by Wolters (1999) who suggested that Indic elements tended to be fractured and restated, and were adopted by indigenous people through the process of local selection. He coined the term "Localization" for such a process.

Similar to the concept of localization that emphasizes the local processes of development, Kulke (1990) suggests that there existed complex pre-Indianzed polities in this region prior to the Indianization of the first millennium AD. He also proposed that the centralization of polities in India and Southeast Asia took place at approximately the same time in the mid-first millennium AD and he calls this "convergence hypothesis" (1990: 28).

Whether one believes in the concept of Indianization or that of Localization, one cannot refute the idea that the process of acculturation and socio-political development in the region was closely associated with maritime trade networks (Bellina and Glover 2004: 68). Wheatley (1975: 238-240) explained that political development in maritime Southeast Asia in the late centuries BC was related to maritime trade between the West and China in which the rulers of local chiefdoms who controlled the trade activities between their local communities and foreign merchants developed their new perceptions of the world, set their new life goals, and acquired organizational skills from the foreign countries. In the early centuries AD, they adopted Indic ideologies to extend their power by institutionalizing their god-king statuses and dynastic traditions. This idea was taken by Hall (1982: xiii) who stated that the selected items of Indian statecraft acquired through maritime contacts were used to consolidate the rule of the leaders locally as well as control the hinterland.

The trade system in maritime Southeast Asia had its roots back in the prehistoric period (Bellina and Glover 2004) and did not only involve economic activities but also created a network of social relations among participating communities. Trade was a means for maritime communities to interact with one another economically, socially, and politically. However, we may not assume that the relations between maritime polities were always peaceful since we also see maritime warfare and piracy throughout Southeast Asian history.

This chapter provisionally proposes three phases of trade and social interaction in the region between the late prehistoric to early historic period: (1) The Iron-Age, (2) The protohistoric period, and (3) The early historic trade and exchange period.

Iron-Age Intra-Regional Exchange Network

Archaeological evidence suggests that intra-regional exchange systems existed since the second millennium BC (Bellina and Glover 2004; Higham 2002). Prehistoric settlements on the coasts and inland areas had exchanged local goods with each other using river systems. This exchange system can be seen in shell ornaments found over a thousand kilometers from their original coastal areas in inland settlements, and metal ingots and artifacts from ore-rich inland areas found in coastal communities (Bellina and Glover 2004: 69). However, such riverine trade seems to be limited only in particular river systems and not widely interlinked.

The Southeast Asian intra-regional exchange network had developed markedly in the Iron Age around the fifth to fourth centuries BC. A number of small, long-established riverine exchange systems were integrated into a wider intra-regional exchange network which allowed the interaction among maritime societies and the circulation of goods and resources over a long distance. Archaeological evidence demonstrates that the artifacts like Dong Son drums and Sa Huynh ornaments were distributed extensively from their production areas to several parts of Southeast Asia.

The bronze drums in the Dong Son Culture (800-43 BC) were created in several sites in North Vietnam and distributed to many places in both continental and insular Southeast Asia (Huyen 2004: 201). Some Dong Son bronze drums found in Peninsular Siam have been stylistically dated as early as 700 BC (Figure 3.1) (Fine Arts Department, Thailand 2003: 171-219). The distribution of the Dong Son bronze drums suggests the existence of intra-regional exchange networks over a long distances from production sites in North Vietnam to other areas in Southeast Asia since there is no evidence, thus far, indicating drum production sites outside that area (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 76). Bronze drums were also produced in the Lake Dian Culture (from c. mid-first millennium BC to the first century AD) in Yunnan Province, Southern China and this culture may be related to the Dong Son Culture of Northern Vietnam (Allard 1998: 337). The bronze drums may have been used as musical instruments in communal rituals and a power insignia. In some ethnic groups of South China in the present day, the ownership of the drums is still an indicator of high status, while in the Dong Son context, these drums suggest the importance of ritual and display (Higham 1989: 201). According to Loofs-Wissowa, the drums were the instruments of authority for chiefs who sought to become kings, so they should not be perceived as merely items of exchange (cited in Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 77).

For a similar instance, the distribution of lingling-o earrings, a type of Sa Huynh ornaments, in the Southeast Asian maritime world also suggests a socio-cultural relationship

and exchange network among coastal communities in the Iron Age (Figure 3.2). This type of artifact has been found in several sites in coastal Southeast Asia such as those in Thailand, Vietnam, Palawan, and Sarawak (Bellwood 1997: 273, W. Noonsuk 2005: 50). Bellwood notes the similarities between jar burial assemblages of the Philippines, northern Borneo, the Sulawesi Sea region of northern Indonesia, and the Sa Huynh culture (Bellwood 1997: 273). The jar burial tradition at Tabon, Palawan, is dated to the first millennium BC, while copper and bronze objects and lingling-o earrings appear later in about 500 BC in the early Metal phase of this tradition (Bellwood 1997: 303).

It is important to note that insular Southeast Asian communities, perhaps, entered the Dong Son Drum circulation network later than mainland communities. Bellwood (2004: 36-38) observes that bronze objects and metallurgy may have arrived in insular Southeast Asia at the same time as Indian and Chinese contacts, which brought a number of exotic artifacts to the region soon after 300 BC. This suggests that the Dong Son drums may have been circulating mainly in continental Southeast Asia in the earliest stage of the Southeast Asian intra-regional exchange system.

The Southeast Asian intra-regional exchange network created not only economic but also social relationships among late prehistoric communities. It also provided a strong foundation for the expansion of East-West international trade that began to flourish in the protohistoric period.

Protohistoric Inter-Regional Trade Network

The protohistoric period saw intensified intra-regional trade and increasingly ranked societies during circa third century BC to the mid-first millennium AD (Bellina and Glover 2004; Manguin 2004). These societies are believed to be early coastal polities or complex chiefdoms with increasing social stratification as evidenced in grave goods and burial treatments (Manguin 2004). This period is also marked by the earliest foreign textual references of the Greeks, Chinese, and Indians to the region (Wheatley 1966: 204). The earliest Indian literature that mentions Southeast Asia is perhaps the *Ramayana,* likely composed by Valmiki in the third or fourth century BC, despite revisions to the text in subsequent periods, which mentions the place-name *Suvarnadvipa*, the Golden Island or Peninsula (Wheatley 1966: 204).

The Southeast Asian prehistoric intra-regional exchange system was integrated into the international trade network that involved many societies in the ancient world in the protohistoric period. China and Rome were the powerful empires in the period of the late 1st

millennium BC to the early 1ˢᵗ millennium AD. Both empires were huge markets for many goods and increased the demand for prestige goods and rarities for their own consumption. The more famous trade route between Rome and China in people's imagination may be the Silk Road, which traversed the inland area of Eurasia, from Loyang across the high arid plateau of Central Asia to the Mediterranean World (Glover 1996: 57). However, particularly for scholars who are interested in Southeast Asia, there was another China-Rome trade route in the Southern Seas starting from Southern China along the Vietnamese coast and Mekong delta, following the coastline along the Gulf of Siam, crossing Peninsular Siam through transpeninsular routes or circumscribing the Malay Peninsula through the Strait of Malacca, into the Bay of Bengal and connecting to the Western World (Glover 1996: 57).

The trade across the Bay of Bengal linking the Indian Subcontinent to Southeast Asia in the protohistoric period was also supported by Buddhism as one sees Buddhist symbols among the trade items found on trade routes dated between 200 BC to AD 300 (Ray 1996). Buddhism refused the Vedic belief of the four-fold castes in society and allowed people to interact to one another more freely (Ray 1996: 45). In the early centuries AD, the change in the Buddhist concepts, which encouraged people to amass merits and wealth, strongly supported the growing trade network and the emergence of trading groups and guilds (Ray 1996: 45). It also placed traders in a relatively high status in its occupational hierarchy. This suggests that Buddhism in this developmental stage accepted the accumulation and reinvestment of wealth (Glover 1996: 59) which was rejected in the time of Buddha. Another important development of Buddhism is the growth of the monastic system which changed the way of life of monks from a life of wanderers to one of monastic habitude (Ray 1996: 46). This encouraged Buddhists to give money to the monasteries allowing monasteries, monks, and nuns to acquire wealth. There are several documents and inscriptions noting donations for the establishment of monasteries by lay persons (Ray 1996). This relationship appears, however, to be reciprocal between monasteries and lay devotees. People gained spiritual guidance from monks in return for making merit to monasteries and offering monks the transportation to spread Buddhist doctrines (Ray 1996: 46).

Southeast Asia had significant roles in the international trade network for several reasons. First, the region occupied a strategic location between the Western World and China. Maritime contact between the West/India and China could be made possible only through Southeast Asia. Second, the region had irreplaceable products that were valued by foreign traders to fulfill the demand of the upper classes in their homelands. These products include, for example, perfumes, spices, aromatic woods, pearls, rhinoceros horns, and other

kinds of forest and marine products. Unfortunately, these products were perishable and normally cannot be found in the archaeological record in a tropical area such as Southeast Asia. Third, this region housed groups of sea-faring people who mastered navigating ships and collecting marine products (Manguin 2004). These groups can facilitate both sea traffic and transpeninsular riverine transportation in the trade network.

A number of artifacts of foreign origin such as glass and semi-precious stone beads and ornaments, metal (including gold) objects and coins, and pottery and other earthen items have been discovered from various sites throughout maritime Southeast Asia, which is evidence of international trade in the region. These archaeological sites include, for example, U-Thong and Ban Don Ta Phet in central Thailand, Khao Sam Kaeo, Phukhao Thong, Tha Chana, and Khlong Tom in Peninsular Siam, Kuala Selinsing in Peninsular Malaysia, Karan Agung and Air Sugihan in Sumatra, Buni in Java, and Sembiran in Bali in Indonesia, Oc Eo and Angkor Borei in the Mekong Delta, and Ta Kieu and Go Cam in coastal central Vietnam (Bellwood 2004; Bellina and Glover 2004; Glover 1996; Glover and Yamagata 1995; Manguin 2004; Southworth 2004; Stark 2000; W. Noonsuk 2005). These sites bear similar types of artifacts and, therefore, demonstrate that they participated in the same exchange network.

Bellina and Glover (2004) propose two phases of protohistoric trade between India and Southeast Asia.

Phase I (c. the fourth century BC to the second century AD)

Phase I saw regular but less intense and archaeologically less-visible contacts between India and Southeast Asia characterized by semi-precious stone ornaments and three types of vessels including bronze containers with a central knob, pottery rouletted wares, and stamped wares (Bellina and Glover 2004: 72-73). In Phase I, the Southeast Asian ornament tradition was changed in which the softer materials such as limestone and shell were replaced by semiprecious stones such as agate and carnelian to make beads and pendants (Bellina and Glover 2004: 73). These artifacts were likely produced by Indian technology. It is possible that these artifacts were imported to Southeast Asia, or were produced locally in Southeast Asia by Indian craftspersons or by local craftspersons with Indian knowledge. This indicates that, in the international trade network, not only did goods and people travel, but ideas and technology did also (Glover 1996).

One important artifact that suggests a relationship among trading societies in this phase are pendants made of the semi-precious stone feline. Feline pendants were found in

some protohistoric sites, especially in upper Burma, central Thailand, and Peninsular Siam (Glover 1989: 28; Hudson 2004:84; W. Noonsuk 2005: 51-54) (Figure 3.3). These feline figures are morphologically different and we can preliminarily divide them into three groups. First, the carnelian feline pendants that have been discovered in upper Burma and Ban Don Ta Phet (Figure 3.4) are morphologically similar to the bronze 'Tally Tigers' of the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BC) of China, which were used as symbols to denote military office (Figure 3.5) (Hudson 2004: 84). They represent leaping tigers and generally have holes perforated from below the chin to above the tail. Although Glover (1989: 28) compares the feline pendant (dated to 400 BC) from Ban Don Ta Phet situated at the very head of Peninsular Siam with the lion pendant found at Taxila, a prosperous Buddhist city from the late centuries BC in northern India, and suggests that the pendant represents a lion and has a Buddhist connotation, the Ban Don Ta Phet feline pendant is stylistically different from the Indian prototype and seems more closely linked to those from upper Burma and China in terms of morphology. Second, the carnelian feline pendant found at Tha Chana (Figure 3.6) is morphologically similar to the rock-crystal lion pendants found in Buddhist monasteries at Taxila and may have represented the symbol of Buddha as the 'Lion of the Sakyas (Sakyasimha)' (Marshall 1975: 748) in ancient Indian Art prior to the creation of showing Buddha in anthropomorphic form (W. Noonsuk 2005: 54). They represent crouching lions and also have holes perforated from below the chin to above the tail. Third, the feline pendants found at Khao Sam Kaeo, Phukhao Thong (Figure 3.7), and Khlong Tom are comparable to the rock-crystal lion pendant discovered in the gold refinery at the archaeological site of Sardis in Turkey (Figure 3.8) (Ramage 2000: 92, 98). Ramage dates the Sardis pendant to around 550 BC (personal communication). The lion pendants in this group are very small (not more than 3 mm in length) and are drilled transversely through the body. In sum, the various forms and distributions of the feline pendants clearly demonstrate that Southeast Asian communities had relationships with one another and with a number of societies in other regions under the international trade network.

It has been hitherto believed that during Phase I there was no production site in Southeast Asia. However, a recent archaeological study at Khao Sam Kaeo reveals some evidence of glass and stone ornament production in the late centuries BC (Bellina and Silapanth 2005: 6). Therefore, it may be possible to assume that the protohistoric coastal communities may have acted as ports, trading stations, distribution centers, and production sites for the international trade network and facilitated the flow of foreign goods to hinterland groups in exchange for forest products (Bronson 1977). The imported and locally produced

prestige goods may have been considered as status markers to express the sophistication and modernity of the owners and their social classes, and used as a means to create social ties and alliances between hinterland groups and coastal communities (Bellina 2003).

It seems, however, that the relationships between early coastal polities and hinterland groups were not organized into dominant-subordinate relations. These polities relied on forest products as their most valuable goods in exchange with foreign merchants as suggested in the Chinese records. In some cases like Satingpra and Kedah in the Siam-Malay Peninsula, it is also possible that the food supply in coastal polities was supplemented by products from upland farming groups (Allen 2000). Hinterland groups were not sedentary; they regularly moved from one place to another in the tropical forests or in the remote inlands. They were also the only groups who had knowledge of where certain forest products could be gathered (Andaya 1993). Therefore, it would be self-destructive and impossible for coastal polities to deploy military forces to control the hinterland groups since their economies depended on them. If the hinterland groups did not wish to be involved in a relationship with a coastal polity, they could have easily moved away, sometimes to other polities that were rivals of the former one (Manguin 2000). Andaya (1993: 237) studied the upstream-downstream relation among the Sumatran societies during the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries AD and suggested that the crucial element in a smooth relationship, in fact, was the ability of the downstream courts to employ "gentle persuasion" and the downstream rulers to maintain their status as kinsmen to the upstream people. It is, thus, important to note that the relations between upstream and downstream were complex and entailed not only commercial exchanges but also ceremonial, political, and social ties (O'Connor 1997: 411) and it was important for coastal polities to maintain their social relationship and to offer the best options to the hinterland groups to support their economic system and compete effectively with other polities.

Phase II (c. the second to fourth centuries AD)

Bellina and Glover (2004: 72, 80) suggest that in Phase II, both intra- and inter-regional exchange intensified and there is a greater quantity but less diverse range of artifacts that are mostly characterized by Southeast Asian-produced ceramics inspired by Indian prototypes. These ceramics include the kundika and kendi vessels, stamped and mound wares.

The kundika is an Indian model for Southeast Asian-made kendi (Rooney 2003: 7). Both of them are containers for liquids with two openings, a long neck, and a spout on the

shoulder. The kundika perhaps arrived in Southeast Asia in the last centuries BC and were used in Indic religious and royal rituals (Bellina and Glover 2004: 80; Rooney 2003: 6). This type of vessel may have also been made of precious metal and was depicted in several sculptures and bas-reliefs associated with Brahmanism and Buddhism. By contrast, kendi was normally unglazed ceramic and had a broader range of uses that extended to everyone even in daily life (Rooney 2003: 6, 8). Although the kundika is much rarer in Southeast Asia, it has been discovered in several sites in this region such as Pyu sites in Burma, Mon sites in lower Burma, Dvaravati sites in central Thailand, Oc Eo in the Mekong delta, Trakieu in central Vietnam, and in central Java (Bellina and Glover 2003: 80).

Besides the kundika and kendi, this phase also saw the distribution of stamped and mound ceramics that bear Indic auspicious symbols such as the srivatsa, the wheel, the svastika, the hamsa, and various kinds of plant motifs (Bellina and Glover 2003: 81). These types of pottery vessels were inspired by Indian prototype and associated with Buddhism and Brahmanism. The evidence in this phase demonstrates more clearly that Indic religious ideology had traveled to Southeast Asia and became significant in socio-political development of this region in the subsequent periods.

Early Historic Social Interaction

In the period of early historic social interaction during the second half of the first millennium AD, we see the Southeast Asianization of Indic ideology and art styles throughout maritime Southeast Asia and the emergence of complex polities or so called maritime states. Despite of some slight differences owing to the process of localization of Indic models, the cultural similarities including similarities in styles of art and architecture among maritime Southeast Asian polities were rather apparent, which indicate the social interaction among them. For instance, some scholars suggest that the distribution and the almost parallel development of the Vishnu images in Peninsular Siam (Figure 4.5), in the area around the Gulf of Siam, in Mekong delta, and in insular Southeast Asia should be perceived as the evidence of commercial and social interaction among maritime polities, in which the belief of Vishnu played a significant role (Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998; O'Connor 1986a: 8). The Indic ideology including the belief of Vishnu, therefore, seems to play vital roles in both the maritime trade network and the development of political systems and royal institution in this period, in which such ideology was circulated in the network and traveled to interacting maritime polities as a cultural cargo along with trade items (Stargardt 2003: 104).

The early historic period also saw a change in maritime trade patterns in which the trading passage via the Strait of Malacca became dominant over that of the transpeninsular routes (Hall 1989: 72). The latter was still in use but probably to a lesser degree. This change supported the flowering of trading polities in the lower part of the Malay Peninsula and in insular Southeast Asia that had access to valuable spices. One eminent polity was Srivijaya that emerged around the seventh century AD and perhaps was centered at southern Sumatra. There still exists the debate over how far the boundaries of Srivijaya extended; however, there is no doubt that this polity provided entrepot facilities, a guarantee of security for international shipping, and markets for both foreign merchants and local people (O'Connor 1996: 596). Its existence and functions unquestionably encouraged trading activities and social interactions in maritime Southeast Asia.

In the late early historic period from around the eighth to tenth centuries AD, the Chinese ceramic trade started to flourish and a variety of Chinese ceramics were exported to several parts of the world via maritime Southeast Asia (Manguin 1993: 34). Maritime Southeast Asian polities participated in the ceramic trade and facilitated the shipping through the ceramic road. A common variety of Chinese ceramics including (but not limited to) Guangdong, Yue, Changsha, and White wares has been discovered from several sites in maritime Southeast Asia; for instance, the archaeological sites in Peninsular Siam (e.g. Ko Kho Khao and Laem Pho), Kedah, Java, and southern Sumatra (but only olive-green Guangdong wares found in Palembang) (Manguin 1993: 35). This evidence suggests that maritime Southeast Asian polities participated in similar ceramic trade networks and, thus, continued to interact with each other just as they had done for more than a thousand years.

In sum, the long-standing maritime trade network from the late prehistoric period to the early historic period allowed maritime polities to interact with one another to create social relationships, facilitate the circulation of goods and ideas, and encourage cultural and organizational similarities among them. This peer polity interaction was a mechanism that encouraged cultural and organizational homologies and deserves a detailed discussion in the following section.

An Application of the Concept of Peer Polity Interaction

The concept of peer polity interaction was proposed by Colin Renfrew (1999) for studies of socio-political change and development. According to Renfrew (1999: 114), peer polity interaction included imitation and emulation, competition, warfare, and the exchange of material goods and information among autonomous socio-political units within a single

geographical region. He uses the term "peer polity" to avoid models that emphasize core-periphery relations or secondary state formation. The socio-political and economic development of peer polities cannot be considered in isolation, since they always interacted (Renfrew 1999: 114).

Renfrew defines "polity" as the highest order socio-political unit in a region, such as a chiefdom. Autonomous political units have neighbors which are comparable in scale and have structural homologies. Structural homologies, according to Renfrew, are the product of interaction among peer polities over a long period of time (Renfrew 1999: 119). He notes that structural homologies might possibly be confused with those that are the product of convergent trajectories of development in similar environments. Thus, Renfrew is interested in comparing specific aspects of peer polities, instead of their generalized structures. These include, for example, specific architectural forms, symbolic systems, and numerical systems (Renfrew 1999: 121).

Renfrew discusses two types of change: exogenous and endogenous (Renfrew 1999: 121-124). Exogenous change is the change that occurred outside the area of a polity, while endogenous change occurred within a polity. He concludes, however, that both types of change are likely to transpire in neighboring polities of equivalent scale and organization (Renfrew 1999: 121). Change is conceptualized as emerging from a constellation of interacting polities in a region. Because of this interaction, uniformities in cultural features may emerge and have a significant role in influencing patterns of future development, such as the process of ethnic group formation that would become the foundation for the emergence of the nation state (Renfrew 1999: 124).

The value of the concept of peer polity interaction is not that it simply explains distributional patterns of material culture or traits across the region, but that it explains changes in the degree of complexity within and among societies. Renfrew (1999: 125) suggests that when one polity is identified in the archaeological record, other polities of comparable scale and organization will be also found in the same region. When one polity undergoes an organizational change and an increase in complexity, or creates new institutional features and innovation, we will also see similar kinds of change in neighboring polities. The transformation of one society is not only a result of internal processes tending towards intensification, but also a result of peer polity interaction. Such interaction may include warfare, competitive emulation, symbolic entrainment, transmission of innovation, and an increase in the exchange of goods (Renfrew 1999: 126-130).

Renfrew's concept of peer polity interaction somewhat coincides with Kulke's convergence hypothesis (1990: 22) which explains the simultaneous socio-political and cultural development of principalities of equivalent scale and status around the Bay of Bengal and in Southeast Asia. Kulke (1990: 22, 32) proposes that the first millennium AD saw a very similar trajectory of the process of state formation on both sides of the Bay of Bengal in which rulers of the maritime polities sought solutions for similar challenges to legitimize and strengthen, with the assistance of Brahmins, their claim to superior authority and power, the kind of power that cannot be acquired from older tribal political traditions. According to Kulke (Kulke1990: 22, 28), the advance chiefdoms in Southeast Asia, therefore, acquired the Indian model of politics and royalty not from the truly imperial Gupta of Northern India but from the princely states of comparable scale of South and Eastern India through a complicated network of relations creating the convergence of their social evolution.

The ideas of Renfrew and Kulke clearly suggest that the cultural and socio-political similarities among maritime polities in Southeast Asia and around the Bay of Bengal were made possible through the peer polity interaction which had deep roots back to at least as early as the protohistoric period starting around the fourth century BC. Although there is no doubt that the Indian influence encouraged the social change in maritime Southeast Asia, we should keep in mind that the Indic cultural elements was adapted to fit into the local ecological circumstance, technological practice, and human experience of this region (O'Connor 1986a: 8). Southeast Asian people, indeed, had abilities to develop their own art schools. Only few centuries after the first spread of Indian temple architecture to Southeast Asia, people in this region created monumental temple architecture such as Borobudur and Angkor Wat that have no equal in India, suggesting the mastery by local people of Indian-inspired art (Kulke 1990: 31).

Maritime Southeast Asia is a significant region for the study of the peer polity interaction and the convergence of socio-political development as mentioned above. This region was the threshold of exotic goods, technological knowledge, and Indic ideas to the inland areas of Southeast Asia and was the region that initially developed the so-called Indianized political system, except the region of upper Burma that had direct contacts with North and Eastern India and developed as the Buddhist polities probably since the first half of the first millennium AD (Kulke 1990: 24). However, it is not surprising to see the development of complex polities with similar organizational characteristics as those in the maritime region in the inland areas of Southeast Asia since these inland polities interacted with and received Indic ideology through the maritime polities without direct participation in

the South-Southeast Asian maritime network. In maritime Southeast Asia, we can witness the emergence of various autonomous political units probably since the late prehistoric period. These polities were comparable in scale and degree of complexity. They developed through time and did not develop in isolation. Instead, they actively communicated with one another through a long-distance exchange networks that began by at least the late prehistoric period. This vast network formed a single interaction sphere across maritime Southeast Asia and it created a new regional identity that was shared by a number of politically independent groups. This identity was noted in early Chinese accounts that refer to the region as "the kingdoms of the South Seas" (Wheatley 1966).

As a result of peer polity interaction, we can see cultural similarities not only in material terms but also in organization. The organizational homologies were encouraged by the process of competitive emulation among maritime peer polities which faced similar challenges (Kulke 1990: 22; Renfrew 1999). They participated in similar trade networks and competed with one another to elevate their power and status. In the competitive atmosphere, each polity tried to develop its organization so that it could succeed in the region. Therefore, if there are more sophisticated organizational concepts or more advanced technological innovations created or adopted by one polity, other polities in the same region will also adopt and improve them, or if there are or more advanced styles of art and architecture created or adopted by one polity, other polities will also adopt and refine them. Chinese records also suggest that this process transpired when the Fununese selected a person with sophisticated political knowledge from *Pan-pan*, namely Kaundinya, to be their king and thus improve their socio-political structure to conform with that in India (Wheatley 1966: 48).

These examples may explain the adoptions of Indic religions, political ideologies, writing systems, and art styles in maritime Southeast Asia during the late protohistoric and early historic periods. They may also be seen as the characteristics of present-mindedness that is one of the important features of Southeast Asian cultures (see Wolters 1999: 114-115). It is not the Indianization, but rather it is the adoption of more sophisticated cultural and socio-political features that enabled them to compete with other polities in the interaction sphere. It seems that Indic cultures were the most appropriate ones since local people and Indians had close relationships for a long period of time and the Indian rulers of princely states were still facing similar challenges as the Southeast Asian elites to establish their authority, enhance their power, and domesticate their people (Kulke 1990: 28).

This chapter proposes that the similar organization shared by maritime polities in the early historic period was the mandala political system. Despite the fact that ancient Southeast

Asian people did not offer us any clue on whether they called their political system a "mandala" or not, this chapter will use this constructive term to refer to the alliance-based political system described by Wolters (1999) and the multi-centric political landscape that shall be discussed in detail later on in our case study.

The Mandala: Concepts and A Case Study of Tambralinga

Since this chapter proposes the mandala political system as the organization shared by maritime polities in the early historic period, it shall review the mandala concept proposed by Wolters and reexamine the political system and landscape in details using the case study of the Tambralinga polity in Peninsular Siam. As reviewed in Chapter 2, we may see that maritime polities in Southeast Asia shared this mandala political system although this is not to claim here that this region had the monopoly of this system. These mandalas demonstrate the similarities in multi-centric organizations of space and the coexistence of Buddhism and Brahmanism, which were the characteristics of the mandala political system and landscape.

1. The Concept of Mandala Political System

The concept of mandalas was proposed by Wolters (1999) as a framework for the study of socio-political organizations of pre-modern Southeast Asia. The term mandala is defined as circles of kings and involved continuous networks of loyalties between rulers and the ruled (Wolters 1999: 25, 114). Structurally, in each mandala, one king who is identified with divine and universal authority would claim personal hegemony over other rulers in his mandala who were his allies or vassals (Wolters 1999: 25). However, in practice, the mandala model often represents an unstable political situation of a vaguely defined geographic area without fixed boundaries. The smaller centers under the god-king could search in all directions for protection from other god-kings and also tend to build up their own network and power to renounce their tributary status. Mandalas would expand and contract from time to time. Yet, only the mandala overlord had the right to receive tribute-bearing envoys and he would also send officials who represented his superior status (Wolters 1999: 28).

In Wolters' view, two most important skills for the mandala overlord are present-mindedness and diplomacy since all interactions among polities in that period depended on personal ties (Wolters 1999: 30). The sacral power of the overlord or the man of prowess acquired through the Bhakti cult was shared by his kinship group and followers in his administration. This political system is based on inherited cultural traits from prehistory

which highlight cognatic systems, an indifference towards lineage descent, and therefore the importance attached to personal achievement in particular generations (Wolters 1999: 38). The mandala structure was multi-centric in nature, so that there was an enduring multiplicity of centers (Wolters 1999: 39).

The concept of mandala was adopted by Higham (1989: 239-318) who applied it to several areas in Mainland Southeast Asia, but in a rather centralizing fashion, including the Mekong delta, the middle Mekong and the Tonle Sap plains, Central Thailand, the Mun-Chi valleys in Northeast Thailand, and Central Vietnam. This concept was also applied to the isthmian region by P. Noonsuk (2001b) with more emphasis on the Saivaite political landscape.

This chapter would like to stress that the mandala system was associated with Brahmanic and Buddhist ideology as the self-evident, religious term of mandala or the sacred circle suggests. Although we can see mandala-like political systems in some societies that were not associated with Brahmanism or Buddhism, this chapter limits the definition of the mandala system to polities related to Indic religions in which their rulers associated themselves with Indic gods and established a sacred landscape in their polities.

Since the mandala political system is alliance-based and depends on personal relationships rather than bureaucratic institutions in its management, it is imbued with internal contradictions. One contradiction in this system is the contradiction between symbolic belief and political practice in which the mandala overlord claimed universal authority through his divine identity and symbolic power over his subordinates. However, in reality, he depended largely on personal relationships to convince and attract his followers using his charisma. Therefore, when we study the mandala political system, we must be careful not to equate what appeared to be in the symbolic level with what happened in political reality. Another important contradiction in the mandala political system is the relational contradiction between the center and its vassals. The center always wanted to retain its vassals under its power but the vassals always desired to renounce their tributary status whenever the chance presented itself. In this field of power dynamics, it is always possible for a vassal to become a center. Changes occurring in a vassal in a periphery area would also cause changes to the whole system and made the center to reorganize itself. However, the mandala political system requires the existences of both center and vassal although they had opposite interests. Without one of them, there would be no mandala system. This dialectical relation was the integral part of mandala institution and meant that the mandala political system was always in flux and full of tension, so that this system was

dynamic rather than static and the ability of a center to maintain its status relied on the ability of its ruler.

The mandala structure can be found in various contexts from small to large scale such as from tantric paintings to Indic religious temples, or from the spatial organization of a village to that of an empire. The mandala political landscape will be discussed in our case study.

2. *The Mandala of Tambralinga: A Political Landscape*

There are a number of early historic artifacts and archaeological sites mostly associated with Saivism found in Peninsular Siam and especially in Tambralinga on the coastal land of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province (W. Noonsuk 2005: 99-127) (Figure 2.2). These Brahmanic sites demonstrate similar cultural elements and such sites in Nakhon Si Thammarat alone can provisionally be divided into seven groups which connected to each other via networks of rivers and land routes, according to Dr. Preecha Noonsuk (2004: 21). He proposes that the spatial distribution of such sites represents the mandala politico-symbolic landscape in which each community settled around and supported its Brahmanic temple that established its sacred geography (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 195). He bases his hypothesis on the concept of sacred geographies of Brahmanic temples in India where they call them "Tirthas" meaning the place to come across or the place for salvation (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 195). Tirthas are sacred geographies and can be found in, for example, mountains, banks of rivers, high areas, sand dunes, and even large trees (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 195). Tirthas that are the most sacred in which shrines are built, are not only the place for people to pass across from their world to heaven but also the place where Brahmanical gods present themselves as avatars to the world. These sacred sites, therefore, are the links or the gates between heaven and earth (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 196).

Temples located in Tirthas did not exist in isolation since the Brahmanical mandala concept requires them to have a center with surrounding peripheries to complete the sacred cosmological structure, a sacred circle (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 229). As a result, a mandala consists of several communities in which each had its temple at the center. P. Noonsuk believes that in a mandala the temple of the most sacred site would be the center of the whole mandala, and several mandalas would constitute a supra-mandala (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 241). To decide which place in the group of mandalas of Tambralinga was the center, he takes into account the epigraphic record of the inscriptions found in Nakhon Si Thammarat. He then finds that the temple of Wat Phra Derm on Haad Sai Keao sand dune was probably the center

of the mandala of Tambralinga since inscription No. 28 mentions the name of the Siva of Tambralinga (or the Lord of Tambralinga) (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 241). It is important to note that no inscription is found at the other temple groups mentioned above, except the Haad Sai Keao Group. Besides the epigraphic record, P. Noonsuk also considers the importance of the Brahmanical concept of the sacred Ganges, making the Haad Sai Keao sand dune the most sacred place since this sand dune is surrounded by a number of rivers representing the sacred Ganges and its tributaries flowing from the mountain, which is also a sacred Tirtha (P. Noonsuk 2004: 23). The area of Haad Sai Keao was not only the center of Tambralinga in the early historic period, but also the center of Nakhon Si Thammarat that developed from Tambralinga in the thirteen centuries AD (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 406).

This chapter would like to emphasize that the concept of sacred geography is of social significance since the sacred geography is related to the practice of pilgrimage in which the Brahmanic people traveled from one Tirtha to another in a polity or even across the boundaries to other polities to worship gods and perform meritorious practices. This pilgrimage practice encouraged social relationships among people of various places in a polity and even of different polities.

In sum, the settlement pattern according to P. Noonsuk's model of mandala political landscape can be seen at various scales: first, a temple surrounded by houses to form a settlement; second, several settlements forming a cluster with a center; and third, several clusters of settlement arranging themselves in the same concentric manner at a larger scale, whereby the center of a state houses the most sacred temple and is surrounded by its vassal clusters. Importantly, in the mandala system we witness organizational similarities between the center and vassal as the result of the process of cultural emulation in which the vassal replicated the political system and organization of space of the center. It is also significant to note that this multi-scalar model provides a workable framework to delineate and contextualize an analytical unit for early historic study. It convinces us to study any entity within its own context and according to the scale of analysis. A center at one scale can be a vassal at another and vice versa. A vassal can, therefore, be a center with its own satellites, realm, and significance at one scale. Although, without any historical records, it is generally difficult to determine which group of settlements belonged to which polity and how far a mandala polity extended, this model of mandala spatial arrangement offers a useful, provisional guideline to help us archaeologically conceptualize the political landscape of maritime polities.

The Mandalas and Their Gods

In the mandala system, we see the coexistences of both Brahmanism and Buddhism and people clearly made offerings or requested ritual performances from both Brahmans and Buddhist monks according to their inclinations and needs (Skilling: 2003: 105). This phenomenon also happened in India, the birthplace of Brahmanism itself, where we have evidence of multiple religions in Saivaite shrines (Lahiri and Bacus 2004: 321). Peter Skilling (2005: 5) also speaks of the existence of hybridism of Brahmanic and Buddhist rituals based on the historical evidence of pre-modern Siam, for which the earliest record can be found in the Sanskrit inscription epigraphically dated to between the seventh and the ninth centuries AD in Nakhon Si Thammarat, indicating the joint participation in rituals and the donations made to both Buddhist monks and the community of the twice-born, the Brahmans. This suggests that the boundaries between Brahmanic and Buddhist rituals were probably very fluid since the early historic period.

The porous boundaries between Brahmanism and Buddhism offer the flexibility to the king to identify himself with Brahmanic gods (i.e. Siva and Vishnu), Bodhisattava, and Buddha (Skilling 2005). In early historic Southeast Asia, it seems that the king associated himself with deities through a devotional (Bhakti) cult to legitimate his rulership, attract followers, and assure his people of prosperity and fertility under his rule (Wolters 1999). The king seemed to be protected by the gods and venerated in, at least, "a rather functional comparison with the gods and their cosmic duties," if not as a part (amsa) of the gods (Kulke 1978: xvi).

As described in the previous section, in maritime Southeast Asia, the king can associate himself with either Brahmanic gods or Bodhisattava according to the particular context and purpose, although we may see one particular cult gaining popularity over the other in one particular area depending on local decision and who the groups of people (i.e. Buddhists, or Siva or Vishnu believers) from outside who came and brought with them their ideas to that area were.

Both Siva and Vishnu were most frequently seen in the royal institution. Peter Skilling once taught me that Saivism or Vaishnavism are not exclusive religions or sects, but alternative ritual systems, sometimes virtually indistinguishable, sometimes competing. Thus, our previous ideas on Saivism and Vaishnavism as separate sects in maritime Southeast Asia may have to be revised.

Paul Mus (1975) suggests that the Brahmanic belief system was the result of the integration, in North India, between Vedic ideology and the earth-god cult, which was widely

believed in Monsoon Asia from India to South China where the sea routes were used as the main channel of communication. The indigenous belief of earth-god was associated with territorial, fertility, and ancestral cults and was also a significant religious feature of maritime Southeast Asia, especially the Cham territories, as a part of Monsoon Asia, in which the amorphous spirit of the soil, oftentimes represented by a stone, was worship by the community of each land through ritual intermediaries (mostly the chief), who also absorbed the divinity into himself at least temporarily during the ritual (Mus 1975: 10, 14). Having developed from the earth-god belief, Saivism was integrated to the Southeast Asian indigenous belief system with no considerable difficulty. Although Saivism was adopted by local people, the pre-existing indigenous beliefs were not eliminated, examples of which are what Mus observed in 1930s in Cham territories and what de Casparis and Mabbett (1992: 282-283) refer to as the god of the stone pond in Cambodia and tree spirits Burma.

Saivism provided the elaboration to the kingship system and allowed the king to associate himself with Siva just like the prehistoric chief absorbed the divinity of the earth-god in Mus' view but with more sophisticated institutions supporting the expansion of the king's power. Siva linga replaced the earth-god stone but still possessed rather similar functions as the symbol of the spirit of the earth and the center of the territory and polity, as was the case of *Tambralingeshvara* (probably representing the Siva linga and/or Siva-king) that was the symbolic center of Tambralinga polity in Peninsular Siam.

While the belief of Siva linga offers the sense of centering, that of Vishnu seems to be of containing (Kaja McGowan, personal communication). Vishnu is the god of water and ocean, so that he was widely worshipped by the sea travelers in the maritime trade network in which we witness the extensive distribution of his image among the maritime Southeast Asian polities. The identity of Vishnu as the god of water coincides with that of the goddess Ganges, a wife of Siva, so that at the water head of Kbal Spean near Angkor we see a thousand lingas situated side by side with Vishnu Anantasayin on the floor of the waterfall. Vishnu as the god of the ocean may also have played a significant role in maritime trade, especially in western Southeast Asia, between the fifth and seventh centuries AD, as sometimes called "a trade network of Vaishana obedience" (Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998; Soeroso and Manguin 1998: 78).

Vishnu also acted as the preserver of the universe and of the earth, who wanders around to protect his followers through a series of avatars, and helps contain the kingdom of the king who belief in him. The footprints of Vishnu (Vishnupada), believed to be associated with the three strides by which he conquered the entire universe (Lavy 2003: 24), can be used

as a mark to claim the territory of one particular polity and to symbolically display the presence of a king who worships Vishnu and also wanders around to protect his kingdom and his people. The obvious example of this is found at Tarumanagara where its king identified his footprints with those of Vishnu, probably to claim or to mark his territory (Lavy 2003: 24).

The political ideas of centering and containing are indeed complementary to each other and the king can choose to associate himself with both Siva and Vishnu depending on the particular context and purpose. Both beliefs played significant roles in early historic polities and we can observe a variety of evidence relating to Siva and Vishnu in maritime Southeast Asia.

However, it would be incorrect to say that the king in the mandala political system associated himself only with Siva or Vishnu. Other Brahmanic gods (i.e. Indra) and Bodhisattava were also related to the kingship institution and significant in the political system in maritime Southeast Asia. Saraya (2002) and Kulke (1993) speak of kings as Bodhisattava in Dvaravati and Srivijaya respectively.

Conclusion

On the basis of historical and archaeological evidence provided above, we see a long-standing peer polity interaction among societies in maritime Southeast Asia and between these societies and other regions in the international maritime trade network that flourished in around the fourth century BC. Both intra- and inter-regional social interactions allowed goods and ideas to be circulated among participating societies, and encouraged the development of similar cultural and organizational characteristics in maritime Southeast Asia.

Around the mid-first millennium AD, the mandala alliance-based political system and multi-centric political landscape in which there were multiple concentric circles of settlements started to be seen more clearly throughout maritime Southeast Asia. These mandalas were related to both Brahmanism and Buddhism in which their rulers associated themselves with Siva, Vishnu, and Bodhisattava. Despite some minor differences due to the process of local selection in particular localities, the similarities in cultural traits and the mandala system were apparent. Therefore, it seems that the long-standing social interaction which took various forms such as trade, inter-marriage, pilgrimage, and even warfare encouraged the cultural and organizational similarities among interacting polities through the process of competitive emulation in which each polity needed to constantly improve itself socially and organizationally to compete with their neighbors and to maintain its political and

economic status in the interaction sphere of maritime Southeast Asia. This may have been the context in which Tambralinga emerged, and the mandala political system may have been materialized in the landscape of Tambralinga as well, as demonstrated in this chapter and as will be explored further in the next chapters.

Chapter 4
Tambralinga's Cultural Landscape

Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the cultural landscape of the Tambralinga Kingdom (c. 5th to c. 11th centuries CE), in which its heartland was located on the coastal land of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province in Southern Thailand today (Figure 4.1). This chapter fulfills Objective II in this research project and will discuss the geographical background as well as living, religious, and political landscapes of Tambralinga Kingdom.

Although the name Tambralinga seems to first appear as Tamali in the Pali text of c. 2nd to c. 3rd centuries, it is not known if this place-name referred to a kingdom because archaeological evidence for a state-level polity dated to this early time is absent. No inscription, sculpture, or architecture made of permanent materials has been identified in coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat, and in most places in Southeast Asia during this early period. However, the Chinese records of the diplomats traveling to the South Seas mentioned the presence of a number of kingdoms in Peninsular Siam in the early centuries CE (Wheatley 1966:Part I). They similarly had kings, officials, Brahmins, monks, exotic goods, walls, and palaces made of wood. It is possible, therefore, that state-level polities existed in Peninsular Siam and perhaps in coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat as well but archaeologists have not been able to identify them because their architecture were made of perishable materials.

Coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat was situated in a strategic geography suitable for the development of a kingdom. If one is to use an analogy of a house, Tambralinga would have its front door opening up to the sea of trade, its living room and kitchen on the fertile alluvial plain, and its backyard at the mountains full of forest and exotic goods valuable to the local people and foreign merchants. The long coastline in the east opened Tambralinga up to the sea, linking them to the Gulf of Siam, the Mekong Delta, the Indonesian Archipelago, and China. The kingdom can basically commute to any place in the South China Sea and beyond. The mountain passes in the west connected them to the trans-isthmian routes allowing the passages from the west coast to the east coast of the isthmian tract. This location was ideal for a kingdom that was involved in the maritime trade across Asia. The alluvial plain behind the ancient beach ridges provided a fertile land for wet-rice agriculture that produced sufficient food for the population and the operations of the kingdom. West of the alluvial plain lay the massive mountain range in which its rain forests offered a wide variety of goods

valued very highly by foreign merchants. The sources of these valuable goods in the mountains were a short distance to the sea due to the relatively narrow alluvial plain, and a series of short rivers facilitating the flows of goods probably made this area suitable for the establishment of a trading kingdom and attractive to foreign merchants to come here for exotic goods. The mountains were just 5 km. from the center of population in Tambralinga. This geographical characteristic made coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat unique in Peninsular Siam since there was nowhere else in this region that the center of a kingdom at the ample rice plain can be this close to the mountain, the sea, and the transpeninsular routes at the same time. In the Bay of Bandon, one needed to travel more than 35 km. to the closest mountain range with rain forests while the Bay of Pattani was more than 65 km. There were some areas in the west coast of the isthmian tract that also had this character but their alluvial plains were much smaller than that of coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat.

The beach ridges were the core of its landscape. They were used as the main communication route that connected various communities together in the north-south direction, while rivers and walking trails provided passageways between ecological zones in the east-west direction. Tambralinga's heartland also connected to the west coast of the isthmus via trans-isthmian routes across the mountain passes and plains.

Coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat has the highest density of bronze drums (Figure 4.4) in Peninsular Siam suggesting that there were probably a group of advanced chiefdoms in this area since the late centuries BCE (Figure 4.2). It also has the highest densities of early historic religious architecture and inscriptions (Figure 4.3). They clearly suggest that coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat was one of the most important areas in terms of socio-political development in this region and that Tambralinga Kingdom was probably dominated by Hinduism.

These inscriptions reflected the political organization, and when taken together with the tremendous numbers of shrines of the same period in the same area, they suggest the existence of a strong state-level polity which most likely supported the establishment of these shrines. In the words of O'Connor, it was an "art world" in which the creations of materiality or what may be considered as artworks, both sculptures and architecture, were interwoven into the political progression and establishment[27].

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[27] O'Connor's lecture entitled "Indian art styles in Peninsular Thailand: At the crossroad in Southeast Asia" at the South Asia Program at Cornell University in 1990. The record of this lecture is still kept at the Cornell Library.

Coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat again has the highest density of the earliest stone Visnu images (Figure 4.5) in the whole Southeast Asia in the 5th century CE (W. Noonsuk 2013: 74-97; O'Connor 1972). The presence of these Visnu images suggests that there must be communities sufficiently complex to create, possess and understand stone sculptures that had never appeared before in Southeast Asia. These statues were imbued with complex language of religiousness and represented a more universal symbol transcending the village boundaries, suggesting the socio-political development of a polity(s) that was becoming a kingdom. They also linked the local communities to the much wider world of the Vaisanavite trade network in which the belief of Visnu bound numerous trading communities together and created a sense of unity and fraternity among them (Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998)[28].

These earliest Visnu images were accompanied with some 5th-6th century Siva lingas in Tambralinga. There was also Inscription No. 28 from Wat Mahathat which Coedès dated to the 5th to 6th centuries[29] based on paleography suggesting a name of a king. All this evidence indicates that there was a highly ranked society(s) or even more likely a kingdom with complex ritual systems and construction programs in place in the heartland already in around the 5th century.

Geography of Tambralinga's Heartland

The heartland area of the Tambralinga Kingdom is an almost rectangular area of 1,275 km^2 (127,500 hectare) or 85 km in the north-south direction and 15 km in the east-west direction, flanked by the mountain range in the west and the sea of the Gulf of Siam in the east (Figure 4.1). Its northern reach is at the Phlai Dam Mountain, between Khanom and Sichon Districts, where the smooth coastal plain is interrupted by a group of mountains and hills before reaching the Bay of Bandon, and its southern limit would seem to be the Sao Thong River, beyond which the archaeological record thins out.

The coastal lands of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province were mostly formed by the accumulation of erosions from the Nakhon Si Thammarat Mountain Range (colluvial and alluvial deposits) and by the movement of waves in the Gulf of Siam (coastal wave-dominated deposits). The colluvial and alluvial deposits closest to the Nakhon Si Thammarat

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[28] See also Coningham (1999-2006) for the Buddhist case.

[29] As mentioned previously, this inscription is also date by Assavavirulhakarn and Skilling to 8th to 9th centuries based on paleography (2006-2007:17).

Range were formed in the Pleistocene epoch (2,588,000-11,700 years BP). This area has been fertile and suitable for rice cultivation and orchards. The coastal wave-dominated deposits were marked by the formation of the beach ridges during the maximum transgression of the sea water in the years 6,000-8,000 BP. After that, the sea started to regress and formed new sandy beach ridges running parallel to the older one in the north-south direction (Suphawajruksakul 2005:19-23).

The waves moved northward along the east coast of Peninsular Siam, carrying sands and forming the coastal land east of the oldest beach ridge (Midas Consultants LTD 1996:1). The evidence of this can still be seen at the geomorphology of the Talumpuk Spit in Pak Phanang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province and the Ta Chi Spit in Pattani Province. These ancient beach ridges are a very important geographical feature in the settlement pattern in this area. They were the high grounds on the coast, which would not normally be flooded in the rainy seasons, and also served as highways for communication along the coast.

There are two prominent ancient beach ridges in coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat running in the north-south direction (Suphawajruksakul 2005:26) (Map 2.1). They are 2 to 5 meters high and 1 to 5 kilometers wide. However, these two beach ridges are almost joined and form a bident shape with the long handle descending from north to south and the two prongs breaking away from but still running parallel to one another.

The ridge on the west is older than the east. It was the shoreline around 6,000 years ago and is still very close to the present shoreline in the northern portion of the heartland from the estuary of the Tha Sung River northward. It runs from the northern end of our heartland at the Phlai Dam Mountain in Sichon District to the Cha-Uat River in Cha-Uat District. It is approximately 120 km. in length. The Cha-Uat River seems to be a remnant of the massive ancestral river that ended this beach ridge and helped create the large, fertile flood plain or the old tidal flat east of the beach ridge, so-called the Pak Phanang River Basin (Suphawajruksakul 2005:35). The widest distance from the present shoreline is about 40 km. at Cha-Uat District. This is "the western beach ridge" referred to in this study.

The second beach ridge was younger than the western beach ridge. It was a long submarine barrier when the western beach ridge was the shoreline but when the sea water regressed sometime after 6,000 years ago, it emerged and became a new shoreline (Suphawajruksakul 2005:35). It runs from the delta of the Tha Sung River to the Cha-Uat River (or the Karaket River as it is called in that area) in Chian Yai District and it is around 65 km. in length. The longest distance from the present shoreline is about 30 km. at Chian Yai District. The distance between this beach ridge to the western one ranges from 1 to 10

km. They are closer to each other in the north and then move away from each another as they descend southward. This will be referred to as "the eastern beach ridge."

This eastern beach ridge was important in the establishment of the Kingdoms of Tambralinga and Nakhon Si Thammarat. In the 13th century, it was called Had Sai Kaeo or the Crystal Sand Beach, a sacred place on which Nakhon Si Thammarat City was founded. It was where a Buddha relic was buried, according to the Chronicle of Nakhon Si Thammarat City, and where the Great Reliquary or the stupa of Wat Mahathat was constructed.

The coastal plains of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province are well watered. It rains here nine months a year from May to January under the influences of monsoon winds. The average rainfall is 1922 ml. per year. It is virtually one of the wettest areas in Thailand and only barely experiences a dry season.

The Nakhon Si Thammarat Mountain Range, or Khao Luang, is a high and thick mountain range, representing the backbone of Peninsular Siam. Its peak, Yot Khao Luang, is 1,835 m. above sea level, the highest mountain peak in the isthmian tract. This was probably used as a prominent landmark for maritime navigation to Tambralinga. The Nakhon Si Thammarat Range acts as a massive wall ensuring that the moisture carried by the northeast monsoon will become the rains that feed the coastal plains of Nakhon Si Thammarat. A number of short rivers flow from this range to the coastal plains and the Gulf of Siam, leaving fertile alluvial deposits on the flat plain before cutting across the beach ridge to the sea. In the rainy season, the rain and the rivers would flood the area behind the beach ridge which acts as a natural dam containing water inside before letting it go to the sea. Although this flood is usually very short-term because there are many rivers channeling water to the sea, it leaves sufficient alluvial deposits on the coastal plains. This geographical characteristic is perfectly supportive of wet rice agriculture.

Tambralinga's Living Landscape

Looking from the sea to the heartland of Tambralinga, the prominent body of the Nakhon Si Thammarat Mountain Range is like a massive curtain behind the flat stage of the coastal plains where most of the activities of the kingdom took place. When viewed from the sky, this mountain range is the ultimate source of countless rivers flowing through the coastal plains to the sea. The mountain range, the coastal plains, and the rivers all seem to take part in the geographical unification of the heartland; however, there is nothing more prominent in this regard than the beach ridges that cut across all clusters of communities from the northern to the southern ends of the heartland. It could be argued that Tambralinga was virtually a

beach ridge society, a society that had the beach ridge as the core of its landscape and communication (Figure 4.1-4.3).

Beach ridge societies are different from riverine societies, such as Chao Phraya or Lower Mekong Basins, where large rivers dominate the landscape. Clusters of communities in these areas grew up around rivers and used them to communicate with other clusters. The rivers cut across the landscape and linked the clusters together. In the Angkor Borei area, close to the Mekong Delta where the current author took part in an archaeological survey supervised by Professor Miriam Stark in 2003, people dug canals, instead of building roads, to facilitate communication and transportation of goods and people between communities that were like islands floating on the marshes of rice fields. One canal bed is dated by OSL and radiocarbon dating to between the first millennium BC and the middle of the first millennium AD (Bishop et al. 2003:319). This area seems to have created the most extensive canal network in Southeast Asia. However, this is not the case for beach ridge societies that have commonly been found on the east coast of Peninsular Siam, such as those around the Bay of Pattani, Sating Phra, and coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat.

River routes were crucial in transportation and communication. However, on a large scale, the rivers could not provide channels of communication between communities because these rivers were too short and ran mainly from east to west, while the clusters were situated in different river systems (see Map 2.1 and Map 3.1). Therefore, there were no riverine links between communities that were situated far away from one another in the north-south axis. In this situation, the beach ridge of coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat became vital. It became the highway of communication. It was the only geographical feature on which people could actually walk or on which ox carts could travel from north to south along the heartland. According to old villagers in Nakhon Si Thammarat today, the beach ridge had been a walking route until recently when the government decided to build a superhighway on top of it. As a superhighway, it still maintains its significance at the core of transportation in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.

Although I was born and raised in coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat, the former heartland of the Tambralinga Kingdom, and have good understanding of the cultural geography in this area, my intimate knowledge of it extends back only a few decades. Therefore, I conducted ethnographic interviews and participatory observations to understand the area's cultural geography in the previous two or three generations. To achieve this, I interviewed old villagers, usually in their 70's and 80's, in this area and asked them to recall the formative period of their lives and how their parents and grandparents did things in the

past. While there is no illusion that contemporary practices necessarily reflect ancient patterns, there is nevertheless something perennial about a world of small-scale agriculture, dependent on human and animal energy, in which wood and fiber provide housing, and that is knit together spatially – only recently by road and rail – but, even now, by rivers, small boats and foot trails. It is the familiar rhythms, style, and patterns of life that have arisen from the possibilities offered by the same landscape.

The beach ridges were the core of Tambralinga's heartland, but it was not the only ecological zone in this area. Communities in the heartland spread out to occupy diverse ecological niches from the shores to the mountains. This ecological diversification may have been the strength of Tambralinga, like it is today, in which its communities were able to support and complement one another in terms of resources and geographical advantages. Three large-scale ecological zones in the heartland from east to west include the seashores, floodplains, and mountains.

The seashores, including the breach ridges and estuaries, were an important area of human habitation at least since the Neolithic Period. Three bronze drums were found in this area. Even today, the communities in this area are involved with fishing and maritime trading. They provide important marine and coastal products, such as shrimp paste, dried fish, and salt, to the inland communities.

The floodplains behind the western beach ridge which was formed mainly by the alluvial deposits were suitable for rice cultivation. This ecozone was extensively inhabited by people in the Tambralinga Period (c. the 5th to 11th century). Only one site in this area has been identified as an Iron Age site but there were more than 70 sites here in the Tambralinga Period. The enormous increase of sites suggests the expansions of population into the floodplains, most probably, to grow rice. Today, in the rainy season, the communities in this area are practically floating on rice fields. They are the main provider of rice and cattle for communities in other ecozones.

The foothill and mountain areas have been sparsely populated and very few sites dating from the Iron Age and Tambralinga Period have been found here. However, they were the source of forest products and minerals, especially tin, that were valued so highly by foreign merchants. Until recently, these products were collected by villagers and sought after by both local and foreign traders. There are also mountain passes, through which people in the heartland could connect to the areas on the west coast of the isthmian tract.

A few decades ago, villagers used rivers and foot trails to distribute the resources and products from their ecozones. A sense of neighborliness and complementarity in the

economic exchanges was strong. The economic relationship could be described as brotherly based on trust, in which there was not fixed prices for goods in the transactions. The cattle from the rice plains also can be left safely with acquaintances of the foothills during the rainy season. The flow of daily life sets the social connectivities between the seashores and the mountains in motion.

Tambralinga's Religious Landscape

In the Tambralinga Period (c. 5th to c. 11th centuries CE), several religions, including Saivism, Vaisanavism, and Buddhism, coexisted in the landscape of Tambralinga's heartland. The Inscription No. 27 from Wat Maheyong in Nakhon Si Thammarat City, written in Sanskrit with Pallava scripts dated to the 7th century, describes the juxtaposition of brahmanical and Buddhist signifiers, the joint participation in rituals in the same space, and the donations of buildings and materials to Buddhist monks (both as a community and individually), and of food to the community of the twice-born, the Brahmins, of Agastya (Skilling 2007)[30]. This inscription is, perhaps, the earliest record of the joint ritual between Hinduism and Buddhism in Siam, where religions were not considered as solid, pure discourses but rather alternative ritual systems (Skilling 2007), in which people could perform any ritual at any temple, Hindu and Buddhist, to serve their purposes. Kings in Siam, and perhaps in Southeast Asia in general, have associated themselves with various deities including the Buddha and it is possible to describe the polities in this region as ritual states since ritual has been a product and an expression of power and played an important role in state economies and diplomacy (Skilling 2007). To perceive religions as alternative ritual systems allows us to understand the hybridism of rituals, the term coined by Skilling (2007), to suggest the fluidity and hybrid nature of ritual practices between different religions. This hybridism of rituals of different religions in early Tambralinga was clear in this inscription. Although this early inscription does not mention Vaisanavism, it is still possible that the worship of Visnu was part of the ritual performed in Tambralinga as well since a number of Visnu statues have been found in the area of this kingdom.

The Wat Maheyong inscription records that the Brahmins in the joint rituals belongs to Agastya, a historical brahmanical saint who spread Saivism to South India. He later

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[30] An English translation of this inscription is found in Wales (1976:34) as he gives a full English rendering of Barth's original French translation.

became deified as a form of Siva. His statue has been depicted as a bearded, pot-bellied guru who preached the world. Agastya was one of the most revered figures in Saivism and, therefore, the fact that the Brahmins in the inscription belonged to him would suggest the significance of Saivism in Tambralinga in the 7th century. The preeminence of Saivism from the 7th century is also suggested in other inscriptions, including the Chong Koi Valley and Wat Mahathat inscriptions, and in the archaeological record related to Saivism. The Wat Maheyong inscription also seems to imply that the rituals were supported by a powerful, wealthy man called Arnaya, who might be the ruler of Tambralinga at that time. The 7th century was, therefore, the transition to not only the prominence of Saivism but also powerful kingship in Tambralinga.

The Saivite rituals and imaginations were probably invoked by the remarkable Tambralingan landscape. The jagged peaks of the Nakhon Si Thammarat Mountain Range which pierced through the clouds into the heavenly realm must have reminded the Hindu people of their sacred Mount Sumeru or Siva Linga, the center of the universe. The rivers that descended from the enormous, immeasurable mountain and the green rain forest of the unknown power must have invoked the image of the Goddess Ganga flowing down the hair of majestic Siva to enrich the earth and to cleanse the souls of all beings. This is the landscape that people saw, walked on, and lived with everyday. It was part of their living experience. Landscape was not only their physical area but also their imagined space; it is a cultural construct and has an ephemeral nature that changes from one generation to the next. People had to make sense of their landscape all the time and they did so by using their belief systems linked to myth and spirituality in their minds. Both ancestral and religious powers were invoked as people attempted to explain their landscapes. In our case, the landscape of Tambralinga was remarkable in itself that it invoked imaginations of people who lived in it through time, and with no exception, the Saivite people exercised their imaginations on it as well; one of them was the belief of Ganga, one of the most powerful myths in Saivism.

The Ganga

The Goddess Ganga is a daughter of Himalaya and a wife of Siva. She is the goddess of water, and is an actual river in north India. She was originally a divine river streaming across the heavens but she agreed to descend from heaven to earth, due to the long-term asceticism and prayers of the sage-king Bhagiratha, to raise the dead ancestors of the Ikshvaku line of kings. To prevent her enormous force from destroying the earth, Ganga first fell upon the hair of Lord Siva, and then flowed through the Himalayas and across the plains

of north India. The River Ganga (or Ganges) emerged from beneath a glacier in the Uttar Khand area in the Himalayas, at the place called Gomukh or the Cow's Mouth (Eck 1998:174, 178). One of the most famous representations of the myth of the Descent of Ganga is a relief at Mamallapuram in Tamil Nadu, south India, dated to around the early to mid- 7th century in the Pallava Period (Huntington 1999:303). There, her descent was celebrated by a massive group of animals and all beings remarkably carved onto a natural cliff.

The belief of Ganga was reflected in Inscription No. 29 from Wat Mahathat, dated to around the 9th century according to Coedès (1961:21-40, 59-60) (Figure 4.6). This inscription is fragmentary but some information can still be gained. It appears to mention Brahmins and the order of Dharmasenapati that anyone who harmed Ganga and red cows would be executed. It gives the impression of puting protection on mothers as well. This inscription, therefore, seems to be a law edict, not just a public announcement or record of royal activities, and Dharmasenapati may be translated as the Minister of Law. The three things that this law appears to protect include Ganga, red cows, and mothers. All of them have something in common: life-giving quality. They can give birth and enrich the earth. In this sense, Ganga represented waters, whether they were in rivers or ponds, which fed the land, were used in rituals, and practically gave life to all beings. The harming of Ganga probably means the polluting of waters and that needs to be prohibited to protect her purity and eventually the health of people who were feeding on her. This law may be to prevent illness and epidemics in the kingdom as well since dangerous diseases in the premodern period, like Cholera, were caused and spread through dirty water. The red cows were commonly protected in Hindu tradition as they gave dairy products importance for the Hindu way of life. The mothers were respected in any society. Interestingly, both red cows and mothers can be tied to Ganga who was Mother River emerging from the Cow's Mouth. She seems to be the symbolic center of the message and represented the life-giving entity in the land.

The association between rivers, mothers, and cows is ancient in the Hindu tradition. In the Vedic imagination, the heavenly streams which fall to become the rivers on earth were the stream of Soma, the nourishing, intoxicating drink of the gods, pressed through the filter of heaven. The pressed Soma was likened to the swift flowing Sindhu, running both with water and with milk and in some hymns, the divine rivers were replaced with the "mother cows", yielding divine milk, who are released from the heavenly pen by Indra. The River Ganga too was later included as one of the seven "mother-rivers" and was said to flow with milk and with amrta, the nectar of immortality (Eck 1981:324-327).

The presence of Ganga in the inscription suggests that people in Tambralinga elaborately made sense of their landscape through Hindu myths as they adopted Hinduism. It is likely that the local tales, supernatural powers and culture heroes that existed before the arrival of Hinduism were included into and veneered by the Hindu mythic and epic themes. The Hindu myths had broader social power as they linked a community to a much wider Hindu World, the same way that the belief of Visnu transcended the villages' boundaries better than one particular ancestral boulder. In India, the great myths of the Hindu tradition took "place" in the landscape for thousands of years, in which all the small geographical details of such place were woven together with myths and tied with other storied places. Undoubtedly, the Ganga in Tambralinga was symbolically linked to the Ganga in north India and other countless Gangas throughout India in the stories told by Brahmins and Hindu people in Tambralinga. The river(s) in Tambralinga was, therefore, not just a river(s) anymore but the grand Ganga that flowed from heaven and purified life in every corner of the earth. A river became an omnipresent goddess whose stories were so divine and charming, opening the minds of the listeners to a greater world of imaginations. In Eck's words, "just as myth is linked to the land, so the land is alive with mythic meanings and stories" (1998:169). As the myth of Ganga was remarkably retold in Mamallapuram and in other places in India, it was as alive in Tambralinga suggested in the inscription.

The Tirthas

The rivers in the heartland of Tambralinga were dotted with shrines, as the Ganga was full of ghats along her courses for cleansing the body and purifying the soul in north India. These shrines were not only places for worship but also sanctuaries for spiritual salvations (Figure 4.7). In Hinduism, these shrines are included under the term "tirthas", the places at which the crossing to the other realms can be safely made.

One of the oldest strands of the Hindu tradition is perhaps called the locative strand of Hindu piety, which involves ritual and reverence linked primarily to place. The place is the fundamental locus of devotion, and its traditions of ritual and pilgrimage usually went back much further in time than any of the particular myths and deities attaching to it. These sacred places can be hilltops and rock outcroppings, the headwaters and confluences of rivers, the pools and groves of the forests, and the boundaries of towns and villages. These places are often called tirthas, especially those associated with waters, and pilgrimage to these tirthas is one of the oldest and still one of the most prominent features in the Hindu tradition (Eck 1981:323).

Although the concept of tirtha is inseparable from the Hindu tradition to the point that every Hindu community must believe in this concept, there are also at least three specific reasons to assume that the concept of tirtha firmly existed in Tambralinga. First, this concept was based on the locative form of religiousness that had a deep root back in the non-Hindu tradition of *genii loci* where *yaksas, nagas, ganas, matrikas* existed (Eck 1981:334), so this locative cult was likely to have existed in coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat, and other areas in Southeast Asia, prior to the arrival of Hinduism and provided the cultural platform for the Hindu concept of tirtha to successfully establish itself as it did in India as well. Second, the concept of tirtha was closely linked to sacred rivers matching with the reference of the sacred Ganga in Inscription No. 29 from Wat Mahathat from the Tambralinga Period. Third, the vibrancy of the concept of tirtha depended on pilgrimage, the ritual practice that was implied in the Chong Koi Valley inscriptions.

In the village level where the locative cult had long existed in relation to ancestral spirits, the worship of the tirthas was likely oriented not only around the universal Hindu gods which were focused by the royal court, but also around local deities and ancestral heroes that were syncretized with these gods. Most of the places of tirthas were probably sacred in the indigenous belief already. The forest is still now believed by the local people to be the sacred place of *chao pa* (the lord of the forest); the mountain has *chao khao* (the lord of the mountain) while headwater has *phi ton nam* (the spirit of headwater), for example. The names of the lords of sacred places change from place to place but the concept is the same— they are the ancestral spirits who protect the places. These indigenous sacred places were syncretized with Hindu gods later on. Local rivers became Ganga, outcroppings Siva, and headwaters the place where all Hindu gods descended, for instance. With the indigenous foundation of locative-ancestral cults, the belief of tirtha became influential in Tambralinga. However, it is not possible to assume that all the tirthas (including shrines) in the early Tambralinga period were established only at the preexisting indigenous sacred places. There were probably numerous tirthas that were newly founded according to the Hindu beliefs in this period.

The word tirtha is from the Sanskrit verb *tṛ/tarati*, meaning "to cross over." The noun means a ford, as well as any watering or bathing place, and sometimes means a path or passage more generally. Tirtha, with its many associations, is a word of "passage", related to the path one travels, not the goal, and is closely linked to waters and rivers. The root of this word belongs to the Indo-European language family, and in English the prefix "trans" is

evident in transition, transform, transport, and transcend which all carry the meaning of passage (Eck 1981:325).

Tirtha is the word of passage and crossing closely related to the river which is an ancient and complex cultural symbol in India, the birth place of Sanskrit and the Hindu tradition. Crossing massive rivers in India, especially in the flooding seasons, has proved a great challenge since the ancient times. The river, therefore, symbolizes the vast obstructing space and, at the same time, the passageway between oneself and one's goal, between one side of the river bank and the other side, between heaven and earth, and between this life and the end of *samsara*. The Ganga, for example, fell from heaven to earth and was called the flowing ladder to heaven (Eck 1981:325). Tirtha, therefore, has different levels of meanings. On the one hand, it can simply mean a ford that a journey to cross the river with a ferry can be safely made, or a riverside bathing and watering place where one can find good, clean water. On the other hand, it is a place where one launches out on the journey between heaven and earth; it is a threshold of time, or space, or ritual. It can also be a holy person through whom many can cross over to the higher spiritual world, the entire sacrifice through which the things in this world were sent to gods in heaven, or the whole city such as the cycle of the seven *moksa*-giving cities in India (Eck 1981:328, 335).

In the spiritual sense, a place of tirtha does not have to only be on the riverside. It can be any place in the sacred geography where both the descending from and ascending to heaven are possible. It is the meeting place between gods and humans. Interestingly, in the Hindu tradition, the gods are the ones who most frequently make the crossing from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven. The word *avatāra*, or the divine descent, shares the same root with *tṝ* meaning to "cross downward." Although Visnu is well known for his descents, other gods often cross downward to earth as well and, in fact, Rudra (a form of Siva) frequently crossed back and forth and became the lord of the tirthas in the later tradition (Eck 1981:330).

One of the powerful languages that contributed to the symbolic grammars of sanctification of a landscape was of the divine as self-manifest. In India, countless places and images in which the divine is said to have appeared miraculously or naturally without human intervention or supplication are called *svayambhu* meaning self-existent. This self-manifest divinity creates a powerful notion that agency in establishing the presence of the divine is not human or kingly, but divine. The gods chose to emerge in this very place, the people might say, as these natural manifestations were commonly related to the spontaneous eruptions of the divine. This divine eruption remarkably linked landscape and gods together as the myth

of *jyotirlinga*, the linga of light, which erupted from below and spanned the earth, the sky and the heavens above, were identified with many of India's most powerful Siva lingas throughout the country (Eck 1998:182-183).

The belief of *svayambhu* is evident at Khao Kha, the most remarkable mountain-shrine in Tambralinga (Figure 5.4). Two prominent natural outcroppings of rock on the ridge of this hill were clearly carved and modified into enormous Siva lingas (Figure 5.22). One may assume that these self-manifest lingas were linked to the popular myth of *jyotirling* in the Hindu tradition, in which the linga of fire just erupted from the earth and pierced through the sky as the outcroppings emerged from the top of the hill without any help from humans. Here at Khao Kha, Siva chose this sacred place and the belief of the self-manifest divinity was remarkably told.

It can be said that all shrines are tirthas but not all tirthas are shrines. Tirthas can be found in a variety of locations as aforementioned since the concept of tirtha itself is rooted in the primitive locative cult. In the heartland, the location of the majority of shrines on the riverside suggests not only that they were the areas where people lived but also they had meaning in the Hindu tradition as tirthas, the spiritual fords where crossings to the other realms may be made. The rivers representing Ganga provided the outstanding reality to this imagination. Some of the shrines on the hilltops, the higher grounds closer to heavenly sky, can be easily imagined as the place where the divine descents would occur.

Another remarkable place where tirthas were situated in Tambralinga is the beach ridge, the land claimed from the sea. In Hindu sacred geography, the sacred land that emerged from the sea is a motif with wide resonance. One of the Hindu myths widespread along the west coast of India is the story of Ganga. After flowing down from heaven and being led by the princely ascetic Bhagiratha across north India to the sea, her waters filled the seas and submerged part of the seacoast. Parushurama, an avatar of Visnu, was asked to help and, according to one of the tales, he stood on the hills of the Western Ghats and drew back his bow. Feared of the great arrow of Parashurama, the sea god Varuna recoiled and agreed to withdraw from the coastlands (Eck 1998:173). This kind of story may have been told in Tambralinga, and the beach ridge may have not only been the highway of the kingdom's communication but also the sacred core of the kingdom's landscape.

It is important to note that in this place-oriented religiousness, the sacredness of the tirthas was not only derived from the preexisting indigenous locative-ancestral cult but also outlived the time in which Hinduism was predominant in Tambralinga. The places of these tirthas, especially Hindu shrines that were deserted, were often superseded by later Buddhist

monasteries and sometimes Islamic mosques, the sacred places in Buddhism and Islam respectively. The sacredness of the places were memorized and passed on over time regardless of the belief systems or religions in which people of each period believed. However, the process of memorization was not consciously carried out since people today do not usually realize that their Buddhist temples or Islamic mosques were situated literally on top of Hindu shrines although they have noticed that the remnants of ancient past existed in these places. They just believe that these places have unexplainable power and have to be respected. The memory of the sacred place survives until today in coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat.

The Pilgrimage

The heartland of Tambralinga was full of tirthas grown from the seeds of the native locative cult of the pre-Hindu times. These tirthas were woven together by myths of the Hindu tradition and probably stories in the indigenous tradition as well, as *tamnan* or tales of specific places are still told and retold in the oral tradition in Thailand. These tales had enriched the experience of life lived in the landscape and become the behavioral guidelines for living together in the society as they commonly provided the examples of the ancestral spirits punishing those who broke the social rules or misused the community's resources. They defined the way humans interacted to the natural environment, to the society, and to the supernatural world (Vallibhotama 2008:10). However, the tirthas could not be woven by myths and tales alone, and to fully understand the kingdom's sacred landscape that tied each tirtha together, one needed to walk, to engage oneself in pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage was the ritual journey to tirthas. It is sometimes called *tīrthayātra* (Eck 1981:334). It created the physical connections between these sacred places and the people. To bodily present in the place where gods and goddesses, heroes and heroines, and sages had appeared, lived, and done glorious things is to absorb their energies and to be filled with confidence to live on. It must have been the divine moment to be able to breathe in the same air the goddesses did, to walk on the very stone touched by the heroes, or to see the holy embodiment of the elegant gods in real life. The myths that they had been told all their lives became materialized and real at this very moment. All these small things must have meant spiritual salvation to the people in the traditional world.

The physical journeys from one tirtha to another created the mental map of the whole sacred landscape. The Hindu symbolic landscape is characterized by its polycentricity, pluralism, and duplication (Eck 1998:165). Therefore, this landscape is full with tirthas

imbued with myths that echoed one another. There is not one Ganga but hundreds both in north and south India and even in Tambralinga, for instance. In India, there have always been a collection of sacred rivers, mountains, and cities situated in each corner of the land. This symbolic landscape requires pilgrimage around it to physically define (and redefine) the land. Bharata has been built this way long before the nationhood of India (Eck 1998:169).

The pilgrims have taken incredibly long journeys to come with their vows and petitions, seeking the sight (*dasana*) and the token of material blessings (*prasada*) of the deity of the place (Eck 1981:334). They came to a tirtha to see and to be seen by gods. The tirthas and its statues had energies so powerful that they pulled pilgrims from all around to commit themselves in the spiritual quests for salvation. However, it may have to be noted that not all tirthas had the same level of religio-social significance, unlike an equal dot in the map for each of them. Large site like Khao Kha with two *svayambhuva-lingas* must have had more religio-social significance than a small shrine nearby. The pilgrims in Tambralinga probably did not have to visit all tirthas. They just had to visit some important ones. An important site certainly was the Chong Koi Valley which had inscriptions pertaining to pilgrimage.

At the Chong Koi Valley in midst the forest on the bed of a waterfall, a group of three inscriptions, of c. 8th century, were found *in situ* close to one another on the same large natural boulder (Figure 4.8). They read[31]:

Inscription I: Of the Glorious Vidyadhikara.

Inscription II: Homage to him to the Lord of the Forests!

Homage to him, to the Lord of the Gods!

They have come to the forest with purpose,

In this place you should think: "(Something) should be offered (by you) to them."

Inscription III: In whose dwelling-places there are good people

If they are pleased, their work will be accomplished.

Assavavirulhakarn and Skilling (2006-2007:16-17) proposes that *vidyadhikara* was an administrative position and, in Inscription II, that the people have come to the glorious forest in search of benefits. For the last line of Inscription II, they are not certain, however, that it

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[31] This translation is offered by Prapod Assavavirulhakarn and Peter Skilling (2006-2007:16).

means: you (the people who have come) should think that you should make an offering to these (gods) or you (the gods who have come) should think that something (a favor/blessing) should be given to these (people). In Inscription III, they also do not know who the "good people" (manuja-vara) are or where their "dwelling places" were.

The problems of the interpretations of the inscriptions seem to be the question of who the audiences of the messages were. Were they gods or men? It is clear, however, that the people had come to the forest in search of benefits which probably were the divine sight, blessing, and material gains. This message evidently refers to the practice of pilgrimage in which people came to the forest, which had no communities around, to meet with the gods at the place where the crossing between two worlds was possible, the tirtha. Reflected from the inscriptions, pilgrimage created spiritual connections between heaven and earth, between gods and people, between people and places, and between people and people, and it also formulated or reaffirmed the social ties between communities that came together to make offerings to gods.

In Tambralinga, by walking or paddling from one tirtha to the next, one was physically weaving the small threads of tirthas into the large textile of sacred landscape. The pilgrimage created a sense of unity, of oneness, of belonging, among the communities which lived in the same sacred landscape. In India, both Vaisanavites and Saivites seem to practice pilgrimage which linked them together. They visit some of the same tirthas, share sacred space, and use similar religious discourses as they both share the Hindu tradition. Pilgrimage brings them together in India, and perhaps the same thing was true in Tambralinga as well, which probably helped tied them together socially and spiritually in the kingdom and facilitate the change to Saivism for the Vaisanavite communities. The Kingdom of Tambralinga seems to be built and sustained by the footsteps of each pilgrim who walked on their ritual journeys, following the vibrant resonance the Hindu myths and tales, for their spiritual salvations the same way Bharata was created. This spiritual connection facilitated all the operations, both political and economic, of the kingdom. It was the foundation, the shared spirituality, of the kingdom.

Tambralinga's Political Landscape

The Concept of Political Landscape

Adam Smith (2003) proposes that the study of political landscape is a conceptual platform for the examination of the spatial constitution of civil authority which needs to create landscapes for political purposes. He focuses on the working of polities through

landscape as spaces produced, reproduced, and razed over time. The creation and preservation of political authority is a profoundly spatial problem. Kings needed to build and demonstrate their power, creativity, and devotion through spaces. A landscape simultaneously constituted and was itself constituted by, the political authority. Politics operated through landscape and the built landscape was an important instrument for establishing physical, expressive, and imagined political relationships.

In early Southeast Asia and the preindustrial world in general, the political landscape was closely related to the religious landscape as political affairs, such as political organization, orientation, and operation, were inseparable from religion. As belief systems, including religions, were the framework to understand the world and the relationships between oneself and the society, the natural environment, and the supernatural power (Vallibhotama 2008: 10), the political relationships among members in the society had to be imagined in this framework as well. To understand the political landscape in which the political power and relationships were materialized and maintained, one needs to comprehend, therefore, how the religious concepts changed in the society and how they were used to serve the political purposes through time.

The Politics of Saivism and Vaisanavism

During around the 5th to 7th centuries, the heartland of Tambralinga had both Vaisanavism and Saivism. While there were Vaisanavite communities in both the northern and southern groups, in which the boundary between them seems to be approximately at the Klai River (see Figure 4.3), those in the southern groups were more prominent compared to the Saivite communities in the same area. Then after the 7th century, Vaisanavism seemed to fade away and Saivism seemed to expand probably from the northern group in the heartland. Although it is still unclear what happened, the current author would like to offer a possible explanation to this phenomenon.

The fall of the Vaisanavism in the 8th century can be observed throughout maritime Southeast Asia, especially in West Java and Cambodia. Dalsheimer and Manguin (1998) proposed that the trade network among the Vaisanavite communities in the Maritime Southeast Asia, suggested by the pan-regional style of early Visnu images, was broken in the 8th century due to the emergence of new powers in Southeast Asia. In the Sunda Strait between South Sumatra and West Java, a new maritime kingdom named Srivijaya, which was based in South Sumatra and which privileged Mahayana Buddhism, became more powerful

and attacked the old Vaisanavite polities in Kota Kapur and West Java, and it seemed to successfully break up the Vaisanavite trade network in the 8th century.

In Cambodia, according to Lavy (2003), both the worship of Siva and Visnu coexisted in the northern and the southern areas. However, the rulers of the kingdom in northern Cambodia, namely Isanapura centered at Sambor Prei Kuk, and its predecessors of the so-called Dangrek chieftains, linked their style of rule to Siva and mostly erected lingas and inscriptions related to them, while the rulers in the Mekong Valley of present-day southern Cambodia and Vietnam, the center of the polity called Funan by the Chinese, primarily identified themselves with Visnu and created one of the most remarkable group of Visnu images. The creations of Siva lingas and Visnu images and the inscriptions related to them, in the north and south respectively, can be dated to around the same time since the 5th century. Lavy proposes that the popularities of Siva in the north and Visnu in the south were linked to patterns of political authority, or styles of rule, in which the Khmer ruling elite, and the Southeast Asian ruling elite in general, utilized images of the gods with the political considerations in mind (Lavy 2003: 22). Although Lavy does not clearly explain how the "two very different conceptions of sovereignty" (2003: 37) are different, he seems to imply that Visnu was more related to water management and Siva to soil and old territorial rituals, and that Visnu was depicted in Khmer art as a world sovereign or *cakravartin* whereas Siva was associated to the asceticism to which the Khmer kings devoted (2003: 33-36). Whatever the case may be, he mentions that Siva and Visnu embodied characteristics that were integral to the Khmer concept of sovereignty.

Under Isanavarman I (c. 616-37), his kingdom of Isanapura became a dominant regional power and expressed the territorial aspirations to expand to the south to control some of the ports of Funan. It was also during the period of Isanavarman I and his immediate successors, Bhavavarman II and Jayavarman I, that the first images of and epigraphic evidence related to Harihara appeared. Lavy (2003:38) proposes that the rise to power of the north and the creations of symbolism of Harihara, a composite deity between Siva and Visnu in the anthropomorphic form originated in India, were not a coincidence. The sudden interest in Harihara throughout Cambodia during the middle of the seventh century corresponded to the territorial aspirations of the rulers in the north, who were the followers of Siva, to control the south, whose rulers were followers of Visnu. Therefore, the Harihara images were originally created by the strong northern rulers to serve as "a visual expression of the integration of varying regional styles of rule rooted in the symbolism and power of Siva and Visnu" (Lavy 2003:39).

In Tambralinga, the vanishing of Vaisanavism seemed to be related to the decline of the polities, in which Vaisanavism used to prevailed, in maritime Southeast Asia[32]. As these polities in West Java and the Mekong Valley were tremendously weakened, the network of Vaisanavite communities was broken, and this socio-political phenomenon directly affected the vibrancy of Vaisanavite communities in Tambralinga. Furthermore, the transition to the Siva-oriented kingship and religiousness in the Mekong Valley seemed to influence the preeminence of Saivism in Tambralinga as well since both areas had always been very closely linked to each other in terms of socio-political and economic development (W. Noonsuk 2013: 89-95, 179; O'Connor 1986). They were practically sharing the same world and changes in one area inevitably affected the others.

Saivism and the Kingdom

The preeminence of Saivism in the Tambralinga Period (c. 5th to c. 11th centuries) was demonstrated in the archaeological record. The number of lingas and yonis (Figures 4.9-4.10 and 4) found in Tambralinga far exceeded that of Visnu images. There are approximately 26 lingas, 30 yonis, and 9 Visnu images found in this area. Although yonis or ablution basins may be used as the bases for lingas, the images of other gods (including Visnu), or even the Buddha images in some later cases, in this early period they were mostly found in association with lingas and, therefore, may have represented the female counterpart of Siva in Saivism. However, only a few lingas can be dated to the 5th century, suggesting that at that time, Saivism may not be prominent over Vaisanavism. Because lingas and yonis are difficult to date, it is difficult to pinpoint when Saivism became preeminent in the kingdom from the archaeological record but the epigraphic record seems to suggest the 8th century. It is possible, therefore, that a large number of lingas and yonis in the corpus were created from the 8th century onwards with support from the emergent Siva-oriented administration.

The 8th century saw not only the preeminence of Saivism but the emergence of strong political organization of the kingdom in the heartland. Most epigraphic evidence related to

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[32] It has to be noted again that in Southeast Asia, all religions seemed to be present in all the kingdoms. They coexisted although one of them may be preferred by the court over all others in a certain period of time. In the Mekong Delta, for example, Saivism also existed prior to the 7th century as Siva lingas were numerous and the name of a powerful king there was even Rudravarman (c. 514-39) for Rudra was a name of Siva (see Lavy 2003:28).

Saivism and the affairs of the kingdom appeared from this period. They are dated by paleography and include as follows:

Inscription No. 27 from Wat Maheyong from c. the 7th century mentions the donations to Brahmins of Agastya, a sage and god in Saivism, possibly by a powerful man named Arnaya. The Chong Koi Valley Inscriptions of c. 8th century records the offerings made to the Lord of the Forests and of the Gods, probably referring to Siva as he is well-known as a great ascetic wandering in the forest and the Lord of all gods in Saivism. The site and the act of offerings were related to *vidyadhikara*, the term composed of *vidya* meaning "knowledge" and of *adhikara* meaning "officer, governor, and director" among other meanings related to directing (Assavavirulhakarn and Skilling 2006-2007:16). It seems, therefore, to be an administrative position, possibly referred to the Minister of Education or the officer in charge of the rituals, which certainly required knowledge. Inscription No. 28 from Wat Mahathat, dated by Coedès to the 5th to 6th centuries and by Assavavirulhakarn and Skilling to the 8th to 9th centuries, possibly states the name of a ruler named *Tamayyalangesvarah* (Assavavirulhakarn and Skilling 2006-2007:19-21) since the name ends with *isvara* meaning lord or Siva himself. Finally, Inscription No. 29 from Wat Mahathat of c. 9th century states the law that protected Ganga, a wife of Siva and a significant goddess in Saivism, among other things by *Dharmasenapati*, possibly the Minister of Law, while the other side of the inscription mentioned the name "Tambralinga" (Veeraprajak 1986:20).

Therefore, Saivism seemed to be closely related to the kingship and the administrative organization of the kingdom from the 8th century onward based on the epigraphic evidence, and this may have caused the overwhelming number of lingas and yonis found throughout Tambralinga. As mentioned previously, the Kingdom of Tambralinga was probably taking shape prior to the 8th century and Saivism flourished before this time as well. However, the 8th century seemed to be a significant turning point in Tambralinga's history. It seemed to be the transition to a strong administration which promoted Saivism and had Saivism as the core of its operations. The king seemed to identify himself with Siva as Inscription No. 28 suggested. He would have had the status of a god-king who transcended the human condition and acted as the head of the kingdom which in itself represented the sacred landscape of the heaven with Mount Sumeru and Ganga. His personal preference to Siva may have become a new tradition that kingship and kingdom's affairs became more attached to Saivism.

The Sanskrit Inscriptions of the Chong Khoi Valley of c. 8th century also suggest that Tambralinga was part of the formation and network of the "Sanskrit Cosmopolis" which Sheldon Pollock remarkably describes as follows:

"For a millennium, and across half of the world, elites participated in a peculiar supralocal ecumene. This was a form of shared life very different from that produced by common subjecthood or fealty to a central power, even by shared religious liturgy or credo. It was instead a symbolic network created in the first instance by the presence of a similar kind of discourse in a similar language deploying a similar idiom and style to make similar kinds of claims about the nature and aesthetics of polity—about kingly virtue and learning; the dharma of rule; the universality of dominion. A network, accordingly, wherein the elite shared "a broadly based communality of outlook," and could perceive "ubiquitous signs of its beliefs"" (1996:230).

This suggests that the elites of Tambralinga shared the similar world of the symbolic network dominated by the use of Sanskrit in the political poetic text across South and Southeast Asia. They continued to be part of the greater world as they had been in the past in a different network such as that of the Vaisnavite tradition.

The 8th century saw not only the possible emergence of god-king but also the organized administration in which at least two administrative positions appeared in the inscription, possibly including the Ministers of Education and Law. This kind of administrative system may have taken place prior to the 8th century as a highly stratified society seemed to develop in coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat long before, but only from the 8th century from the epigraphic evidence. From this date, the Kingdom of Tambralinga seemed to be well-structured with a strong administrative organization. The kingdom's affairs, which were considered sacred and based on Saivite beliefs, were decided by the Siva-king who was the head of the kingdom and his advisors, and then carried out by his officers, some of them appearing in the inscriptions.

It is important to note that these officers put their administrative positions in the inscriptions, not their personal names. In the initial big man society in which the state power was not very centralized and the powerful people would attempt to acquire their prestige through various means, such as donations and construction of temples, and announce their names to the public in the process of completion with other powerful people and families, one would expect to see personal names on the inscriptions. The fact that these officers were virtually faceless since their names were covered by their administrative positions suggests that the power of the kingdom was relatively more centralized to the core of the administrative organization and not spread out so much to the powerful families. However, it

was likely that the competitions among elites and powerful families were always taking place in the history of Tambralinga as they were quite common in other early societies. These competitions were only concealed during a time of strong kingship and highly centralized government. In the case of Tambralinga, the name of a wealthy person called Arnaya who may have represented a powerful family, if not actually the king, was recorded in Inscription No. 27 from the 7th century as he seemed to make a large sum of donations to both Buddhist monks and Saivite Brahmins. This inscription may be evidence for competition for prestige among elites prior to the 8th century before the possible emergence of centralized administration, after which there had been no inscription with personal names or related to competitions among elites again. It is not known if the powerful family of Arnaya who also believed in Saivism in the 7th century took control of the kingdom in the 8th century and made it a Siva-oriented kingdom. Some scholars even think that Arnaya may be the king of Tambralinga (e.g. P. Noonsuk 2001: chapter 3) but with the fragmentary state of the inscription, this still remains as a possibility.

In the heartland of Tambralinga, the old Vaisanavite communities, which were weakened by the decline of the Vaisanavite network and Vaisanavite polities in other areas in maritime Southeast Asia, may have to change their focus from Visnu to Siva to fit into the new vision of the Siva-oriented administration probably based in the northern group. There is no evidence of violence related to this change. Therefore, it may be assumed that the coexistence of Saivism and Vaisanavism, perhaps seen as alternative ritual systems in the framework of religious hybridism prior to the 8th century throughout Tambralinga, and the practice of pilgrimage between their tirthas (sacred sites) may have familiarized them with the other sect and created a sense of fraternity and unity among them (Eck 1981, 1998; P. Noonsuk 2001; Skilling 2007). After all, they were both under the umbrella of the Hindu tradition, and the Vaisanavite shrines seemed to still be used after the 8th century although no new Visnu image was created after this date. The role and meaning of Visnu may have changed from the supreme god in Vaisanavism to the most prominent assistant of Siva in Saivism.

At Na San where Vaisnavism was prosperous before the 8th century as aforementioned, there are two important figures related to Saivism of approximately the same period. They are a stone sculpture of Ganesa (c. 9th or c. 10th century) and a small bronze seated figure of Harihara (c. 9th century) (O'Connor 1982: 61). Ganesa is the most influential son of Siva while Harihara is a composite deity between Siva and Visnu. They seem to suggest, therefore, that the former Vaisnavite communities at Na San possibly started to

embrace the belief related to Siva in the 9th century as there is no image related to Siva prior to this date found in this area. The image of Harihara, which is the only image found in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, may also suggest the attempt to integrate the worship of Visnu with that of Siva after Saivism became prominent in the kingdom in c. 8th century, and it may reflect the persistent memory of Visnu in the area where Vaisnavism used to be an important cultural force.

Although the transition from Vaisnavite to Saivite traditions in some areas in Tambralinga seemed to be related to a similar transition in Cambodia, there is no evidence of the state-supported production program of Harihara images in Tambralinga, unlike that in Cambodia (Lavy 2003), suggesting a different nature of society and approach of the ruling class. There may be no need to create a large-scale symbolism to facilitate the unification of the two sects in Tambralinga as the Vaisanavite groups in Tambralinga seemed to be communities, not polities like those in the Mekong Valley, despite the fact that they had been important socio-political groups in the initial stage of the Kingdom of Tambralinga. Both Saivite and Vaisanavite communities in the Tambralingan heartland situated side by side, scattered throughout the landscape and probably were under the same kingdom. This characteristic would have eased the transition to Siva-oriented religiousness to them compared to other polities in maritime Southeast Asia.

Hinduism seemed to be used to unify the Kingdom of Tambralinga. As aforementioned, besides the similarities among statues found in the heartland, the shrines in the Tambralinga Period demonstrate standardization in their constructions (Figure 5.20). Their stone architectural parts, especially the limestone doorframes and thresholds, were remarkably similar from site to site (Figure 5.21). Although one might argue that these similarities were merely due to the cultural affinity, the current author tends to believe that they were the result of the kingdom-supported program of construction since these similarities appeared in all the groups in the unified landscape which had evidence of the presence of a kingdom, not several kingdoms. Tambralinga was the only name that appeared in the epigraphy in the heartland since possibly at least the 5th century.

It seems that the standardization of the construction of the Hindu shrines was supported by the court. The construction of a shrine was a complex procedure requiring the supervision of a Brahmin(s) who had proper knowledge based on the Hindu manual. Although the construction required support from communities, a group of villagers could not have done that alone. There had to be a Brahmin, the religious specialist. In the history of Hinduism, Brahmins were almost always associated with kingship and supported by the

court. In Manu's Law, it is said "The Ksatriya does not flourish without the Brahmin, and the Brahmin does not prosper without the Ksatriya; but when Brahmin and Ksatriya are united, they prosper here and in the hereafter" (cited in Skilling 2007: 182). Oftentimes, the king would donate funds, lands, and villages to the brahmana community to build shrines and maintain them. This was also true in Buddhism. The Chong Koi Valley Inscriptions also indicate that the tirtha belonged to *vidyadhikara*, an official who in turn belonged to the court. This suggests that the establishment and construction of tirthas were at least partly supported by the kingdom in one way or another. Therefore, although not always identical, the similarities in the construction of the shrines throughout the heartland may be seen as the result of the kingdom's program of shrine constructions in which the court would support the constructions by sending out Brahmins and making donations, in various forms, to the shrine being constructed.

Local communities and wealthy families may have originated the constructions of the shrines as well. Building temples is one of the highest merits a Hindu (as well as Buddhist) can perform and it is a clear manifestation of power for persons and families with high socio-political status as we have seen in Inscription No. 27 from Wat Maheyong. A large number of shrines (89 sites) in Tambralinga's heartland may imply that their constructions were inevitably supported by local communities (see Figure 4.3). They could not have been erected by the court alone. There must have been collaborations between the court and local communities. Whatever the case may be, the shrines were probably finally linked to the kingdom through its donations and support of Brahmins.

The Kingship and the Mandala-like Structure

The kingdom-supported construction program may be viewed as the materialization of the court's and the king's power to construct the political landscape in which all the shrines in the local communities were tied together in the kingdom, and became intrinsic part of people's experience (DeMarrais 1996). The symbols of Siva and images of other gods, who were identified with the god-king, were enshrined in the temples that were erected with support of the court would constantly have reminded people in the kingdom of the power and omnipresence of the court and the king as they woke up in the morning and saw the shrine, as they walked pass by the shrine to their fields, and as they went into shrine to worship and acquire blessings from the gods. The symbolism of the god and the king as one was particularly powerful in this regard. The king's materialization of power may also be seen in other things, including, but not limited to, the rituals supported by the court as seen in the

Chong Koi Valley Inscriptions, the declaration of law as seen in Inscription No. 29, the donations to temples and Brahmins, and the sending out of Brahmins to promote Hinduism which in turn would promote his status as the god-king, the supreme god on earth and the head of the kingdom[33].

Preecha Noonsuk in his challenging work (2001: 195) proposes that the spatial distribution of the Hindu shrines in Tambralinga represented the mandala politico-symbolic landscape in which different scales of sacred circles were formed in the kingdom. In this symbolic landscape, houses around a shrine would form a community; several communities around a bigger shrine would form a cluster; and several clusters around the most important shrine would form a kingdom. Together, they all constituted concentric rings of sacredness, similar to the sacred mandala structure in Hinduism. Of course, in reality, these circles are not symmetrical and the important shrines were not always in the middle. It is after all a symbolic landscape.

P. Noonsuk's idea is very useful in imagining the political landscape as inseparable from the religious landscape. To ensure the prosperity of the kingdom, the king had to construct his kingdom according to the sacred structure of the universe, the mandala structure. He could not allow the kingdom to float freely in space as it would offer no guarantee that the kingdom would prosper and receive blessings from gods. By coordinating the kingdom landscape with the structure of the universe, the people would have confidence in their lives and behave according to the law of heaven; in this case, the Hindu law. The kingdom, therefore, needed a pillar or *axis mundi* that connected and fixed heaven and earth together. It is the nail of the world (Miksic 2009). It was situated at the most important shrine of the kingdom in P. Noonsuk's idea. He believes that this shrine was at the Wat Phra Doem Site from which Inscription No. 28, the inscription with the name of Siva-king, was believed to derive.

P. Noonsuk (2001) states that not all tirthas have equal importance and sacredness, just as Banares (on the Ganges in India) was considered the most sacred city although, symbolically speaking, there were several sacred cities in India. The sacredness of the shrines in the lowlands depended mostly on rivers, believed to be sacred Ganga in Inscription No. 29 derived possibly also from the Wat Phra Doem Site, which also brought fertility to the land. The Wat Phra Doem Site, therefore, was also the most sacred site, according to P. Noonsuk, because it was on the Crystal Sand Beach which was an island surrounded by rivers

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[33] See DeMarrais et al. (1996) for the materialization of power.

or sacred Ganga. In his idea, the community-level shrine would be less important than the kingdom-level shrine, and this religious hierarchy was also reflecting the political hierarchy in which the king used to control his subordinate clusters. For P. Noonsuk, this is where the religious and political landscapes merge.

Although it is still difficult to determine the levels of sacredness of each shrine and to link them to the political hierarchy based on the evidence available to us today, it is possible that each cluster in Tambralinaga's heartland reflects a political group[34]. At least, the two large groups of shrines, the northern and the southern groups which included several clusters in each of them, seemed to represent separate large socio-political groups with their own slightly different cultural characteristics as mentioned previously. P. Noonsuk's idea about how the landscape of the Kingdom of Tambralinga was symbolically attached to the cosmic structure in Hinduism through the nail of the world and arrangement of tirthas which were themselves the fords between heaven and earth is valuable. This symbolism was significant in the process of state formation of Tambralinga.

Hinduism, especially Saivism after the 7th century, was very instrumental in the process of state formation in Tambralinga. The kingdom seemed to promote this religion in its territory. Inscription No. 29 from Wat Mahathat seemed to record the use of Saivite laws to protect red cows and Ganga. The Chong Koi Valley Inscriptions suggested that the kingdom encouraged and facilitated the practice of pilgrimage. The Hindu pilgrimage can help weave the landscape together, fraternize different groups of people, and ultimately create as sense of unification in the kingdom. It would not be surprising if the court in fact supported Brahmins to go out to the local communities to promote Hinduism as the way to weave all the ecozones in the heartland together under the same sacred landscape ruled by the god-king. The shrines were not only in the lowlands but also the foothill areas through which the forest product would flow to the coastal centers. The distribution of the shrines spreading out in all ecozones demonstrates clearly how Hinduism tied the kingdom together and helped facilitate the flow of goods and circulation of resources in the kingdom. Here, the political, economic, and religious landscapes are one.

The Centers

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[34] It has to be noted that P. Noonsuk's clusters of shrines in Tambralinga are slightly different from the current author's clusters shown in this work, largely due to the advancement in the technology of mapping the shrines that had not been particularly accessible to him when he was active in his fieldwork mostly in 1980's.

In the early historic period, Tambralinga seemed to have multiple centers based in different river valleys. Clusters of shrines demonstrated in the site distribution map (Figure 4.3) may have represented political groups with their centers. Before the 8th century, these centers may have been loosely tied to one another under the label of Tambralinga. The distinction between the northern and southern groups may still be relatively clear at this time. However, taking into account the evidence presented so far, it was likely that from the 8th century there was the most important center, the capital that was the seat of the overlord but its location is still debatable. As aforementioned, P. Noonsuk proposed the Wat Phra Doem Site on the Crystal Sand Beach as the capital. However, the current author would like to propose another possibility. According to the distribution of shrines, it is clear that the highest density of sites is in the Tha Khwai-Tha Chieo-Tha Thon Cluster, and it is evidently the most probable candidate for the capital of Tambralinga (Figure 5.1 and Cluster 2 in Figure 4.3). This capital may have had Khao Kha, where the enormous *svayambhuva-lingas* (Figure 5.22) were overwhelmingly reigning on top of the prominent hill, as the nail of the world or *axis mundi* of the kingdom. Khao Kha would have served perfectly as the symbol of power for the god-king based on its massiveness, grand Saivite statement, and outstanding geography surrounded by and overlooking numerous smaller shrines.

The Tha Khwai-Tha Chieo-Tha Thon Cluster was situated in a particularly strategic location. The shrines were concentrated in the lowland area between the sea and the mountain. Its center occupied the fertile rice plain and had the shortest distance from the mountain, compared to other clusters. The distance to the mountain was very important in the prosperity of the center since it was the source of exotic goods highly valued by the foreign merchants. The center therefore can control the rice production and flows of goods from the rainforest closely.

This cluster had been the most important stronghold of Saivism that dominated the northern part of the heartland. In the 8th century when Saivism and Siva-oriented administration became preeminent, it was probably from this cluster that they expanded. Therefore, it is possible to assume that this cluster had been, at least, a very significant socio-political center before the 8th century and became the capital of the Kingdom of Tambralinga after the 8th century. However, there is no inscription found at the site since the Crystal Sand Beach Cluster (Hat Sai Kaeo) has all the inscriptions in the heartland, except the unmovable Chong Koi Valley inscriptions, perhaps because this cluster later became the capital of the Kingdom of Nakhon Si Thammarat in the 13th century and remained the capital of Nakhon Si

Thammarat since then; thus, it is possible that all the inscriptions that had been found anywhere in Nakhon Si Thammarat were moved there.

According to the archaeological record collected by the current author, the Crytal Sand Beach seemed to be occupied from the 8th century onwards. The excavations at Wat Thao Khot yielded a brick foundation, from which a brick sample was thermoluminescence dated to around 800 CE while the excavations at Wat Chantharam offered Tang Dynasty ceramic sherds dated to the 9th century. Although this evidence is still thin, they give us some clues to pursue in the future. At this point, it is still unclear if the Crytal Sand Beach was heavily occupied or became a city in the 8th century, or it just started to be inhabited by the Hindu communities. However, the 8th century date coincides with the emergence of strong Siva-oriented administration and the vanishing of Vaisanavite communities. Thus, it is possible that at least some Saivite communities were expanding from the northern part of the kingdom and started to settle here. Only in the light of future research will we be able to pinpoint the capital of Tambralinga with more certainty. Wherever the capital may have been, it is certain, however, that coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat was the heartland of the Kingdom of Tambralinga throughout its history.

Conclusion

The heartland of Tambralinga, in coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat Province today, was located in a suitable geography for the development of a maritime kingdom, in which it had an easy access to the sea of trade and the mountain of exotic goods. It also had a sufficient alluvial plain for rice cultivation. People living in this area today still use walking trails and rivers to commute between the mountains and the coasts. Their brotherly relationship set the social connectivity in motion across geographical space.

The religious landscape of the Tambralinga Kingdom (c. 5th to c. 11th centuries CE) was complex and closely related to the Hindu beliefs. The concepts of Ganga, tirtha, and pilgrimage all contributed to the creation of the imagined landscape of this kingdom. Physical spaces were given meaning and turned into places. The Hindu imaginations were woven into the physical geography and into the primordial locative beliefs of the indigenous people. The power of places was reinterpreted and enhanced by the Hindu beliefs. The footsteps of pilgrims seem to tie the sacred sites together and help unite the kingdom which had various communities with a shared locative religiousness. The Hindu beliefs in sacred places may have also linked Tambralinga to a much wider Hindu world, in which people of Tambralinga may have been motivated to take a spiritual journey to India, the homeland of

Hinduism, to visit the legendary places and absorb the power of the gods and heroes in their original abodes as well. All of these imaginations and actions would have led to the development of political structure, social ties, and trade in Tambralinga.

On the other hand, political landscape, as an academic field, is the study of the spatial constitution of civil authority which creates landscapes to establish physical, expressive, and imagined political relationships (Smith 2003). In the case of Tambralinga and early Southeast Asia, the political landscape was inseparable from religions since the political operations were based on religious concepts and the political powers were materialized in religious constructions (DeMarrais et al. 1996). In this chapter, several aspects of the political landscape of Tambralinga (c. 5th to c. 11th centuries CE) are explored. As aforementioned, Tambralinga's heartland on coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat was geographically suitable for the development of complex societies. In around the 5th century, Tambralinga served as a center of innovation of Visnu images in Southeast Asia. These stone statues also indicate the existence of a polity (or polities), complex enough to understand and require a transcendental symbol of religious communication across the villages' boundaries. In around the 8th century, local stone inscriptions suggest that a stronger political administration in Tambralinga took place and its political organization and kingship were closely interwoven into Saivism, the Hindu sect that focused on the worship of Siva. The king seemed to become the god-king with his name ending with *isvara*. The archaeological record also indicates that a large number of Hindu brick shrines, mostly associated with lingas and ablution basins, may have been erected in this period. It is possible that these shrines and their related images were built partly with support of the court. Although it is still not certain where the capital of Tambralinga was, it is quite clear that its heartland was located in coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat and Sichon was a pivotal area of this kingdom.

Chapter 5

Sichon: A Pivotal Area of Tambralinga

Introduction

Flowering in the maritime intraregional exchange network in Southeast Asia since the late centuries BCE, coastal communities in Nakhon Si Thammarat, on the western edge of the Gulf of Siam, were probably later regarded collectively under the name "Tamali" in Mahanidesa, an Indian Pali text dated to around the 2nd or 3rd century CE as a destination of Indian merchants. Historians tend to agree that Tamali was Tambralinga, the name of a kingdom appeared in the local inscriptions, and Tan-ma-ling, the name used in the Chinese accounts, among other names (Wheatley 1966). Historical evidence has suggested that the coastal land of Nakhon Si Thammarat was the heartland of Tambralinga; however, only a few archaeological investigations have been conducted in its heartland.

As aforementioned, Tambralinga's heartland is an almost rectangular area covering 1,275 km^2 (127,500 hectare), 85 km long in the north-south direction and 15 km in the east-west direction. It is flanked by a mountain range in the west and the sea of the Gulf of Siam in the east (Figure 4.1). It was mostly formed by the accumulation of erosions from the Nakhon Si Thammarat mountain range (colluvial and alluvial deposits) and by the movement of waves in the Gulf of Siam (coastal wave-dominated deposits). Two prominent ancient beach ridges, running in the north-south direction, formed the core of the cultural landscape of the heartland. They are 2 to 5 meters high and 1 to 5 kilometers wide.

In this chapter, I will focus on the area between the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon rivers in Sichon district, Nakhon Si Thammarat province, since this area has the highest density of ancient brick shrines dated to the Tambralinga period (c. the 6th to 11th centuries CE) in the heartland (Figure 2). This fact suggests that this area was a pivotal area or a significant center of Tambralinga Kingdom, which deserves more archaeological investigations. To fulfill Objective III of this research project, this chapter will discuss the distribution of sites, GIS data, and scientific dating of some important sites in relation to the heartland's cultural geography in general. It is noteworthy that the major part of the presentations of discoveries in this chapter will be in the form of scientific numbers, maps, and figures, into which the energy of our research team was considerably invested, and therefore this chapter will only have succinct verbal descriptions.

The Archaeological Geography of Sichon

The area between the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon rivers in Sichon district is situated between the Nakhon Si Thammarat mountain range in the west and the Gulf of Siam in the east (Figure 5.1 which is Cluster 2 in Figure 4.3). Around 50 years ago, people in this areas used walking trails and rivers to commute with communities in both the mountain and seashore areas. Although the people in the mountain areas can sometime themselves take a journey to the communities on the seashores and vice versa, the communities in Sichon area also served as an important link between communities in those two different ecozones to facilitate the flow of goods and social interaction. This area was also a significant area for wet rice cultivation and cattle production. It has been said until now by people in Nakhon Si Thammarat that the best cattle comes from Sichon.

To study the landscape in the past, information layers of aerial photographs, satellite images, and GIS data were created and overlaid on top of one another using a GIS software (ArcGIS 9.3) to analyze the distribution of sites (all of them have brick shrines, most likely of Hinduism) and suitable areas for agriculture between the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon rivers in Sichon district (Figure 5.1). The coordinates of the sites of the Tambralinga period (c. the 6th to 11th centuries CE) had been collected using handheld GPS unit with reference to the WGS 84 datum (zone 47) and the UTM/UPS system. There were 45 sites found and recorded in this area, and among these sites, 29 of them were condensed in a small area of 12.5 square kilometers at the middle of the cluster. When overlaying these coordinates on the aerial photographs and drainage layers, it was found that the sites were far from the modern rivers between 17.7-1129.4 meters with an average at 302.5 meters. Yet, there was the standard deviation at 241.4 meters. Therefore, after removing of the extreme numbers in statistics, the average distance between the sites and the rivers should be between 61-543 meters. However, when we took into account the traces of possible ancient rivers and floodplains, we found that all of the sites were close to the waters (Figure 5.2).

In terms of soils, all the 45 sites were located in 4 types of soil, in which 7 of them were on loam, 8 on alluvfium, 19 on sand loam, and 11 on silt loam (Figure 5.3). The slope gradient of this area was around 1-5%. The soils in this area were formed by the alluvial deposits carried by waters from the mountains, especially in the rainy seasons when this area was flooded. Therefore, the physical environment in this area is suitable for wet-rice cultivation.

Agriculture and Population

It is always difficult in archaeological research to study agricultural practices in the past because this subject requires meticulous, expensive examinations of the physical environment, settlement pattern, sediments, and plant remains usually from coring and excavations. However, this research is not designed and has funding for such specific type of detailed scientific examinations. Therefore, this chapter will only attempt to open up the windows and serve as a starting point in the study of past agriculture in Sichon area which has not been conducted in any previous research. Various strands of evidence will be used to discuss the possibilities of agricultural area and population size in the Tambralinga period (c. the 6th to 11th centuries) although we are not trying to propose that our hypothesis should now be a well-established fact.

We assume that the physical environment in this area in the recent past, including the rainfall and floodplain, may have not been radically different from that in the Tambralinga period. There is also something perennial about agricultural practices based on simple technology and energy of humans and draft animals. Thus, we also assume that wet-rice cultivation was also practiced in the Tambralinga period. There is also a large reservoir called "Sra Di" that is around 50 x 150 m. and around 1 km. north of Khao Kha, but it may have been used mainly for consumption, not mainly for irrigation, in the past, as the rice cultivation in this area seems to have been mainly rain-fed. However, our assumption has to be scientifically tested in the future. This reservoir was cut by the modern irrigation canal but we can still see the traces of its rectangular shape (Figure 5.4).

We then delineate the floodplain area based on the studies of aerial photographs and overlay them with the coordinates of 45 archaeological sites. It shows that the floodplain is 21,768,431 square meters, and this area should be the minimum size of area for wet-rice cultivation although we take into account that high-ground rice cultivation may have been practiced as well, which would add even more agricultural area into our calculation (Figure 5.2). The wet-rice cultivation in this floodplain area could depend on natural rainfall and would not need large irrigation constructions.

We interviewed old villagers and found out that there had been a variety of native rice in this area but now they were replaced by Jasmine Rice introduced by the government. They told us that, in the recent past, native rice grown with local technology once a year in this area would usually yield around 400 kilograms of rice per 1,600 square meters (1 Rai), so our floodplain would yield at least 5,442,000 kilograms of rice per year in total. They continued to inform us that one person would usually consume around 380 grams of rice for one day,

which would be around 138.7 kilograms per year. Thus, our floodplain may have been able to feed approximately as much as 39,235 people per year!

Although this is a rough calculation, it opens up a discussion on the population size in this area. If we also take into account that this area has the highest density of brick shrines (45 sites) and man-made ponds associated with the shrines, and one of the sites is Khao Kha, which is one of the largest religious complexes in Peninsular Thailand, occupying the whole hill, we may see that it makes sense for this area to have a large population. It is the scale of a city or even a capital city, not just an ordinary community.

Khao Kha: A Religious Center

Among the sites found in this area, Khao Kha is the biggest one. It is a massive Hindu religious complex built on a natural hill with at least 7 religious structures (Figure 5.6-5.10 and 5.23-5.24). The hill is around 850 meters long and 300 meters wide, with the height of around 72 meters from the sea level (Srichai 2001:173) (Figure 5.5). The Tha Thon river is only around 50 meters in the northwest of the hill. There was an ancient walkway from the river up to the hilltop at around the middle of the western side of the hill, suggesting the importance of river transportation in the past. On the bank of the river at the foothill of Khao Kha, some polished stone axes were found, an indication of human occupations in this area perhaps prior to the foundations of Hindu shrines here.

Some shrines at Khao Kha were made of bricks with some stone architectural parts but some were made of purely stones, such as the boulder-linga with stone platform at the northern end of Khao Kha (Figure 5.6-5.10). There are also at least 3 ponds that were dug out of bedrock on the ridges of the hill. As a pilot project to integrate modern technology into archaeological investigation to map and study Khao Kha in details, the three-dimensional mapping methods were employed. Data and images from, such as total station theodolite, digital cameras, 3-D scanners, and drones (UAV), were used to create informative images of Khao Kha (Figure 5.11-5.24). This work can be developed more in the future to collect data for further geographical and environmental analyses in the laboratory. The details of the equipment and methodology include:

Materials and Equipment
1. UAV (multirotor DJI S900 with A2 flight control)
2. Camera (Sony A6000 with time lapse function)
3. Target sheet
4. Real Time Kinetic (RTK) GPS

5. PC ground station

6. Agisoft Photoscan

7. Aerial photographs

8. Topographic map (1:50,000) from the Royal Thai Army

9. 2003 color orthophotographic map (1:4,000) from Land development department

Methodology: Aerial Photographic Map

Due to small degree of aerial picture overlapping (< 50% overlap), the aerial photographic map was produced by the georeferenced technique of ArcGIS 9.2. The aerial pictures were tied together to produce a single aerial photographic map using the georeferenced and mosaic techniques. After that, the topographic and orthophotographic maps were used as the referenced coordinate to register coordinates of the single aerial topographic map using the georeferenced technique. The result map was used to identify archaeological remains.

Methodology: High resolution image map for Khao Kha (Figure 5.11-5.16)

1. Prepare flight plans for UAV with PC ground station,

2. Place target sheet cover the archeological site and measure coordinates with RTK GPS,

3. Load each fight plan to UAV and take the 75-80% overlap pictures by camera along the flight line,

4. Process pictures with measured coordinates (GCP) by Agisoft Photoscan to produce 3D model of Khao Kha archaeological site,

5. Produce high resolution image of Khao Kha archaeological site

Methodology: High resolution image of each object in Khao Kha (Figure 5.17-5.19)

1. Take terrestrial pictures at each interested spot such as the monuments, etc.,

2. Process pictures by Agisoft Photoscan to produce 3D model of each interested spot,

3. Produce 3D picture of each intrested spot

Methodology: Cross-section for Khao Kha (Figure 5.10)

1. Track route and take pictures across Khao Kha archaeological site by using GPS and cameras

2. Tag geographic coordinates from GPS to pictures by using Gpicsync software

3. Import track data to ArcGIS 9.2,

4. Produce attitude profile against distance and plot interested object of Khao Kha archaeological site at its' coordinate,

5. Produce cross-section profile map

Thermoluminescence Dating

Two brick samples acquired during survey in the unexcavated area on the ridge of the hill, south of this linga, were TL-dated in 2014 by the TL Lab at Kasetsart University to 1,536±123 BP and 1,562±109 BP or 355-601 CE and 343-561 CE, suggesting that the brick structure(s) on the hill may been first constructed at a very early time.

There are also 2 more TL dates from the brick shrines from Sichon district. The first was from Ban Theparat, not far from Khao Kha to the southwest. It was TL-dated in 2014 by the same lab mentioned above to 1,655 ± 125 BP or 234-484 CE, suggesting that the communities and brick shrines in the Sichon area may have been part of one of the earliest center in the historical period of Southeast Asia. The second TL date came from Wat Khao Phanom Trai. It was TL-dated in 2011 by the same lab to 670 + 50 or 1291-1391 CE, suggesting that some communities in this area were continued until the 14th century CE.

Conclusion

Taking into account all the information mentioned above, it may be proposed that the ancient communities, which built and maintained the brick shrines, had lived in the areas suitable for lowland agriculture, especially for wet rice cultivation, with sufficient supply of water and alluvial soils. It may be hypothesized, based on the calculation of the amount of rice produced in the floodplain, the density of brick shrines, and the massiveness of the Khao Kha complex, that this area between the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon rivers in Sichon district was the most concentrated center of population in Tambralinga Kingdom, if not the capital city. Also, this food-producing area may have not been abandoned after the fall of Tambralinga Kingdom and some communities still occupied this area until the rise of Nakhon Si Thammarat Kingdom in the 13th-14th centuries CE.

Chapter 6
Conclusion

This research project is designed to be exploratory. Although it aims to study Tambralinga, it also reviews the context that gave rise to such kingdom. By discussing the concepts related to the process of state formation, this research shows that Southeast Asia and Tambralinga can be part of the theoretical world in this subject. Tambralinga was like other complex societies and states in the sense that it had complex operation, organization, and materialization of power exercises. It also had to live with a broader world and compete with other peer polities that led to its development as well.

Geography played a vital role in the social development in Tambralinga. Its unique location and geography opened it to the maritime trade and cultural influences which allowed cosmopolitan mindedness and civilizations to emerge. Compared to a house, Tambralinga's heartland looked out on the South China Sea and had the mountains in its backyard. The mountains were important to the kingdom's trade and development as it was the source of exotic goods, such as forest products and tin, valued very highly by foreign merchants. Situated between the shores and the mountain was the flood plain that produced rice and cattle for the population in the kingdom. The beach ridges were the core of its landscape. They were used as the main communication route that connected various communities together in the north-south direction, while rivers and walking trails provided passageways between ecological zones in the east-west direction. Tambralinga's heartland also connected to the west coast of the isthmus via trans-isthmian routes across the mountain passes and plains. This area had the highest densities of the Bronze Drums (c. late centuries BCE) in the Malay Peninsula and the early Visnu images of the conch on the hip group (c. the fifth century CE) in Southeast Asia. Tambralinga seems to have served as the center of innovation of these Visnu images in this region. Its heartland also had the highest density of early Hindu

shrines and stone inscriptions (c. the 5th to 11th centuries) in the isthmian tract. It can be seen that the significance of Tambralinga as a cultural center was based closely on its landscape.

In Tambralinga's heartland, Sichon area was probably one of the most important center of population, if not the capital city of the kingdom. The physical environment and the size of suitable area for wet-rice cultivation between the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon rivers can support a large population. The density of brick shrines, man-made ponds associated with the shrines, and the massive religious complex of Khao Kha also point to the importance of Sichon area in the development of Tambralinga Kingdom.

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Figures

Figure 1.1: Maritime Southeast Asia
(Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: plate 30)
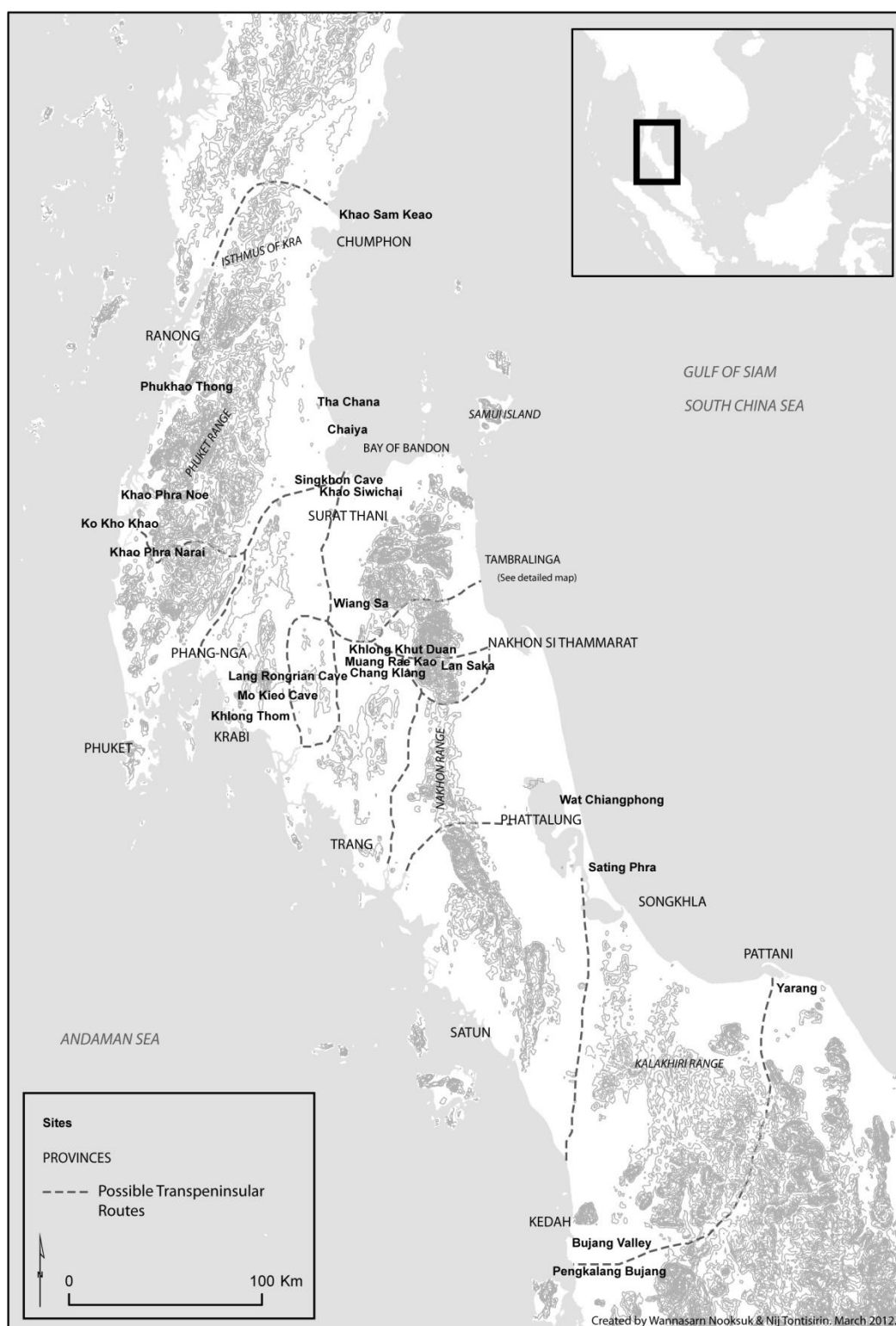
Figure 1.2: Peninsular Siam, Provinces,
Possible Trans-Peninsular Routes, and Archaeological Sites
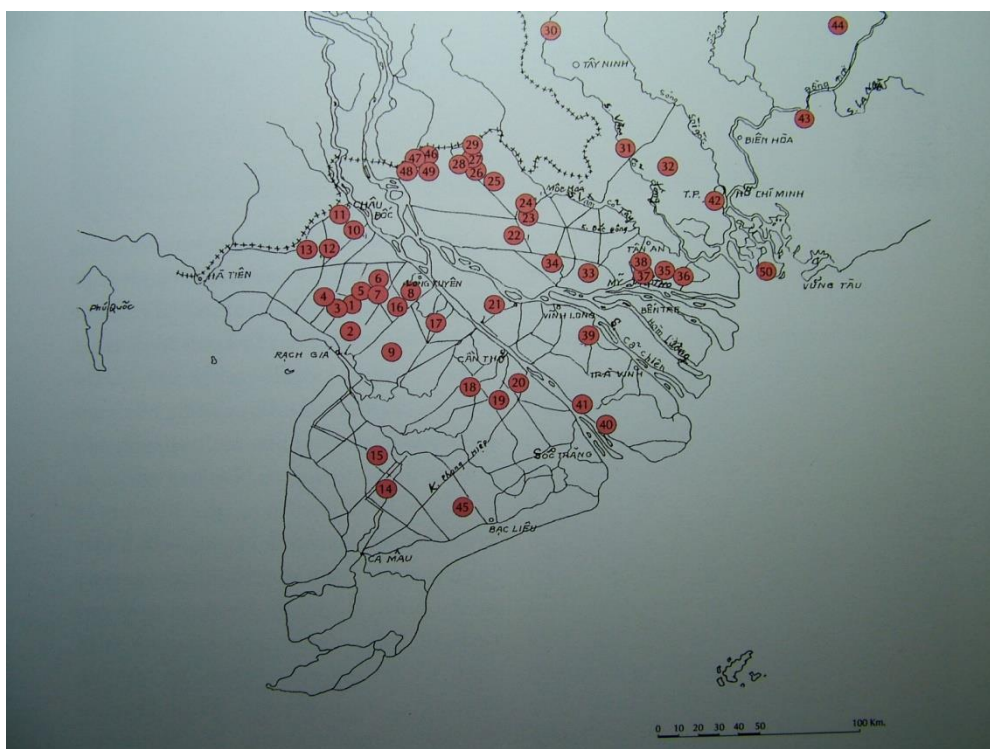
Figure 2.1: Site Distribution in Vietnam's Mekong Delta
(Vo Si Khai 2003:39)
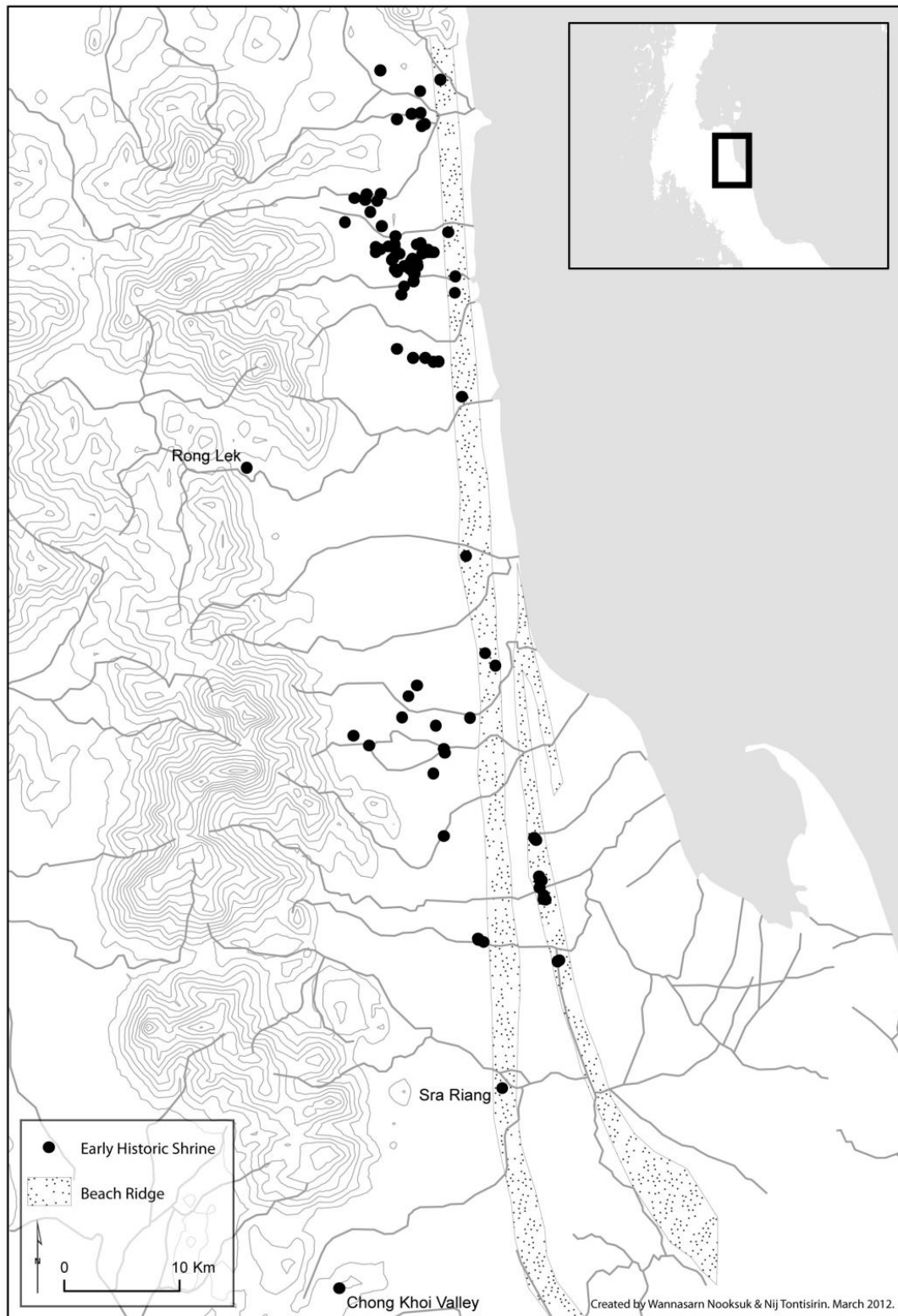
Figure 2.2: Distribution of Hindu shrines
in the Early Tambralinga Period (c. the 5th to 11th centuries)

Map I. Southern Sumatra, showing location of six of the early Srivijaya inscriptions
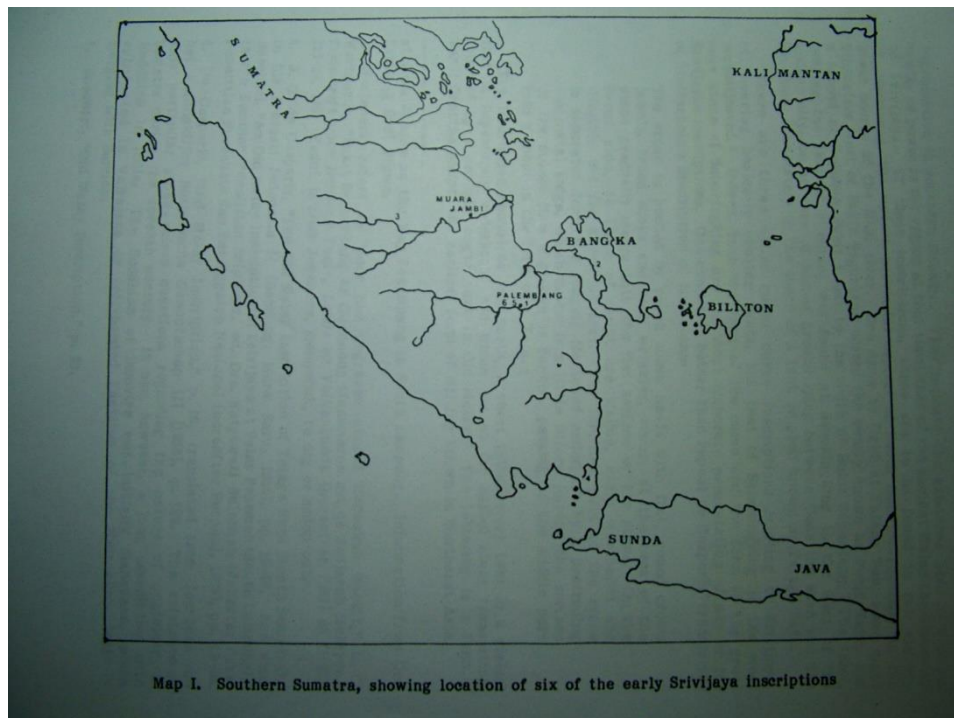
Figure 2.3: South Sumatra (McKinnon 1985: 2)
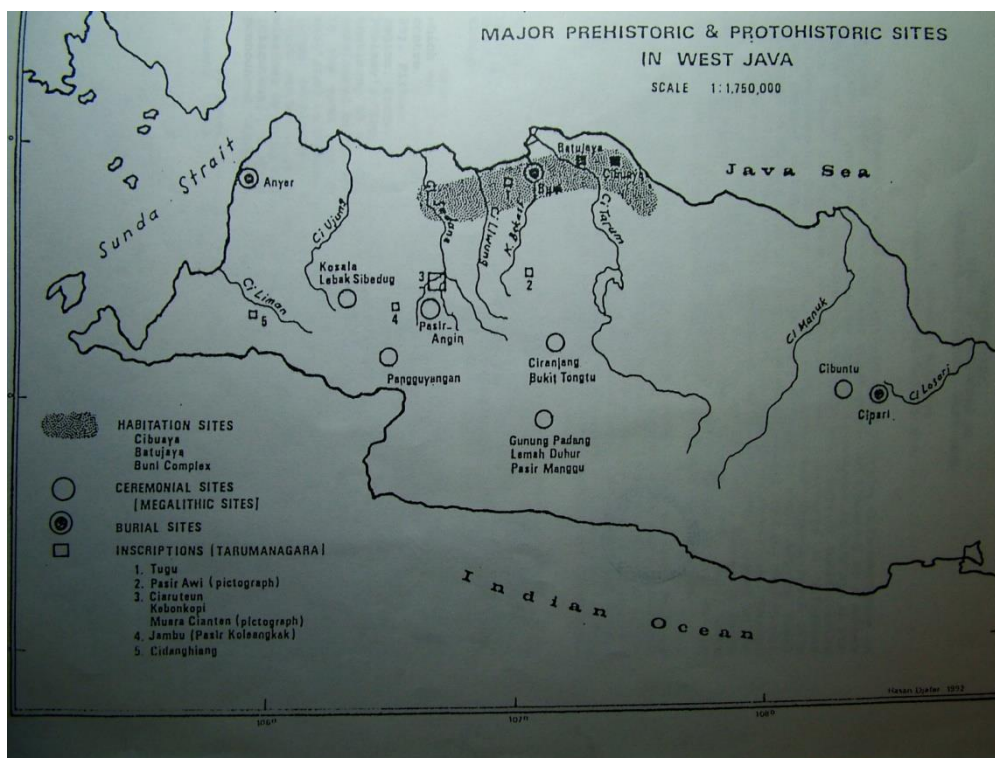
Figure 2.4: West Java (McKinnon et al. 1994)

Figure 3.1: Bronze Drum from Khao Sam Keao (Fine Arts Department 2003:171)

Figure 3.2: Lingling-o earings from Khao Sam Keao (A. Sricuchat (ed.) 1996: 39)

Figure 3.3: Feline pendants from the Samon Valley and Halin (only the lowest one), in Burma (Hudson 2004: 109)

Figure 3.4: Feline pendent from Ban Don Ta Phet
(A. Sricuchat (ed.) 1996: 38)

Figure 3.5: The Chinese Tally Tigers (Hudson 2004: 110)

Figure 3.6: Feline pendent from Thachana (A. Sricuchat (ed.) 1996: 38)

Figure 3.7: Feline pendent from Phukhao Thong
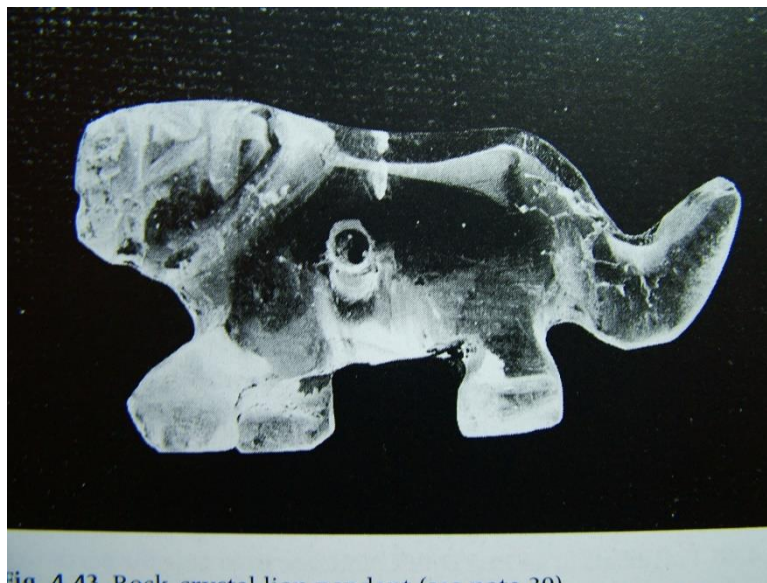
Figure 3.8: Feline Pendant from Sardis (Ramage 2000: 92)
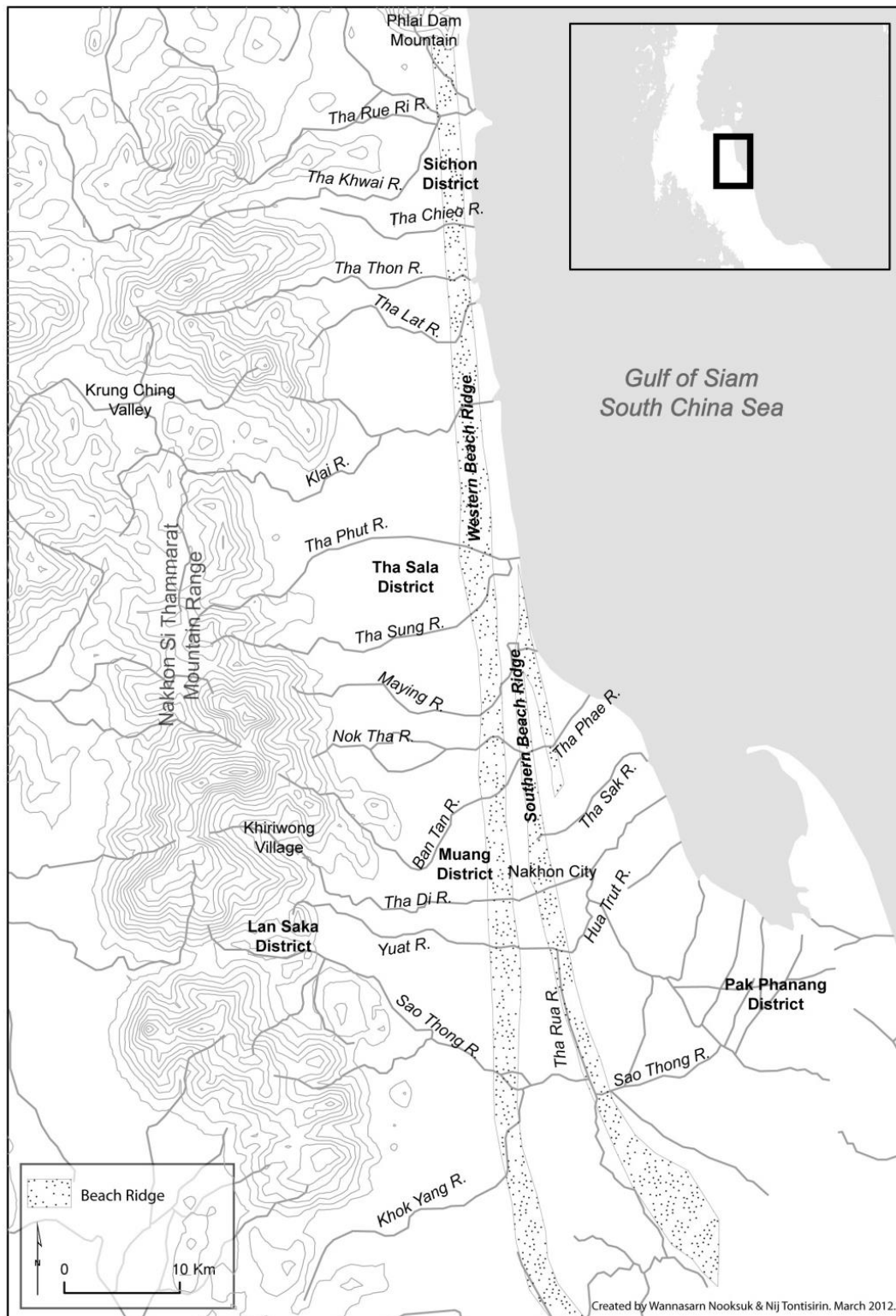
Figure 4.1: Geography of coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat, the heartland of Tambralinga
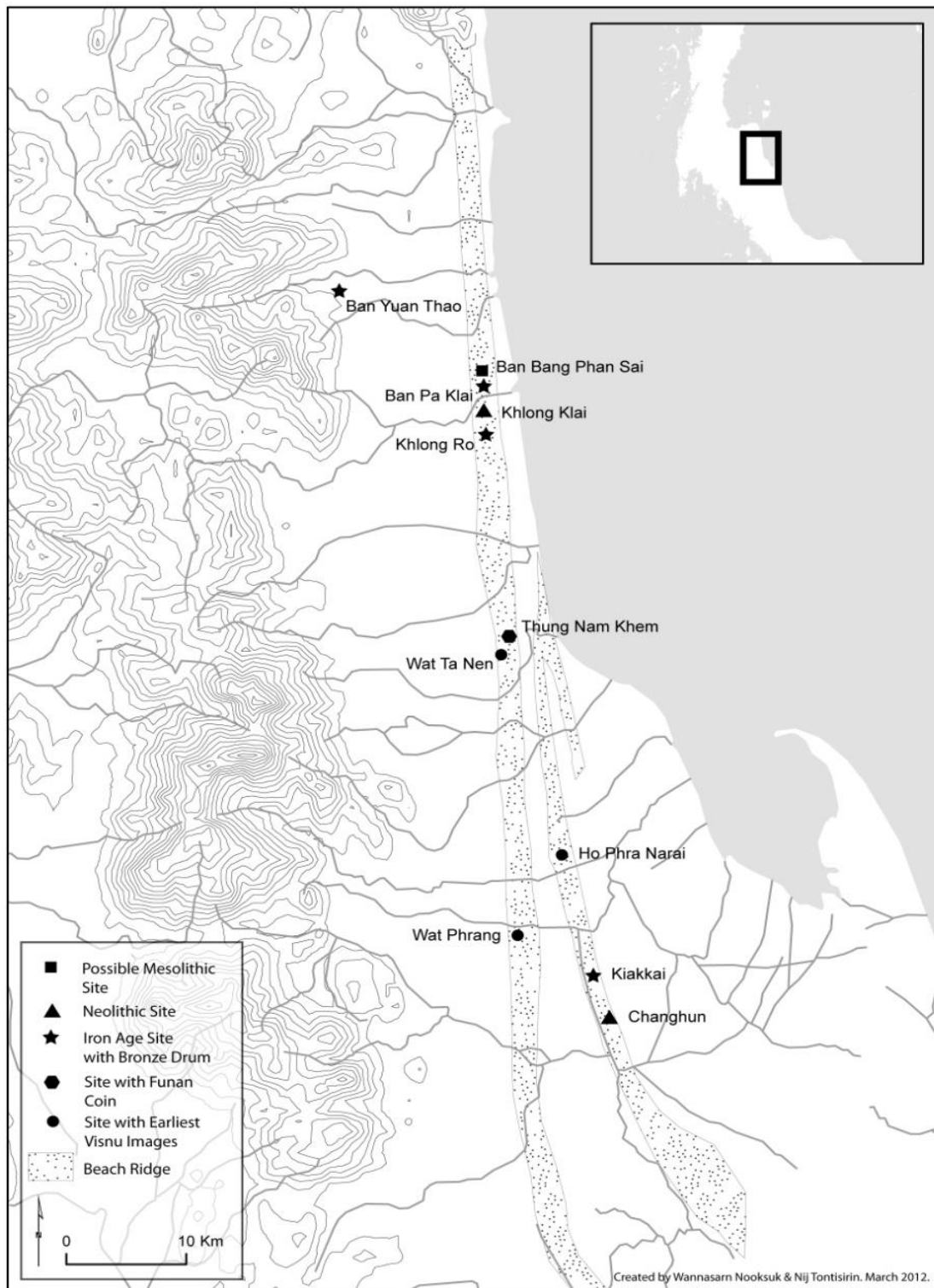
Figure 4.2: Prehistoric sites and other related sites dated to
the early phase of the early historic period
in coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat
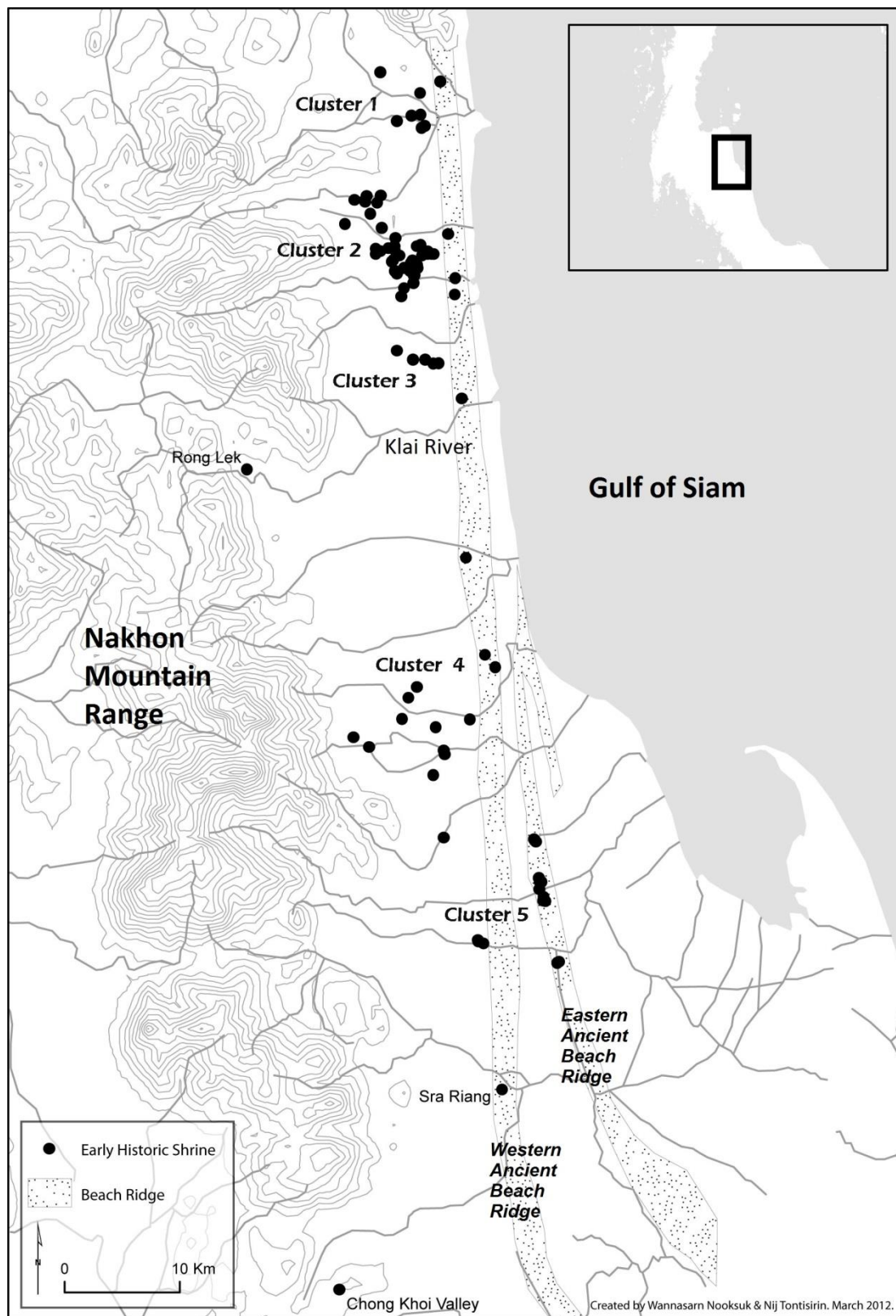
Figure 4.3: geography and distribution of sites
in the Tambralinga period

Figure 4.4: Bronze Drum from Kiakkai (c. 700-500 BCE)

Figure 4.5: Vishnu from Wat Tanaen, Nakhon Si Thammarat,
c. 5th century CE
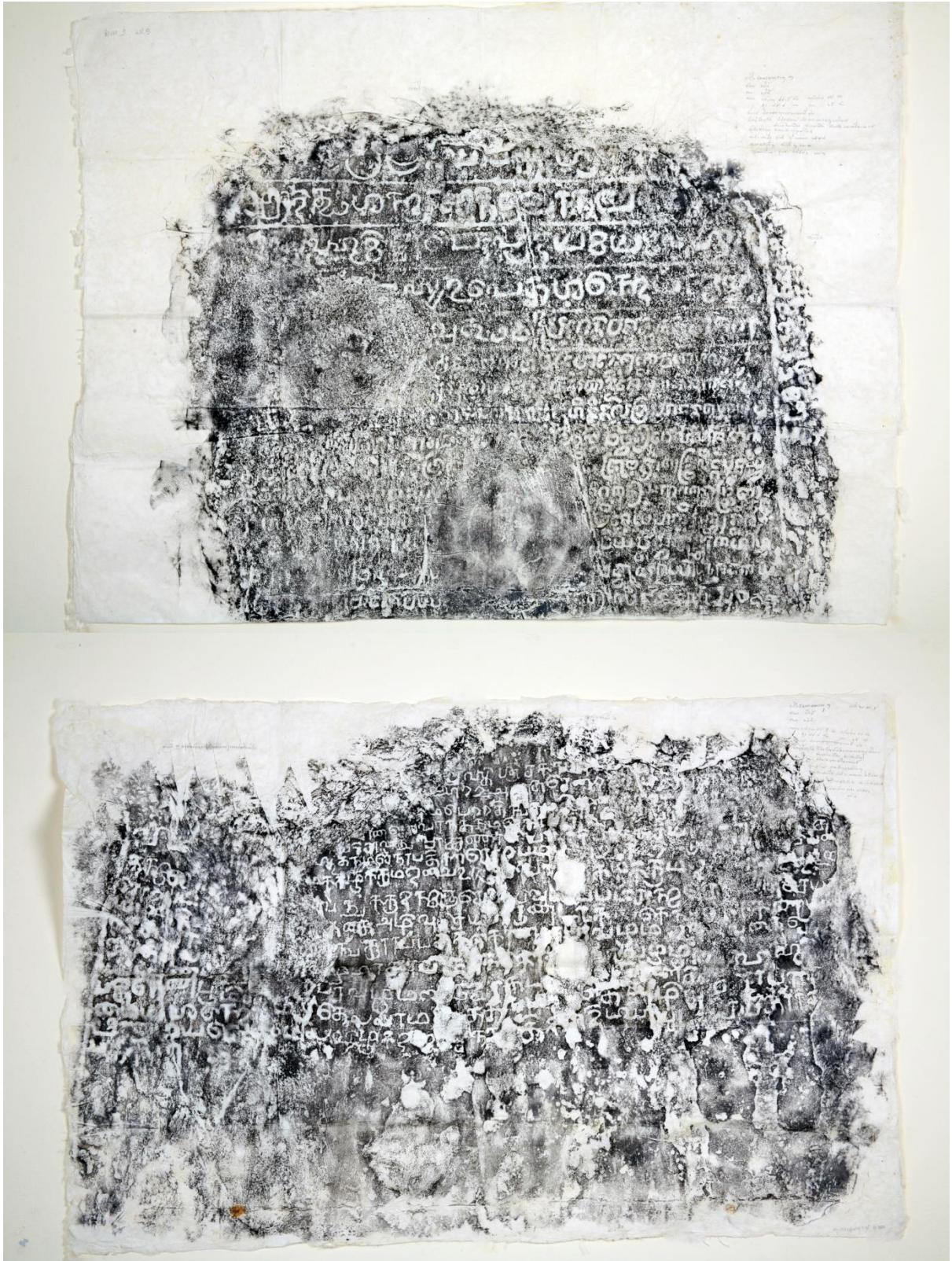
Figure 4.6: Inscriptions No. 29 (two sides)

Figure 4.7: Brick Monuments at Mokhalan

Figure 4.8: The boulder on which the Chong Khoi Valley Inscriptions were inscribed

Figure 4.9: A linga and a yoni at the site of Than Phra Sayom,
Mueang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat (c. the 9th century CE)

Figure 4.10: An ablution basin for statue or a yoni for linga from the site of Wat Nakhom,
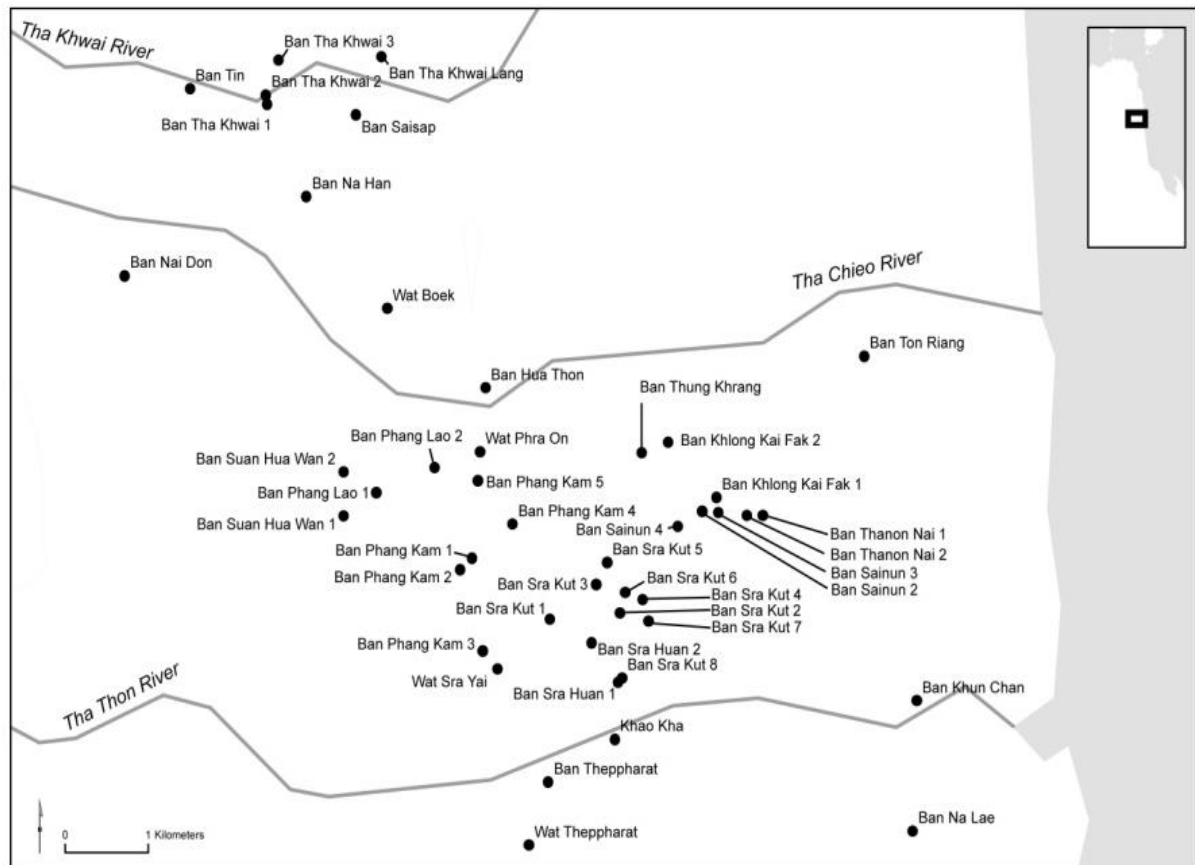
Figure 5.1: The cluster of the Tha Khwai-Tha Chieo-Tha Thon Rivers
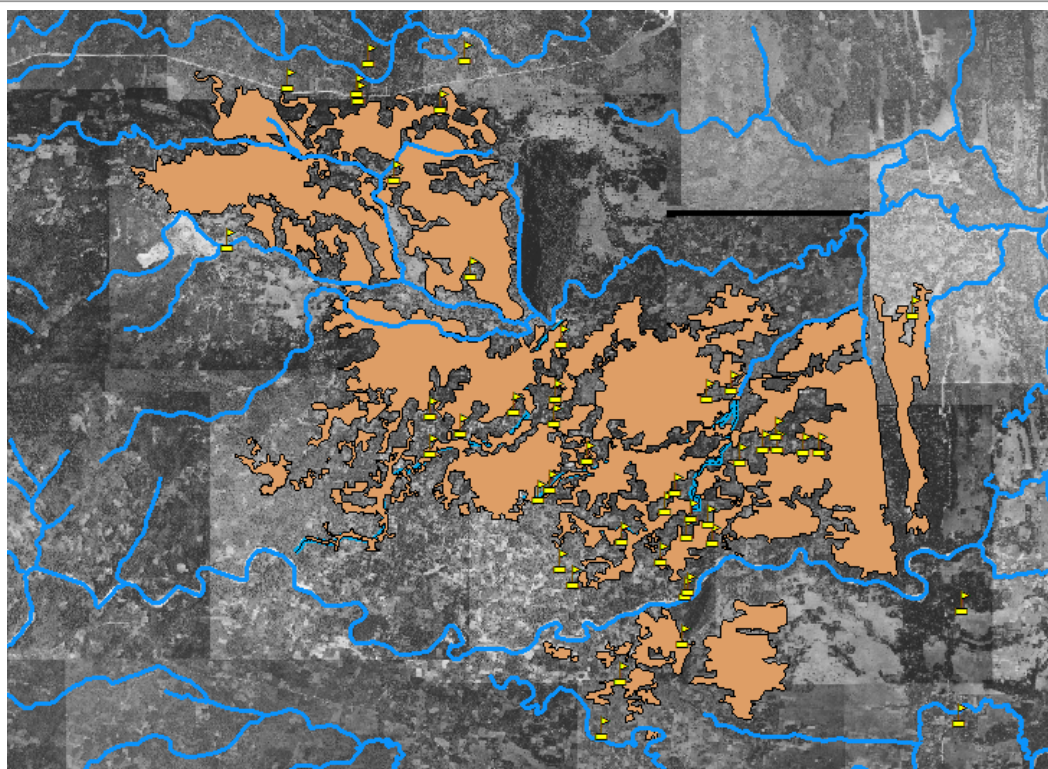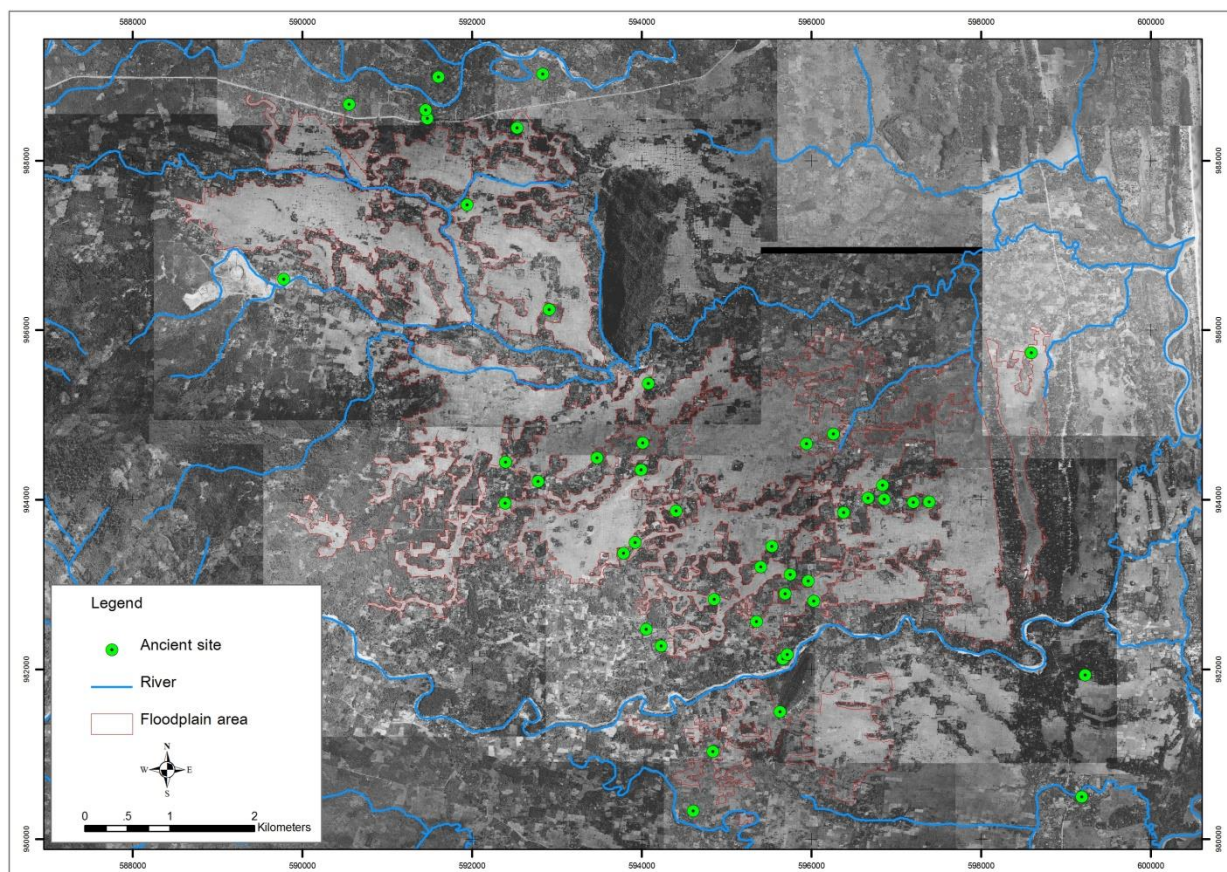
Figure 5.2: the distribution of site and the floodplain
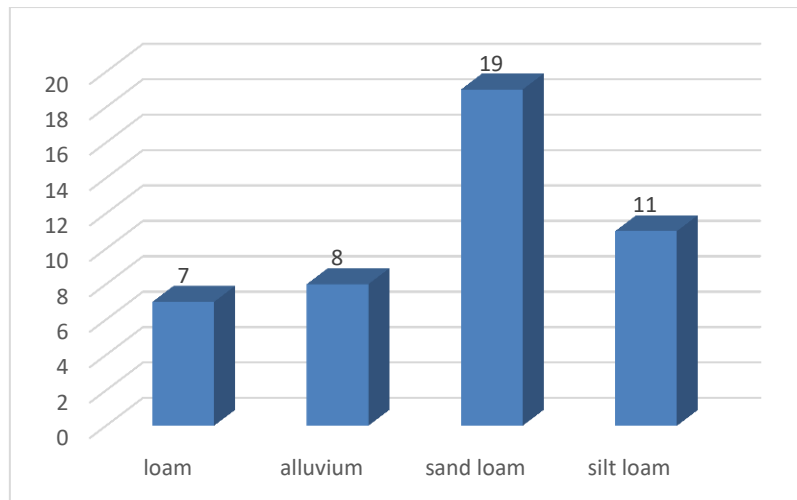
Figure 5.3: number of sites in each soil type
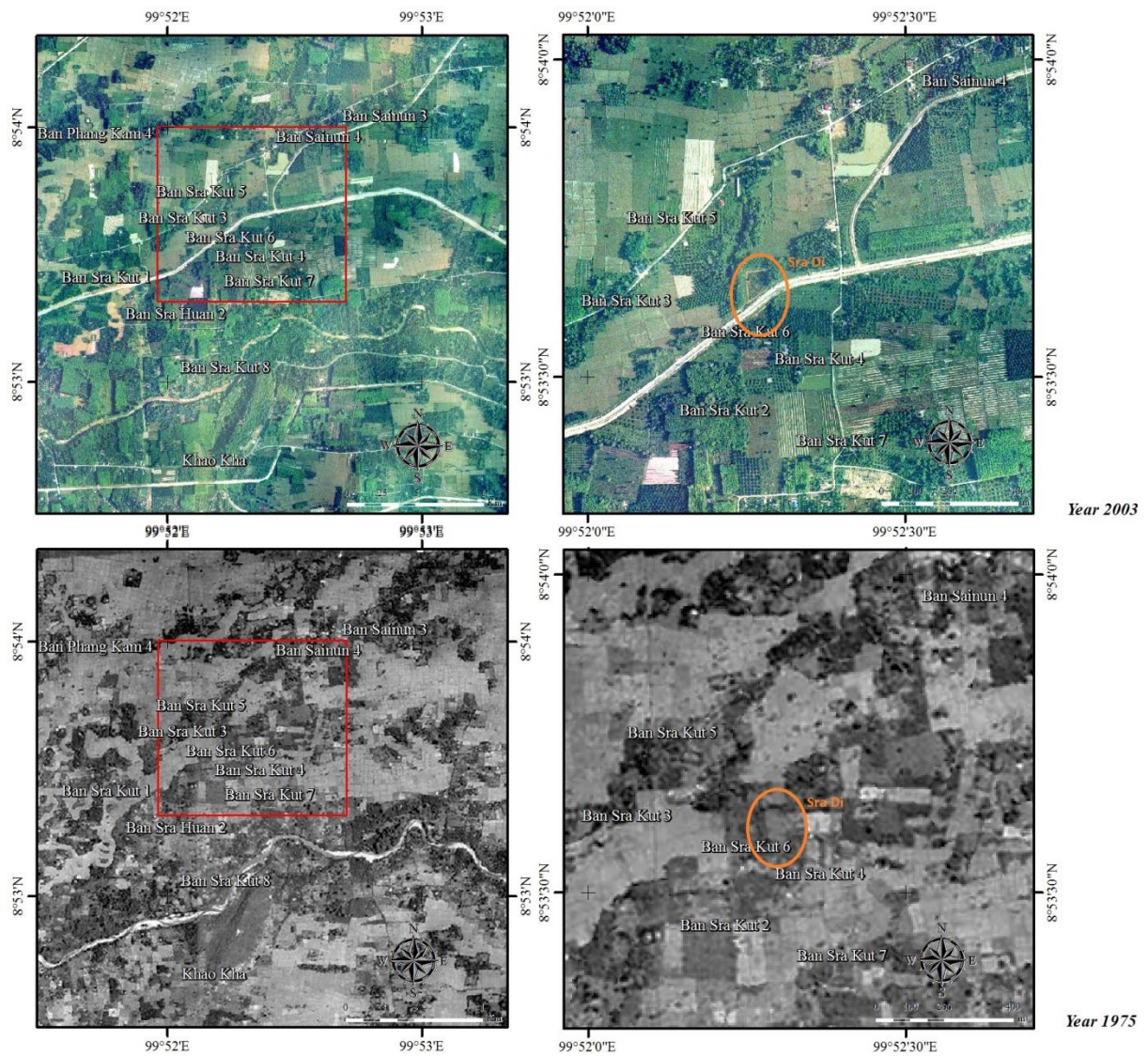
Figure 5.4: Sra Di, an ancient large reservoir (50 x 150 m.), around 1 km. north of Khao Kha
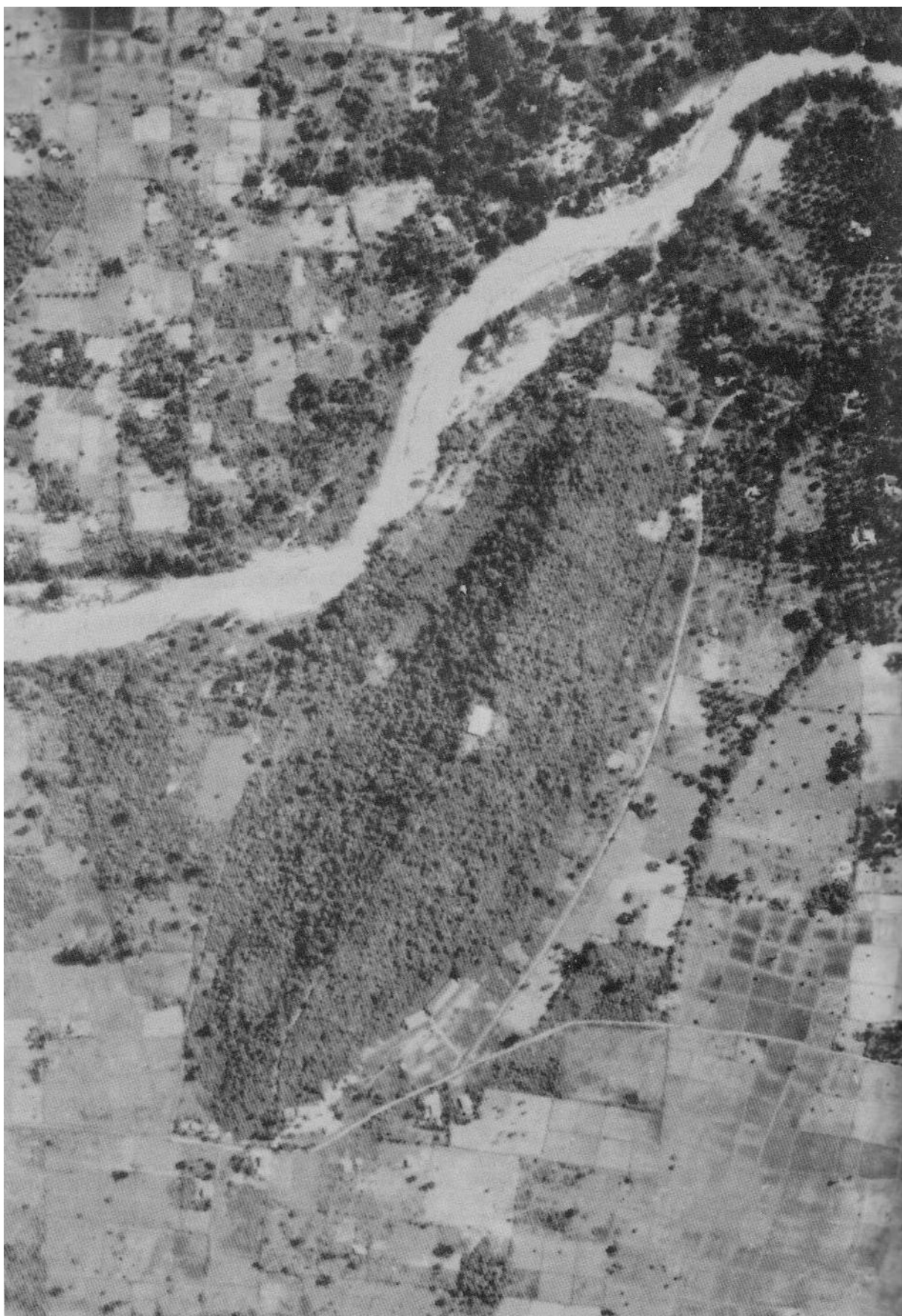
Figure 5.5: Aerial Photograph of Khao Kha

Figure 5.6: Locations of Monuments at Khao Kha

Figure 5.7: An ancient Hindu shrine (Monument no. 2) at Khao Kha,
Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat (c. the 8th century CE)

Figure 5.8: Threshold and doorframe at Monument no. 2 at Khao Kha,
Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat (c. the 8th century CE)

Figure 5.9: The Northern Svayambhuva-linga at Khao Kha

South   North

Brick monument @ 57 m. (MSL)
Brick monument @ 62 m. (MSL)
Pond 8m. X 13m. @ 63 m. (MSL)
Brick monument @ 65 m. (MSL)
Pond 12m. X 24m. @ 63 m. (MSL)
Brick monument @ 66 m. (MSL)
Pond @ 59 m. (MSL)
The Svayambuva-linga @ 53 m. (MSL)

0 m. (MSL)

         ~62 m.   ~45 m.   ~36 m.   ~68 m.   ~12 m.   ~80 m.   ~198 m.

Longitude (DD)	99.870897	99.87124	99.871354	99.871455	99.871875		99.872236	99.872236
Latitude (DD)	8.879524	8.880217	8.880385	8.880697	8.881202		8.881942	8.881942
					99.871891			
					8.881215			

Remark : DD : Decimal degree (WGS 1984)

Figure 5.10: Elevations of Monuments at Khao Kha from Sea Level

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Figure 5.11: PC ground station control UAV autopilot for taking pictures
along each flight plan
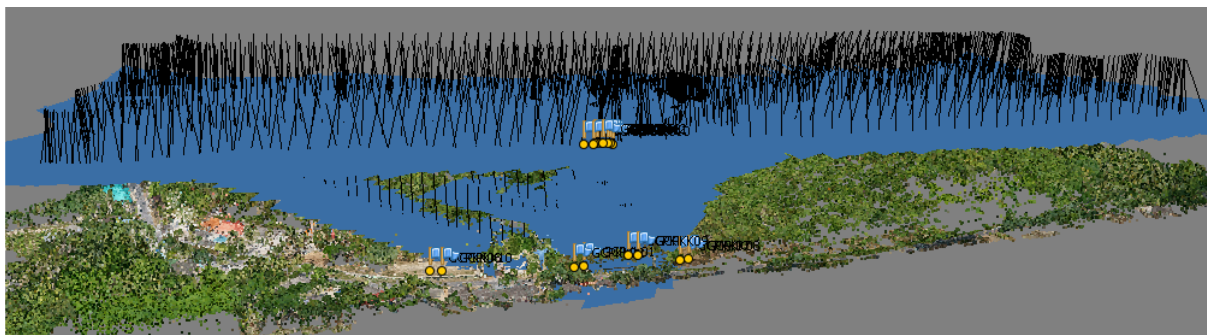
Figure 5.12: 3D processing from 2D pictures, took by UAV, with Agisoft Photoscan software

Figure 5.13: High resolution 3D image map from SfM technique

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Figure 5.14: High resolution color orthophotograpic map

105 m

47.8 m

-9.21 m

205 m
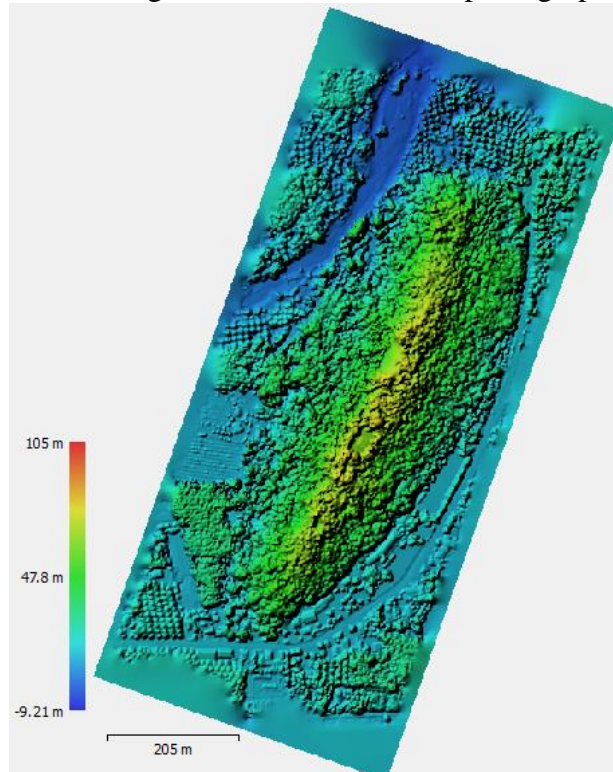
Figure 5.15: Digital surface model (DFM) from SfM technique for morphological and topographic study

Figure 5.16: UAV
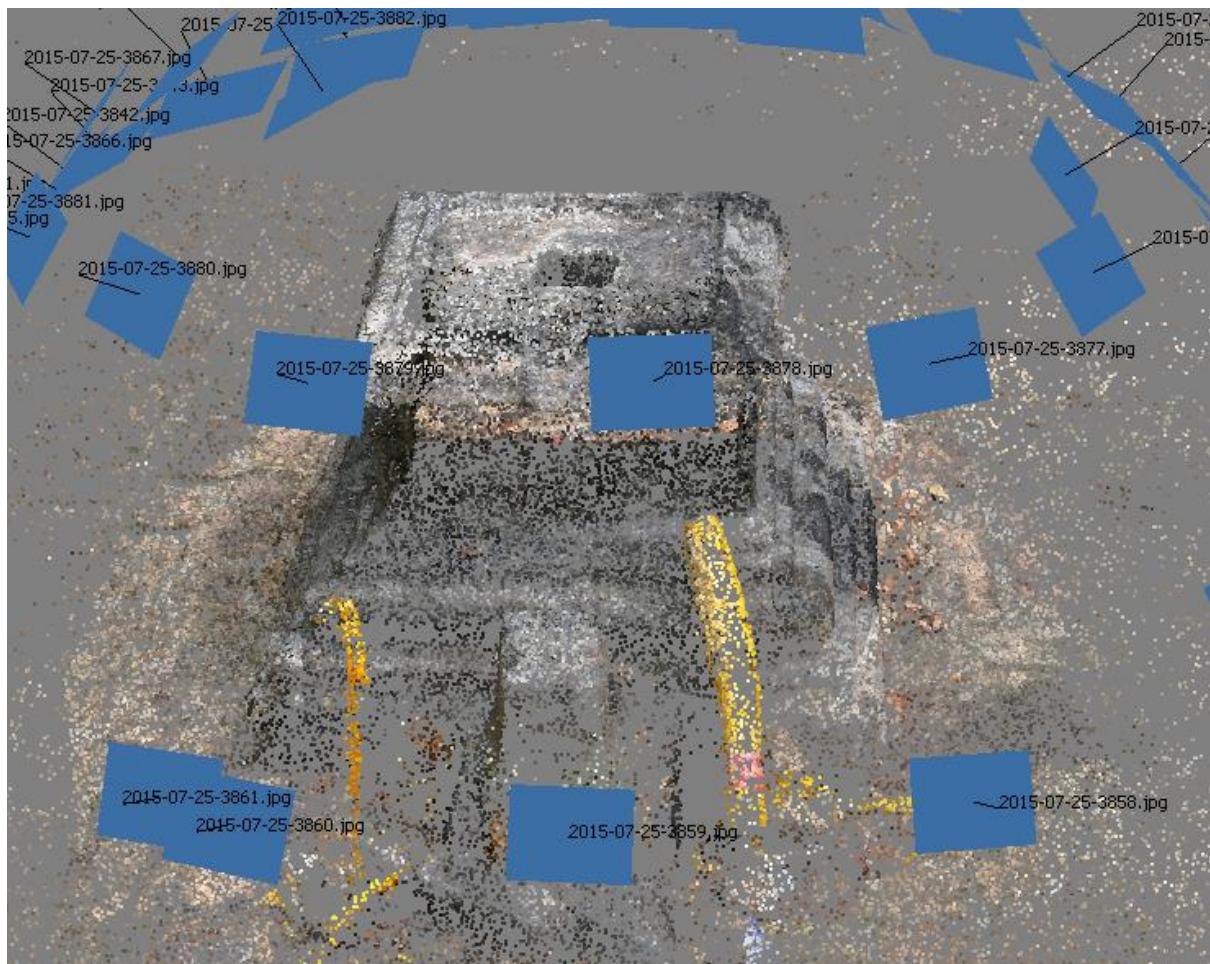
Figure 5.17: 3D processing from 2D pictures, took by terrestrial snapshot, with Agisoft Photoscan software

Figure 5.18: High resolution 3D object from SfM technique
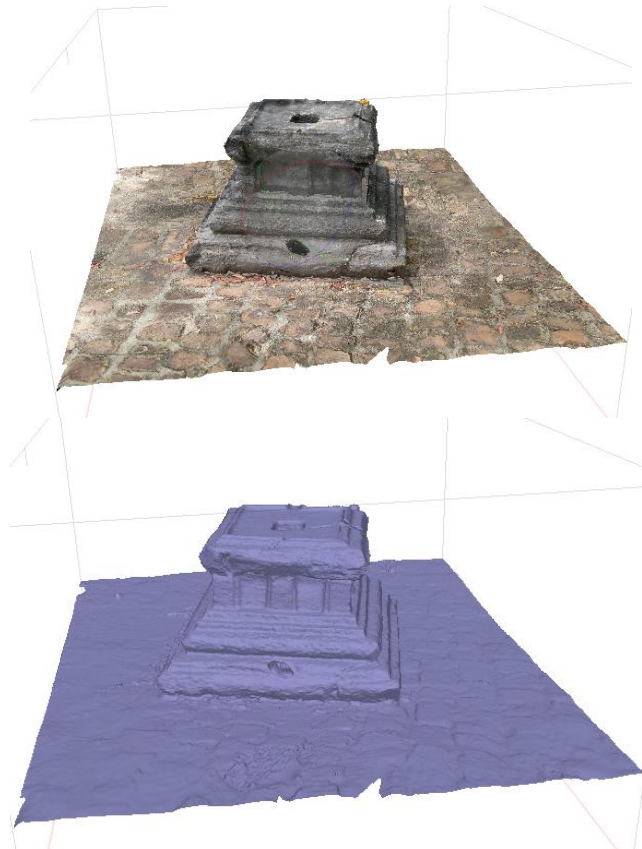
Figure 5.19: 3-D model created with the point cloud technique

Figure 5.20: Image of Khao Kha generated using drone and SfM Technique
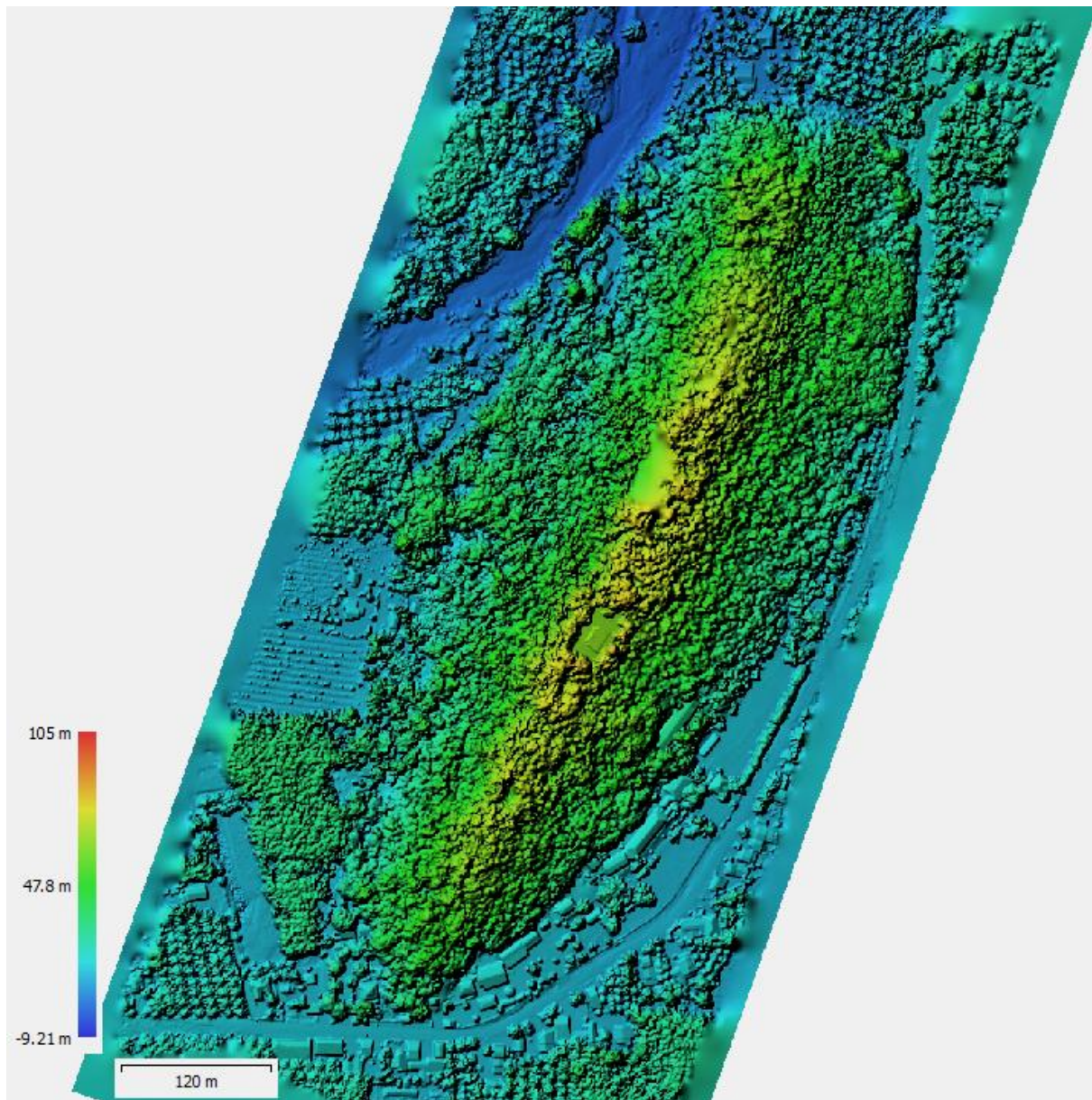
Figure 5.21: Image of Khao Kha's elevation generated using drone and SfM Technique

Khao Kha seen from the south

Khao Kha seen from the west

Khao Kha seen from the east

Khao Kha seen from the north

Figure 5.22: Khao Kha seen from different direction, generated by SfM technique
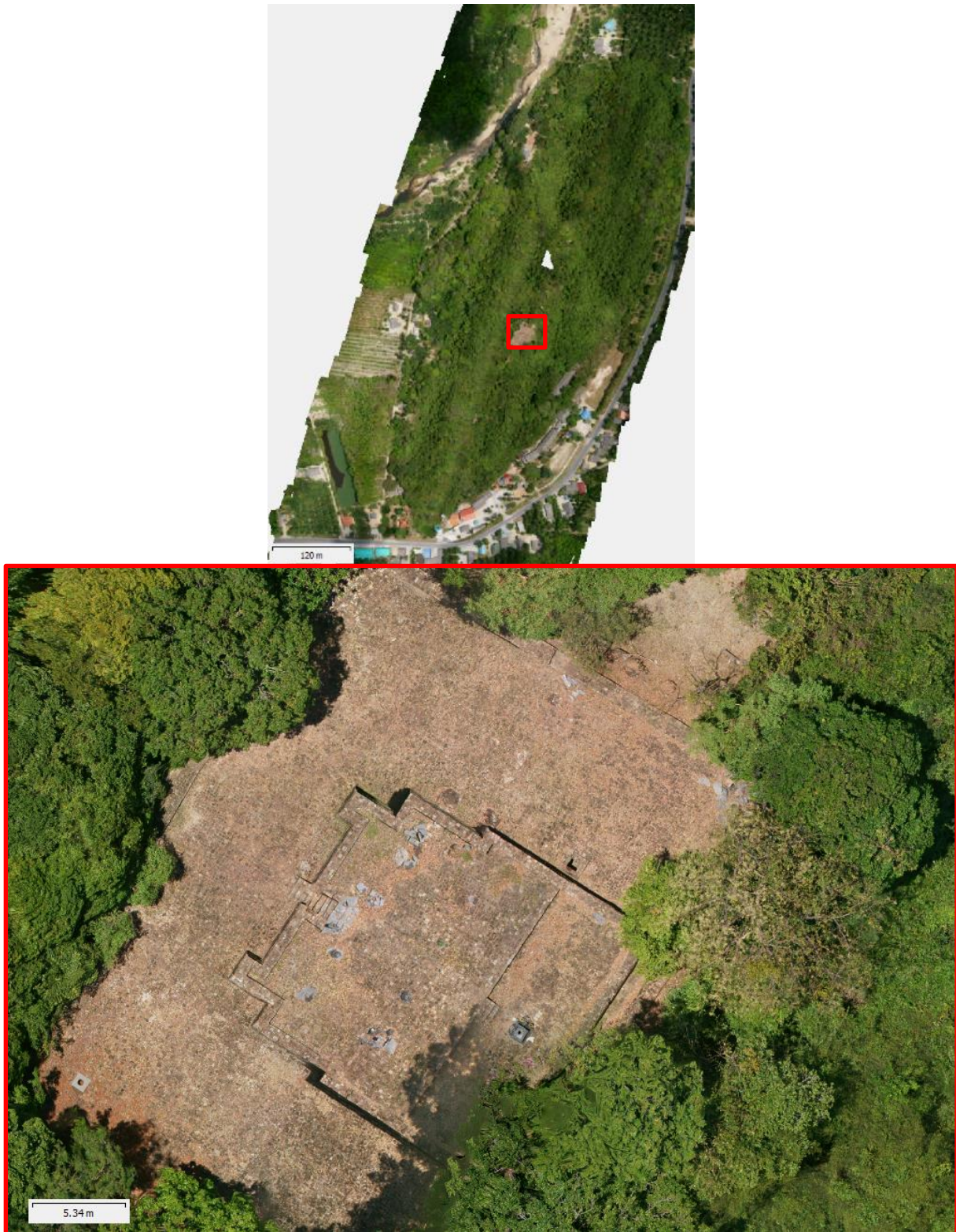
Figure 5.23: Monument No. 2 (largest brick structure) at Khao Kha, generated using SfM Technique

Figure 5.24: Monument No. 4 at Khao Kha, generated using SfM Technique

Outputs

1. Parts of the discoveries from this research project will be published in the SPAFA Journal, an international journal of SEAMEO SPAFA.

2. The discoveries from this research project can be used for academic and community development purposes. For the academic purposes, the discoveries from this research project can be used for national and international publications and presentations in the conferences, for teaching students, and for producing books, which will enhanced in the future. For the community development purposes, the discoveries from this research project can be used by the communities and the government to preserve and manage archaeological heritage for various reasons, such as for community-based education, for heritage tourism, and for community-based museums and historical park.

The Heartland of Tambralinga: An Archaeological Landscape Approach

Dr. Wannasarn Noonsuk (Walailak University)

Introduction

Flowering in the maritime intraregional exchange network in Southeast Asia since the late centuries BCE, coastal communities in Nakhon Si Thammarat, on the western edge of the Gulf of Siam, were probably later regarded collectively under the name "Tamali" in Mahanidesa, an Indian Pali text dated to around the 2nd or 3rd century CE as a destination of Indian merchants. Historians tend to agree that Tamali was Tambralinga, the name of a kingdom appeared in the local inscriptions, and Tan-ma-ling, the name used in the Chinese accounts, among other names (Wheatley 1966). Historical evidence has suggested that the coastal land of Nakhon Si Thammarat was the heartland of Tambralinga; however, only a few archaeological investigations have been conducted in its heartland. Since this paper is a result of the research project entitled "In Search of Tambralinga's Heartland: The Distribution and Chronology of Archaeological Sites in Central Sichon District, Nakhon Si Thammarat", which was supported by the Thailand Research Fund (TRG5680069), it explores the physical and cultural landscape of the area in Sichon District, in which there was the highest density of archaeological sites dated to the 6th to 11th centuries CE. GIS data and scientific dating of some important sites will also be discussed along with the meanings of the heartland's cultural geography in general.

The Coastal Lands of Nakhon Si Thammarat

For general background information, the coastal lands of Nakhon Si Thammarat province were the heartland of the Tambralinga kingdom. It is an almost rectangular area covering 1,275 km^2 (127,500 hectare), 85 km long in the north-south direction and 15 km in the east-west direction. It is flanked by a mountain range in the west and the sea of the Gulf of Siam in the east (Figure 1). Its northern reach is at the Phlai Dam mountain, between Khanom and Sichon districts, where the smooth coastal plain is interrupted by a group of mountains and hills before reaching the Bay of Bandon; its southern limit would seem to be the Sao Thong river, beyond which the archaeological record thins out (W. Noonsuk 2013).

The coastal lands of the Nakhon Si Thammarat province were mostly formed by the accumulation of erosions from the Nakhon Si Thammarat mountain range (colluvial and alluvial deposits) and by the movement of waves in the Gulf of Siam (coastal wave-dominated deposits). The colluvial and alluvial deposits closest to the Nakhon Si Thammarat range were formed in the Pleistocene epoch (2,588,000-11,700 years BP). This area was fertile and suitable for rice cultivation and orchards. The coastal wave-dominated deposits were marked by the formation of beach ridges during the maximum transgression of sea water in the years 6,000-8,000 BP. After that, the sea started to regress and formed new sandy beach ridges running parallel to the older one in the north-south direction (Suphawajruksakul 2005:19-23). The waves moved northward along the east coast of peninsular Siam, carrying sands and forming the coastal land east of the oldest beach ridge (Midas Consultants 1996:1). Evidence of this can still be seen in the geomorphology of the Talumpuk Spit in Pak Phanang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat province and Ta Chi Spit in Pattani Province. These ancient beach ridges are a very important geographical feature in the settlement pattern in this area. They provided coastal high ground

that would not normally be flooded in the rainy season and also served as highways for

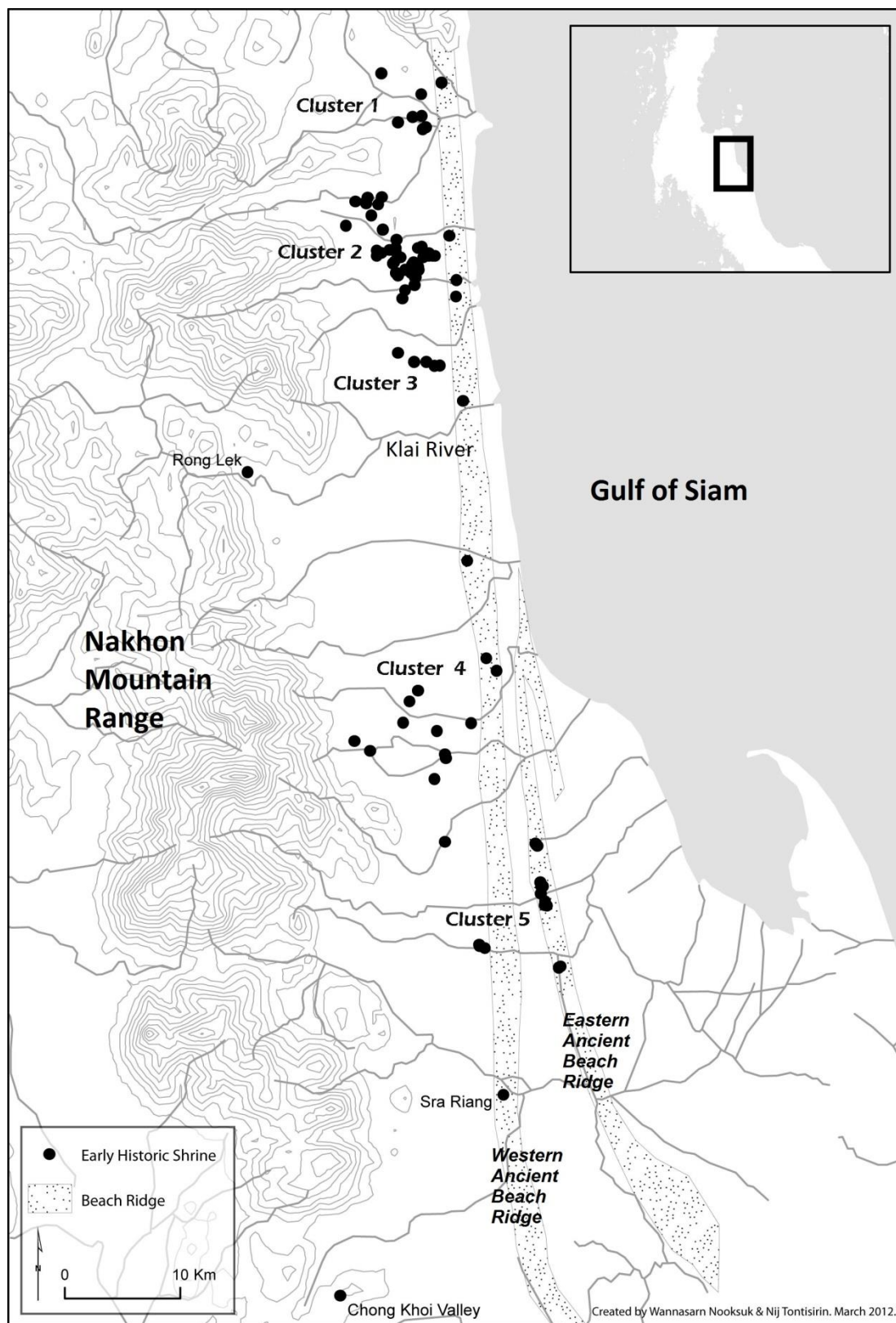communication along the coast.

Figure 1: geography and distribution of sites in the Early Tambralinga period

in coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat

Two prominent ancient beach ridges in coastal Nakhon Si Thammarat run in the north-south direction (Suphawajruksakul 2005:26). They are 2 to 5 meters high and 1 to 5 kilometers wide. These two beach ridges are almost joined to form a bident shape, with a long handle descending from north to south and two prongs breaking away from, but still running parallel to, one another. The ridge on the west is older than the east. It was the shoreline around 6,000 years ago and is still very close to the present shoreline in the northern portion of the heartland from the estuary of the Tha Sung River northward. It runs from the northern end of the heartland of the region at the Phlai Dam Mountain in Sichon District to the Cha-Uat River in Cha-Uat District. It is approximately 120 km in length. The Cha-Uat River seems to be a remnant of the massive ancestral river that ended this beach ridge and helped create the large, fertile flood plain or the old tidal flat east of the beach ridge, the so-called Pak Phanang river basin (Suphawajruksakul 2005:35). The widest distance from the present shoreline is about 40 km. at Cha-Uat District. This is the "western beach ridge" referred to in this study.

The second beach ridge is younger than the western beach ridge. It was a long submarine barrier when the western beach ridge was the shoreline, but when the seawater regressed sometime after 6,000 years ago, it emerged and became a new shoreline (Suphawajruksakul 2005:35). It runs around 65 km in length from the delta of the Tha Sung River to the Cha-Uat River (or the Karaket River, as it is called in that area) in Chian Yai District. The longest distance from the present shoreline is about 30 km at Chian Yai District. The distance between this beach ridge to the western one ranges from 1 to 10 km. They are closer to each other in the north and then move away from each other as they descend southward. This will be referred to as the "eastern beach ridge."

The eastern beach ridge was important in the establishment of the kingdoms of Tambralinga and Nakhon Si Thammarat. In the 13th century, it was called Had Sai Kaeo, or Crystal Sand Beach; it was a sacred place on which the capital city of the Nakhon Si Thammarat kingdom was founded. According to the *Chronicle of Nakhon Si Thammartat City*, a Buddha relic was buried there and it is where the Great Reliquary or the stupa of Wat Mahathat was constructed (Wyatt 1975:66-77).

The Nakhon Si Thammarat mountain range called Khao Luang is a high, dense range that forms the backbone of peninsular Siam. Its peak, Yot Khao Luang, rising 1,835 m above sea level, is the highest mountain peak in the isthmian tract. This was probably used as a prominent landmark for maritime navigation to Tambralinga. The Nakhon Si Thammarat range acts as a massive wall ensuring that moisture carried by the northeast monsoon will become rains feeding the coastal plains of Nakhon Si Thammarat. The coastal plains of Nakhon Si Thammarat province are indeed well-watered. It rains there roughly nine months a year from May to January, under the influence of monsoon winds. The average rainfall is 1922 ml. per year; thus, it is one of the wettest areas in Thailand.

A number of short rivers flow from this range to the coastal plains and the Gulf of Siam, leaving fertile alluvial deposits on the flat plain before cutting across the beach ridge to the sea. During the rainy season, the area behind beach ridge floods, as it acts as a natural dam containing water inside before letting it go to the sea. Although seasonal flooding is usually short-lived because of the many rivers channeling water to the sea, it leaves sufficient alluvial deposits on the coastal plains to provide suitable support for wet rice agriculture (W. Noonsuk 2013).

Tambralinga's heartland area has been occupied by people since the prehistoric period. There are some Mesolithic sites (12,000-5000 B.P.) in the mountain areas and perhaps one on the

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ancient beach ridge at the site of Ban Bang Phan Sai (P. Noonsuk 1997:81). The cultural

chronology in the coastal land most clearly starts with the Neolithic Period.

In this paper, I will focus on the area between the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon

rivers in Sichon district, Nakhon Si Thammarat province, since this area has the highest density

of ancient brick shrines dated to the Early Tambralinga period (c. the 6th to 11th centuries CE) in

the coastal lands of Nakhon Si Thammarat (Figure 2). This fact suggests that this area was a

significant center of Tambralinga Kingdom, which deserves more archaeological investigations.

The Archaeological Geography of Sichon

The area between the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon rivers in Sichon district is

situated between the Nakhon Si Thammarat mountain range in the west and the Gulf of Siam in

the east (Figure 2). Around 50 years ago, people in this areas used walking trails and rivers to

commute with communities in both the mountain and seashore areas. Although the people in the

mountain areas can sometime themselves take a journey to the communities on the seashores and

vice versa, the communities in Sichon area also served as an important link between

communities in those two different ecozones to facilitate the flow of goods and social

interaction. This area was also a significant area for wet rice cultivation and cattle production. It

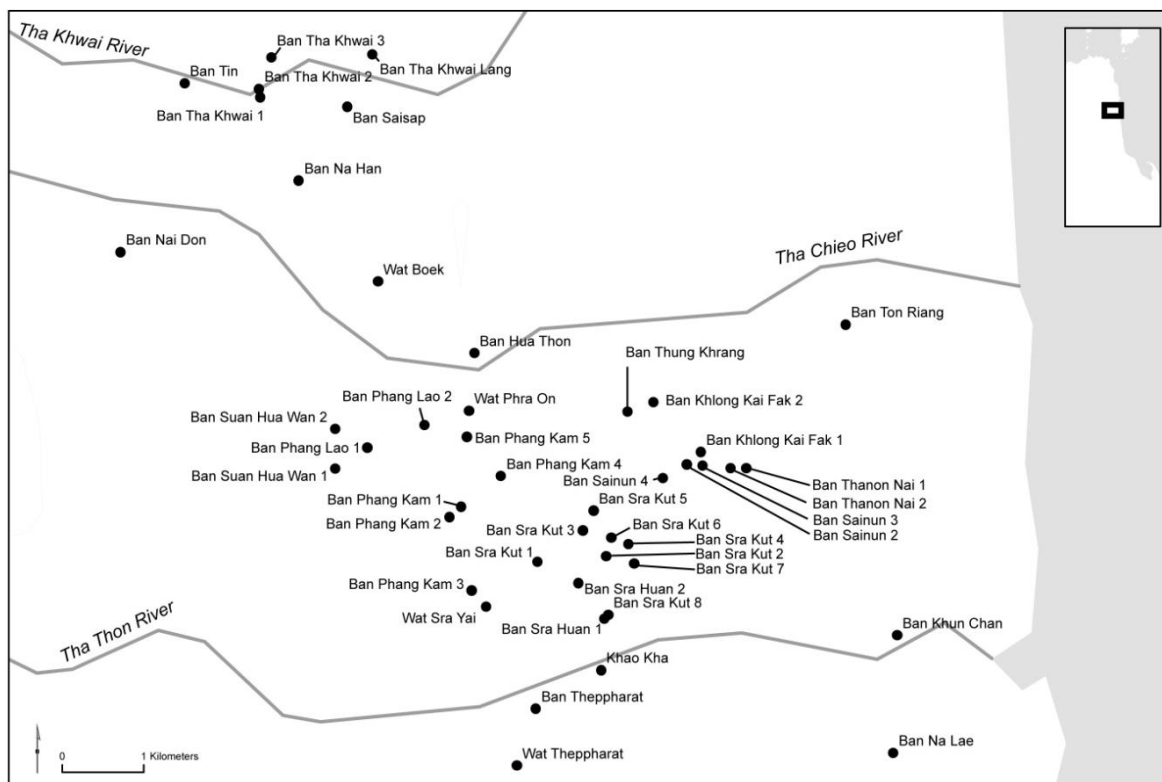has been said until now by people in Nakhon Si Thammarat that the best cattle comes from

Sichon.

Figure 2: the distribution of sites in the area between the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo,

and Tha Thon rivers in Sichon district

To study the cultural landscape in the past, information layers of aerial photographs, satellite images, and GIS data were created and overlaid on top of one another using a GIS software (ArcGIS 9.3) to analyze the distribution of sites (all of them have brick shrines, most likely of Hinduism) and suitable areas for agriculture between the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon rivers in Sichon district (Figure 2). The coordinates of the sites of the Early Tambralinga period (c. the 6th to 11th centuries CE) had been collected using handheld GPS unit with reference to the WGS 84 datum (zone 47) and the UTM/UPS system. There were 45 sites found and recorded in this area, and among these sites, 29 of them were condensed in a small area of 12.5 square kilometers at the middle of the cluster. When overlaying these coordinates on

the aerial photographs and drainage layers, it was found that the sites were far from the modern

rivers between 17.7-1129.4 meters with an average at 302.5 meters. Yet, there was the standard

deviation at 241.4 meters. Therefore, after removing of the extreme numbers in statistics, the

average distance between the sites and the rivers should be between 61-543 meters. However,

when we took into account the traces of possible ancient rivers and floodplains, we found that all

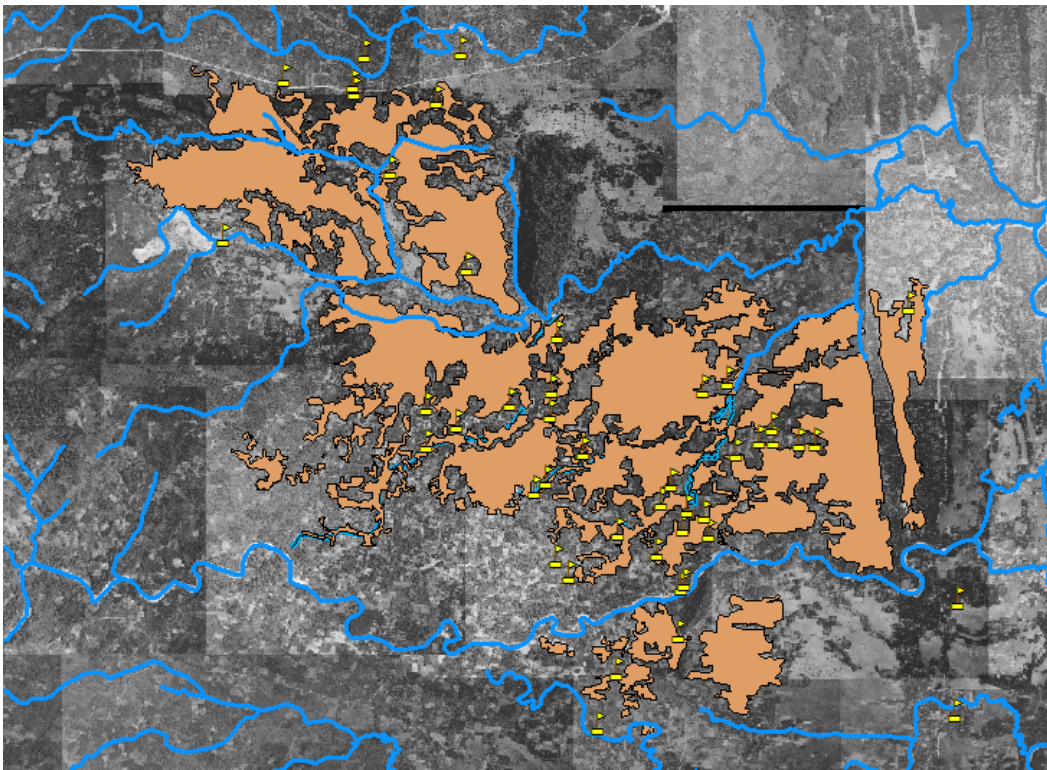of the sites were close to the waters (Figure 3).

Figure 3: the distribution of site and the floodplain

In terms of soils, all the 45 sites were located in 4 types of soil, in which 7 of them were

on loam, 8 on alluvfium, 19 on sand loam, and 11 on silt loam (Graph 1). The slope gradient of

this area was around 1-5%. The soils in this area were formed by the alluvial deposits carried by

waters from the mountains, especially in the rainy seasons when this area was flooded.
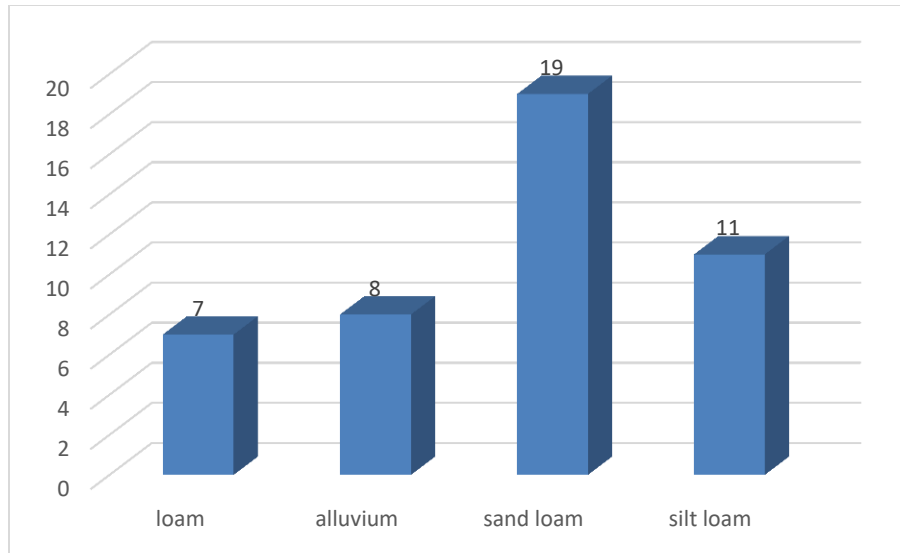
Graph 1: number of sites in each soil type

Among the sites found in this area, Khao Kha is the biggest one. It is a massive Hindu religious complex built on a natural hill with at least 7 religious structures. The hill is around 850 meters long and 300 meters wide, with the height of around 72 meters from the sea level (Srichai 2001:173). The Tha Thon river is only around 50 meters in the northwest of the hill. There was an ancient walkway from the river up to the hilltop at around the middle of the western side of the hill, suggesting the importance of river transportation in the past. On the bank of the river at the foothill of Khao Kha, some polished stone axes were found, an indication of human occupations in this area perhaps prior to the foundations of Hindu shrines here.

Some shrines at Khao Kha were made of bricks with some stone architectural parts but some were made of purely stones, such as the boulder-linga with stone platform at the northern end of Khao Kha. Two brick samples acquired during survey in the unexcavated area on the ridge of the hill, south of this linga, were TL-dated in 2014 by the TL Lab at Kasetsart University to $1,536\pm123$ BP and $1,562\pm109$ BP or 355-601 CE and 343-561 CE, suggesting that the brick

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structure(s) on the hill may been first constructed at a very early time. To map and study Khao Kha in details, the three-dimensional mapping methods were employed. Data and images from total station theodolite, digital cameras, 3-D scanners, and drones were used to create 3-D point cloud models (Figure 4). It is still a work in progress.
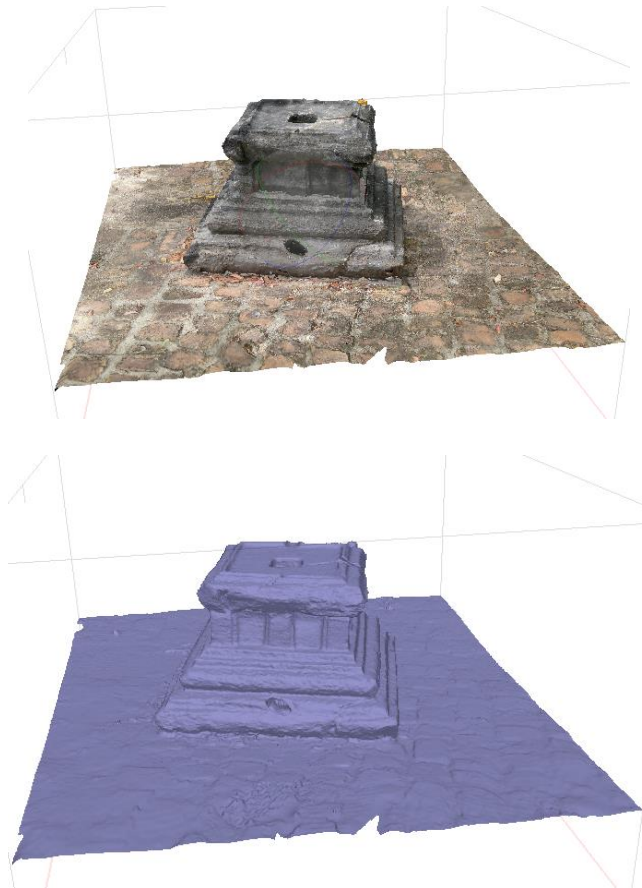

Figure 4: 3-D model created with the point cloud technique

There are also 2 more TL dates from the brick shrines from Sichon district. The first was from Ban Theparat, not far from Khao Kha to the southwest. It was TL-dated in 2014 by the same lab mentioned above to 1,655 $\pm$ 125 BP or 234-484 CE, suggesting that the communities and brick shrines in the Sichon area may have been part of one of the earliest center in the historical period of Southeast Asia. The second TL date came from Wat Khao Phanom Trai. It

was TL-dated in 2011 by the same lab to 670 + 50 or 1291-1391 CE, suggesting that some communities in this area were continued until the 14th century CE.

Conclusion

Taking into account all the information mentioned above, it may be proposed that the ancient communities, which built and maintained the brick shrines, had lived in the areas suitable for lowland agriculture, especially for wet rice cultivation, with sufficient supply of water and alluvial soils. Although I am still in the process of estimating the size of population in this area based on the size of agricultural areas that people may possibly have used to produce crop plants, it may be said from the density of brick shrines, the massiveness of the Khao Kha complex, and the extent of the suitable area for wet rice cultivation that this area between the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon rivers in Sichon district was the most concentrated center of population in Tambralinga Kingdom, if not the capital city. Also, this food-producing area may have not been abandoned after the fall of Tambralinga Kingdom and some communities still occupied this area until the rise of Nakhon Si Thammarat Kingdom in the 13th-14th centuries CE.

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