

ARCHAEOLOGY AND CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY
OF TAMBRALINGA IN PENINSULAR SIAM

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This dissertation has three main research questions. First, how did the Tambralinga Kingdom develop? Second, what was the significance of this kingdom in maritime Southeast Asia? And, third, what was the kingdom's cultural geography? To answer these questions, the author reviewed the previous scholarly work on the topics and conducted a series of archaeological surveys and excavations, ethnographic interviews, and studies of historical records, such as stone inscriptions and old chronicles.

In terms of its development, Tambralinga, located in Peninsular Siam between the South China Sea and the Bay of Bengal, had the openness of an island to trade and cultural influences. It originally emerged as a trade station in the Trans-Asiatic Trade Network in the early centuries CE and became a powerful kingdom with its peak in the 13th century. Its heartland was 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 period called “the Early Tambralinga Period” in the dissertation. The locations of the shrines suggest the distribution of communities and communication routes along the coast of Nakhon. Five clusters of shrines are identified in this work. The center of the early Tambralinga Kingdom was likely situated in the area between the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon Rivers. In the late 8th century, Tambralinga was associated with Srivijaya, an entity that could also be viewed as a league of trading polities, which focused on trade and commercial collaboration, rather than agonistic engagement. The peak of the Tambralinga Kingdom seems to be in the 13th century. A large number of Chinese ceramics dated to the 13th to 14th centuries were discovered by the author in the excavations in 2009 at Nakhon City, the capital of the Tambralinga Kingdom in this period.

In terms of cultural geography, the heartland of Tambralinga had beach ridges running in the north-south direction as the core of its landscape. This strip of the coastal land offered easy travel and exchange. 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.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Archaeologist Wannasarn Noonsuk was born on 1 August 1979, in Nakhon Si Thammarat, Southern Thailand. His father, Dr. Preecha Noonsuk, taught history, art history, and archaeology at various universities in Southern Thailand, and he fostered the author's interest in these fields, bringing him to archaeological sites from a young age. The author attended Wat Mahathat Elementary School and Kanlayanee Si Thammarat Secondary School in Nakhon Si Thammarat. He entered Silpakorn University in Bangkok, majoring in Archaeology, and he received a Bachelor of Art degree in 2001 with 1st class honors. In 2002, His Majesty the King of Thailand awarded the author with the Anandamahidol Scholarship, one of the most prestigious scholarships in Thailand, to pursue graduate studies in archaeology in the United States of America. During 2002-2005, he completed his studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa where he received a Master's degree in Anthropology in 2005. During 2005-2012, he attended the Ph.D. program in the Department of History of Art and Archaeology at Cornell University under the supervision of Professors Kaja M. McGowan and Stanley J. O'Connor.

In 2010, the author founded the Archaeology of Peninsular Siam Project and has since served as its director. This long-term project benefits from collaboration between Walailak University in Southern Thailand, the Archaeology and Southeast Asia Programs of Cornell University, the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, and L'École Française d'Extrême-Orient to promote archaeological exploration, education and training, publication, and heritage management in the area of Peninsular Siam. In 2012, he received an appointment to teach in the Doctoral Program in Asian Studies at the School of Liberal Arts, Walailak University.

This dissertation is dedicated to Dr. Preecha Noonsuk,
my father and devoted archaeologist,
who had waited his whole life to see this dissertation.

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INTRODUCTION

Geography... [of Peninsular Siam] is the twin sister of art: tin, valuable forest products, easy transpeninsular river passages have all ensured that the region would be both a commercial and cultural crossroads where almost every major South-east Asian and Indian style would leave some trace. The sophistication and dazzling quality of many of the works of art discovered in this area or believed to have come from here is striking. Assuming that there is a correlation between the general cultural level of the small estuarine states, the ruined monuments of which are still visible on the Peninsula, and the quality of the art works produced in them, they may be compared to the brilliant civilizations of the oasis trading cities strung out along the caravan routes of Central Asia. (O'Connor 1996:596)

Peninsular Siam or Southern Thailand, the northern part of the Malay Peninsula, is an isthmian tract between the South China Sea and the Bay of Bengal (Map 1.1). It was an important crossroad of civilizations since the mid-1st millennium BCE. Unlike the lower part of the Malay Peninsula which was heavily forested and almost impossible to cross, the isthmian tract had a series of trans-isthmian routes comprising of rivers and walking trails running from the west to the east coasts and providing passageways across the isthmus. At around the middle of its long eastern shoreline in what is now Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, a significant kingdom in the history of maritime Southeast Asia, Tambralinga, once stood. In this introduction, I will offer a brief history of Tambralinga, review previous scholarly work on this kingdom, identify research questions, and propose a working methodology by discussing the research methods and key concepts, especially cultural geography, that will be used in the work.

Brief Historical Background

Tambralinga was one of the most important states in the peninsula, whose historical existence was supported by a number of documentary and archaeological evidence. Unlike other



Map 1.1 Asia and Peninsular Siam

early states in the peninsula in c. the mid-1st millennium CE, Tambralinga's name occurred in several local stone inscriptions. The place-name of Tambralinga first appeared actually in the Mahaniddesa, an Indian text of the 2nd or 3rd century CE in its Pali form, Tamali, as recognized by Sylvain Levi (Wheatley 1983: 237). It was a destination of Indian merchants who came to Southeast Asia in search of wealth (Wheatley 1966: 184). The center of Tambralinga is believed to be in what is today Nakhon Si Thammarat Province.

On the basis of Indian records and local inscriptions, it can be assumed that Tambralinga existed in the isthmian region since the 2nd or 3rd century CE, and continued into the early centuries of the 2nd millennium CE. In the late 12th century, another name of Tambralinga emerged: Nagara Sri Dharmaraja in Sanskrit or Nakhon Si Thammarat in Thai. Although the name Tambralinga was still used in the Chinese accounts, as Dan-ma-ling, until 1351 (Sumio 2004:52), the name Nakhon Si Thammarat became more popular in the local records after the late 12th century. The Nakhon Si Thammarat Kingdom seems to be the subsequent stage of the development of the Tambralinga Kingdom and both of them were centered on the coastal lands of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. In this work, I will refer to Nakhon Si Thammarat as Nakhon, the same way the local people refer to it¹.

In the late 8th century, Tambralinga was associated with Srivijaya, a powerful maritime kingdom in Sumatra and the Straits of Melaka. However, as will be discussed later, the author proposes that the relation with Srivijaya was merely a convenience of trading and relations rather than as dependency of an empire based on Palembang in Sumatra. Quite possibly Srivijaya was a trading bloc, something like the Hanseatic League in the North and Baltic Seas in the 13th to

¹ However, more often, the local people would simply refer to it as Khon as the southern Thai people, according to their dialect, tend to say any word as briefly as possible. Nakhon Si Thammarat is the name of the kingdom, the city (muang), the modern-day province, and the mountain range in the middle of that province, among other things.

15th centuries. Srivijaya was an organization that focused on trade and commercial collaboration, rather than agonistic engagement. It created market in maritime Southeast Asia and allowed its participatory kingdoms their autonomies.

The peak of the Tambralinga Kingdom seems to be in the 13th century as it expanded its trade in maritime Southeast Asia and sent a series of envoys to China. On the other hand, Wolters (1958) mentioned that Tambralinga might have already been a powerful kingdom earlier than that, in the 10th century, when it sent envoys to China and one of its rulers was able to establish himself as the overlord of Angkor. A large number of Chinese ceramics dated to the 13th to 14th centuries were discovered by the author in the excavations in 2009 at Nakhon City, the capital of the Tambralinga Kingdom in this period. The historical documents suggest that Tambralinga subsumed the whole isthmus under its rule and sent army across the Bay of Bengal to occupy the northern part of Sri Lanka. However, its domination was short-lived, perhaps only for a century, and it was annexed by the Ayutthaya Kingdom from the north in c. the 15th century. On the basis of historical records, it is possible to assume that Tambralinga was a significant maritime polity which had a long history of approximately ten centuries.

Questions and Related Concepts

Although scholars have appreciated the fame of Tambralinga in the history of maritime Southeast Asia, especially in the period after the 12th century, its material culture and cultural geography have still been less studied. In this work, there are three main research questions. First, how did the Tambralinga Kingdom develop? Second, what was the significance of this kingdom in maritime Southeast Asia? And, third, what was the kingdom's cultural geography? To answer these questions, the author reviewed the previous scholarly work on the topics and

conducted a series of archaeological surveys and excavations, ethnographic interviews, and studies of historical records, such as stone inscriptions and old chronicles. These various research methods went hand in hand and constituted the inter-disciplinary approach for this work. Although the second question is case specific, the other two can be related to general concepts and theories.

How did the Tambralinga Kingdom develop?

This question can be linked to the concepts of secondary state formation. Many scholars have theorized the nature of the state and its evolution (e.g. Claessen and van de Velde 1987; Claessen and Oosten 1996; Cohen and Service 1978; Feinman and Marcus 1998; Haas 1982; Parkinson and Galaty 2007; Possehl 1998:268). They usually divide the state into two types: primary and secondary states. While the first is considered pristine, the second is derivative. Although their definitions of the state vary, they usually involve centralized government, institutionalized social hierarchy, specialized professions, organized religion, and territory. Various models related to the characteristics and operations of early states have also been developed, such as the peer polity interaction model (Renfrew 1999), the dynamic model (Marcus 1992), and the dual-processual model (Blanton et al. 1996).

In Southeast Asia, the origin of early states has been of great interest to scholars (e.g. Coedès 1968; Higham 1989; O'Reilly 2007; Stark 2001, 2006a, 2006b; Wheatley 1979, 1983). However, early states in Southeast Asia might have differed from the definitions given by theorists who work in other parts of the world in that they may be better described as decentralized rather than centralized, and prestige-oriented rather than territory-oriented (see Geertz 1980; Reid 2008; Wolters 1999). In the case of the Tambralinga Kingdom, although we

know that it was a secondary state with institutionalized social hierarchy, kingship, and religions, we do not have sufficient evidence and knowledge, at the moment, to propose its internal socio-political characteristics, and, therefore, the author intentionally avoids imposing any generalized concepts developed elsewhere to the Tambralinga case. The aim of this work is to start with the basics, which is to enhance our understanding of Tambralinga's history, material culture, cultural geography, and the ways of life of its people.

In any case, the concepts related to the origin of the secondary states are based on the borrowings of political ideas and religions from the pre-existing states. It cannot be denied that early states in Southeast Asia exchanged goods with and borrowed cultural ideas from early states in India as early as the 4th century BCE (see Glover and Bellina 2011). This process is usually called the “Indianization” of Southeast Asian societies (see Coedès 1968; Manguin 2011). However, people and polities in Southeast Asia did not adopt the ready-to-use package of Indic cultures, but, instead, they selected and reshaped it to fit their own cultures. According to Wolters (1999), Indic elements tended to be fractured and restated, and were adopted by indigenous people through the process of local selection. He wrote, “the term ‘localization’ has the merit of calling our attention to something else outside the foreign materials. One way of conceptualizing ‘something else’ is as a local statement, of cultural interest but not necessarily in written form, into which foreign elements have retreated” (1999: 57). His concept of localization is now widely adopted in scholarship in the studies of Southeast Asia.

The localization of Indic elements that resulted from the social interactions between people in Southeast Asia and those in India is also examined by Dhida Saraya (1995). She suggests that the development of (Sri)Dvaravati, an initial phase of Thailand's history, was based

on the '*Patha Sangsan*'² among local communities, and between these communities and the external socio-cultural forces in which local maritime adventurers ventured out to other communities to seek experience and wealth and, ultimately, were drawn to participate in the larger Trans-Asiatic trade network strongly supported by China (1995:21-22). The key of this social development is the '*Patha Sangsan*', which can be translated as encountering-fraternizing. Professor Dhida credits the initial impulses of the development of coastal port-cities to both, with more emphasis on the latter, (1) the expansion of China and its increasing interest in the communities in the southern Southeast Asian coasts, and (2) the roles and initiative of the local Southeast Asian maritime adventurers from coastal communities. These people had skills and specializations in seafaring and acted as the medium of the cultural and economic *Patha Sangsan* by offering new 'things' to various communities in Southeast Asia, leading to the development of cities and states (Saraya 1995:22). The concept of *Patha Sangsan* is, thus, closely related to commercial activities and entails the encountering-fraternizing between groups of people, in which it originates a new outcome and changes the natures of all parties participating in the same interaction sphere.

As mentioned previously, Tambralinga seems to emerge in the Trans-Asiatic maritime trade network in the early centuries CE, although the late prehistoric communities on the coastal lands of Nakhon Province were already involved in the Southeast Asian intra-regional maritime exchange since the late centuries BCE. Situated in the isthmian tract between two oceans, it had the openness of an island to trade and cultural influences. People, goods and ideas from India could made their ways, with the assistance of indigenous people, from the west coast of the isthmus to Tambralinga via a series of trans-isthmian routes that included a network of rivers and

² *Patha* is a Thai word means to encounter, to collide, or to battle, whereas *Sangsan* has its root in Sanskrit and means to fraternizing, to socialize, or to interweave. It should be noted that this word alone remarkably suggests the *Patha Sangsan* between Thai and Sanskrit languages as well.

walking trails. The Indic elements that the merchants and itinerant priests brought with them to Tambralinga, such as the ideas of political organization, religions, and art styles, were localized and became important in the formation of the kingdom in the mid-1st millennium CE.

Tambralinga also became a center of innovation for the earliest Visnu images in Southeast Asia. According to the concept of the peer polity interaction proposed by Renfrew (1999), Tambralinga may be viewed as a center that transmitted innovations in art style and ideology related to it to its neighboring polities participating in the same interaction sphere. In this concept, polities in the same interaction sphere always interacted to one another in terms of trade, competitive emulation, symbolic entrainment, warfare, and the transmission of innovation. When innovations and socio-political improvements occurred in one polity, the neighboring polities would try to imitate or import such innovations as well because, according to Renfrew (1999:126-130), they had to constantly improve themselves in order to survive and thrive in the competitive environment of the interaction sphere.

Although trade was significant in the formation of the Tambralinga Kingdom, other elements were needed for this process as well, such as agricultural production. A kingdom had to have sufficient food supply in order to thrive. In Tambralinga, the flood plain behind the beach ridge is ample and could have produced sufficient rice for the population in the kingdom. This food supply could also have supported the operations of the kingdom, such as the army and the specialized professionals.

The Indic religions and their political ideas played important role in the process of state formation in Southeast Asia as well. Besides being the ideology that legitimized the dynastic rule and socio-political inequality, Indic religions also influenced the spatial arrangement of the polities. In Early Tambralinga (c. the 5th-11th centuries), Dr. Preecha Noonsuk, scholar from

southern Thailand and father of the current author, emphasizes the significance of Saivism as the center of the belief system, cosmology, education, and temple network. In his challenging work (2001b:195), he proposed that the spatial distribution of the Hindu shrines in the heartland 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 concept can be studied along with Tambiah's concept of the galactic polity, which was developed from the fifteenth-century Ayudhayan 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 power of kings. The galactic model represents a system that is maintained by the dialectic tension between the core and the surrounding peripheries and flow of social affiliations. Tambiah (1977: 69) finds that the system was embedded in "archaic cosmological mentality," and represented not only in kingdoms but also in local villages and small-scale segmentary societies. This Indic system elucidates certain key components of indigenous cosmological concepts (Tambiah 1977: 73). The fact that landscape is interwoven into life and cosmological belief in Southeast Asian traditions leads us to the study of cultural geography.

What was it like to walk in Tambralinga?: A Study of Cultural Geography

Geography is crucial in the study of state formation because every early state operated in space and used natural resources. For example, a state needed land for its population to live and produce food, rivers for water supply and transportation, mountains for timbers and forest products, and the open sea for maritime trade. However, geography is not just physical space but also cultural construction. This significant aspect of geography is studied in cultural geography.

Cultural geography is the study of the relationships between people and their environment. The environment includes not only the natural settings, but also the social settings and other cultural elements that in turn shape and give meanings to geography from past to present. Srisakara Vallibhotama, a renowned senior Thai scholar, proposes that cultural geography is the study of geographical landscape as it is related to people's lives and habitations, and it should include the study of how people or groups of people in the past interacted with one another, with their environments, and with supernatural power (Vallibhotama 2008b:7-10; 2008c: 10, 23). He noted people in Thailand have changed their natural space into cultural space by constructing myths to explain the meanings and significance of their locality. This view concurs with that of Nithi Aeosriwong, another senior Thai scholar. He postulates that humans place all the real and imaginary things, as well as the relationships between them, into the space and time they have themselves constructed. By doing so, humans give meanings to the things of their world and, therefore, their worldview is based on their conception of space and time (Aeosriwong 1995:132). In both views, natural space, therefore, became a cosmology of the local community, which tied people together in the society and established social rules for the relationships between a person and the society, the natural resources, and the supernatural power. The ownership of the natural resources did not belong to people but was given to the

supernatural power, or *phi* in Thai, the ultimate protector of such resources, such as rivers, forests, lakes, and animals³. In this way, people could not over-exploit such resources because it would be against the rules and *phi* would harm them (Vallibhotama k2008c: 35).

In this work, I will use the terms cultural geography and landscape interchangeably although, in fact, cultural geography is broader than the study of landscape as it also includes the study of seascape which is also an important component of Peninsular Siam. In cultural geography, landscape has been constructed, inhabited, and imagined by groups of people from past to present. Although the landscape is shaped by us, it also shapes and influences us as well. The question of how people in the past interacted with and used their landscape for their livelihood is well-established in archaeological inquiries. Although necessary in any archaeological research, we should also transcend beyond the boundary of this type of question to study landscape in other aspects. It should be noted again that landscape is not synonymous with the natural environment; it is the external world seen through our perception. Therefore, landscape is a cultural product created and understood in the social context; people culturally transform physical spaces into meaningful places (see Anschuetz et al. 2001:158), and sometimes they are imbued with political statements (see Smith 2003). However, landscape is not passive to human interpretation. It has its own agency as well, creating impression and imagination in people's minds and experiences. Paul Devereux draws several strands of data, both scientific and humanistic, to propose that the sense of place is a mental phenomenon, partly generated within the human mind and partly provoked by a place itself (2000:19). He examines the Greek concept of space that includes two words: *topos* meaning the physical aspects of a place; and *chora*, a mysterious, less passive property of space, a more subtle and poetic quality.

³ See also the Marxian concept of alienation in Sangren (2000).

He notes “when we consider chora, place becomes an agent that provokes our sensibilities, that can stir the seeds of spirituality within us” (2000:19). Anyone may be able to feel this sense of place when experiencing the Grand Canyon or the Parthenon for the first time. Stanley O’Connor mentions the same ‘seeds of spirituality’ cultivated in our mind and imagination by the landscape of Peninsular Siam. He notes:

Caves and high places had a very strong impact on the religious imagination of those who lived in the Isthmian tract in former times...It would seem as if the religious imagination of former times was stirred by a sense of the potency of the landscape, which through so much of Southern Thailand is dominated by limestone buttes rising with strange and twisted forms above the rice fields...Perhaps the sedimentation of long memory together with the compelling brute presence of these pinnacles allowed the landscape to speak and be read as a system of the language of changing formal religious intention, whether ancestor worship, Hinduism, Mahayana, or Theravada Buddhism. (1974:71)

High places are dominant features or landmarks in geography. While earth and water are related to the supernatural power of the underworld, the high places are related to the supernatural power of the celestial domain and cosmic forces (Vallibhotama 2008c:46). People in Peninsular Siam in the past placed votive tablets in the caves and built monuments on the hilltops. This signifies the power of the place in people’s experience, and the attempt of people to make sense of their world through imagination and materialization. This interaction between culture and landscape is also described also by Kaja McGowan using an example of Bali’s Batur:

Responding to natural features or signs in the landscape, the inhabitants of Batur may add their own contributions by erecting natural objects or structures in wood and stone near caves and springs, both within the caldera and around its rim, thereby enlarging the significance of their lived world...An environment like Batur’s greatly shapes the range of possible choices for its inhabitants, but then the inhabitants themselves reshape their surroundings in response to these choices. Each reshaping of the

environment suggests a new possibility for cultural reproduction. (2000:33-35).

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 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 ridge was the core of its landscape. It was 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. To explore Tambralinga's cultural geography, I mainly employ the archaeological and ethnographic field methods.

Methods

As archaeology focuses on acquiring the ground-truth of the human activities in the past, it provides valuable tools to study the landscape. Anschuetz et al. suggest that archaeology has "the ability to facilitate the recognition and evaluation of the dynamic, interdependent relationships that people maintain with the physical, social, and cultural dimensions of their environments across space and over time" (2001:159). Miriam Stark emphasizes that "Mainland Southeast Asia's archaeological record, not documentary records, offers the most accurate information for reconstructing the first millennium A.D., but these have been underutilized"

(2006a:1). I employed its field techniques, including surveys and excavations to uncover the social development of Tambralinga and the relationships between land and life in this kingdom. However, the archaeological record cannot provide the full picture of life and cultural geography in the past. Therefore, I also used ethnographic methods to collect data about how land and life were connected in this area in the recent past to reimagine on how life might have been organized in the second half of the 1st millennium CE. This inter-disciplinary approach would enhance our knowledge of Tambralinga.

Survey Methods

In archaeology, sites are found in a variety of ways (Drewett 2011: chapter 3). At one extreme, systematic ground survey would involve setting up a grid system on the whole area and walking in line throughout each grid to find evidence of human activities in the past. This technique has proven to be time-consuming, expensive, and usually impossible for a large area. In our case, Tambralinga's heartland is around 1,275 km², so it is not possible in the present to conduct a systematic survey in that way. Instead, I conducted surveys at the sites that have already been reported and also those discovered by me during my random surveys in the area. Most of the time, when artifacts were found and reported, I would drive to that find spot and asked villagers whether they found any ruins associated to the artifacts and then walked around the nearby areas to see if there are other sites or not. Usually, I would find a number of sites with brick structures located close to one another. In this way, I increased the number of sites to study. According to Drewett (2011:28), this survey technique is based on existing knowledge of the sites still remembered by people.

Mapping Techniques

The remains of the sites were then documented and their locations were collected using a GPS unit (Global Positioning System Unit). Then, their locations were transferred to the computer using the GIS program (Geographical Information System) which produced the maps of the distribution of the sites. The locations of the sites were also projected onto the aerial photographs and satellite images as well. The site distribution maps are crucial in this study as they demonstrate the relationships between the sites and geographic surroundings, such as rivers, estuaries, plains, mountains, and beach ridges. I used the mapping techniques not only to create the representation of geographic reality but also to construct a tool for investigation to enhance our experience and knowledge of cultural geography. This exploratory mapping is encouraged by James Corner who says: “the unfolding agency of mapping is most effective when its capacity for description also sets the conditions for new eidetic and physical worlds to emerge...mappings discover new worlds within past and present ones; they inaugurate new grounds upon the hidden traces of a living context” (1999:214). Thus, mapping is a world-enriching project and has become an effective tool in this study to unfold the past cultures from the landscape.

Excavation Methods

Record keeping is crucial in archaeological fieldworks. For that purpose, I assigned a code for each trench excavated according to the local name of the site, year of excavation, and numerical order of trenches in that site; for example, TK.09.1 refers to the first trench excavated in 2009 at Wat Thao Kot in Nakhon City. This code will be used in the database of the Archaeology of Peninsular Siam Project in the future as well.

There are different methods of excavation (Drewett 2011: chapter 6). However, as it is most familiar to me, I used the excavation method, called the basket system, learned from the Harvard-Cornell Archaeological Exploration of Sardis in which the author had worked in 2007-2008 as appeared in the Sardis Excavation and Recording Manual 2008 written by Professor Nicholas Cahill. Excavation at Nakhon followed the natural stratigraphy of the site in which different soil layers and architectural features are identified in excavation, removed individually, and the finds from each layer kept separate. Soil layers are real and important parts of the archaeological record, with their own meanings and problems and the goal of excavation is not simply to clear away earth to expose buildings and find glamorous objects, but to dissect and understand the whole history of building, destruction, and deposition, all the processes that led to the current state of the site. It is to uncover the history that the soils represent. To that aim, one is never to dig more than one soil layer together and mix their contents, but to distinguish individual strata and dig each one separately.

The archaeological record from the excavation at Nakhon Province was organized into baskets, lots, and phases respectively. It is often impossible or undesirable to excavate a stratum completely at one time because it is difficult to make final decisions about stratigraphic sequence before excavation has ended, the artifacts classified, and all the results are in. Therefore, to give the excavator a degree of control and flexibility in his/her operation, the soil units of excavation are created. They are called the baskets which have both a stratigraphic significance and an arbitrary component. They are where the materials from the excavation are stored. They allow the excavator to dig a part of a stratigraphic layer in the trench first to test and the rest later or start a new unit of excavation when an actual soil layer is very deep; however, a basket should never contain material from more than one stratum.

While baskets are units of excavation, lots are units of stratigraphy. One lot or stratigraphic unit can be dug in any number of baskets. A lot is the smallest coherent unit of stratigraphy: a single layer of soil, a wall, a brick floor, a layer of brick fragments resulting from the collapse of wall, a pit, etc. Lot numbers are merely arbitrary labels intended to identify different stratigraphic units, not to describe their position in the stratigraphy of the trench. After the artifacts and ecofacts are analyzed and the dates are obtained, different lots may be grouped together to represent various activities in the same time period or phase.

Ethnographic Methods

Although I was born and raised in Nakhon Province, 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 Nakhon Province and asked them to recall the formative period of their lives and how their parents and grandparents did things in the past. I focused my questions on how people in the recent past produced food and crafts, collected natural products, practiced religions, traveled, and interacted with other communities. When possible, I also observed how people worked in the field and produced their crafts, such as pottery, because in some places, these are still done in the traditional ways. The ethnographic data helped connect the archaeological record and the ways of life together, or at least, suggest the possibilities of how land and life were tied together in the past.

Organization of the Work

This work has five main chapters. Chapter One discusses the maritime Trans-Asiatic Trade Network in the late centuries BCE to the early centuries CE, the atmosphere in which Tambralinga emerged. This vast network connected civilizations of the ancient world together and allowed goods, such as Chinese silk, Southeast Asian spices, Indian beads, Arabian incense, and Roman coins, to travel across the world along with maritime merchants. In Peninsular Siam, trade offered opportunities for powerful local men to enhance further their economic and socio-political powers and for Indian craftspeople to settle here to make profits. It also facilitated the flow of new ideas, especially from India, that enriched the cultural life and development of the isthmian societies. Chapter Two deals with the cultural development from the late prehistoric period to the early Tambralinga period in Nakhon Province. Early Tambralinga (c. the 5th-11th centuries CE) has usually been overlooked by scholars. New discoveries of early Visnu images that suggest the significance of Tambralinga as a center of innovation are also discussed. In Chapter Three, the distribution of early Tambralinga sites is provided. Five major clusters of sites were discussed. Chapter Four explores the cultural geography of Tambralinga in which ecological zones were linked by rivers and walking trails and vital in its development. Chapter Five discusses the relationships between the Tambralinga Kingdoms and its neighbor, especially Srivijaya, and the development of the Nakhon Kingdom during the 12th to 14th centuries as the subsequent period of Tambralinga.

A Note on the Spellings

Transliteration of Thai words into English presents a long-lasting problem because the Thai language has its own scripts, not the Roman ones. There are many variations of Romanized

Thai words depending on the writers; some of them followed specific rules of Romanization while the others just did it randomly. Different spellings are usually offered for the words of Pali and Sanskrit origins as well; for example, Nakhon Si Thammarat could be called Nagara Sri Dharmaraja. In this work, I follow the rules for Romanization of Thai words, especially for site names, offered by the Library of Congress⁴, except for some words that have been already commonly used, such as Chandrabhanu and Siam.

⁴ The Romanization tables created by the Library of Congress can be found online at:
<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsd/romanization/thai.pdf>

CHAPTER ONE
THE MAKING OF TAMBRALINGA: PENINSULAR SIAM
AND THE MARITIME TRANS-ASIATIC TRADE

Introduction

Coming to the reign of Emperor Huan, in the 9th year of *Yen-hsi* (166), An-tun, king of Ta-Ch'in, sent an envoy from beyond the frontier of Jih-nan, who offered elephant tusk, rhinoceros horn and tortoise shell. It was only then that for the first time communication was established (between the two countries).

From *Hou-Han-shu* 88 (Leslie and Gardiner 1996:155)

Compiled by Fan Yeh in the early 5th century using a number of histories and documents as sources, *Hou-Han-shu* or the Book of the Later Han is the official historical text that covers the period of the Eastern Han Empire from 25 to 220 C.E. and is the first Chinese source that described Ta-Ch'in, the Chinese name believed to refer to the Roman Empire (Leslie and Gardiner 1996:4, 41, 153, 279). Although not the earliest mention of the Roman Empire in the Chinese record (the earliest being in 97 CE), it is the first account for a mission sent by the Romans themselves to China and for the only direct communication with the Han. However, it is not certain which Roman Emperor should be credited for this diplomatic mission since An-tun, transcribed as Antoninus, can be Antoninus Pius who reigned from 138 to 161⁵ or Marcus Aurelius Antoninus who reigned from 161 to 180. In addition to this identification problem, scholars still cannot determine whether this mission was legitimate or not since there is no reference on this mission in any classical documents (Leslie and Gardiner 1996:153; Young 2001:33). The tribute presented to the Han court also does not seem to come from Rome or the

⁵ Even though arriving at the Han court in 166 CE, this envoy could still be from Antoninus Pius if he stayed in other places (e.g. India or Southeast Asia) for some years before going to China.

Roman Empire. This anonymous embassy might well be just an independent group of Roman merchants who picked up elephant tusk, rhinoceros horn, and tortoise shell, famous products from Southeast Asia, on the way to China after exchanging their Roman cargoes with local ones (Young 2001:33). This is probably the reason why the Chinese court was not surprised to see the list of the Roman tribute which was actually expected to be much more spectacular as the Roman Empire was considered the source of jewels and exotica in Chinese eyes (Leslie and Gardiner 1996:154).

One thing that we do know, however, is that this envoy used a maritime trade route from Jih-nan in northern Vietnam to China (Leslie and Gardiner 1996:155). This trade route and the items used for tribute suggest the significance of Southeast Asia in the early contact between the Roman Empire and China. It is clear in this account that Roman merchants were active in the South China Sea although to what degree is uncertain. This account suggests Sino-Roman trade operated through a series of ports, trading stations, and trade routes involving many cities and communities in the ancient world.

Located very far apart from each other on each side of the Eurasian landmass, the Roman Empire in the west and the Han Empire in the east were the great empires in the few centuries before and after the Common Era. They barely knew each other and imagined the other as an unknown world with colorful fantasy. The Romans knew the Chinese as the Seres or as the Silk People. A little later the name Sinae appears in western sources and seems to derive, like Sanskrit Cina and the present China, from Qin, the name of the short-lived dynasty that preceded Han and united China 221 BCE (Pulleyblank 1999:71). At the same time, according to Pulleyblank, the Chinese began to hear about a country in the far west which they called Ta-

Chi'n or Great Qin, “apparently thinking of it as a kind of counter-China at the other end of the world” (1999:71).

The flow of people, goods, and information between the Roman and Han empires involved both overland and maritime trade routes. When speaking of the Silk Road, people tend to think of the long-suffering caravans of merchants and two-humped camels wandering in one stream from the heartland of China, all the way across the endless desert and narrow mountain passes of Central and Western Asia, to the Eastern Mediterranean. However, as we will see later, this is not the case in the early contact; the Silk Road seems to have had many routes and was be operated in sections involving many groups of merchants, transporters, and middlemen.

The sectional nature of the overland Silk Road is also seen in the maritime Silk Road, sometimes called the Spice Road. There is no evidence of any single ship operated by a particular group that made its way directly from the Red Sea, passing through coastal Arabia, sailing around the Indian subcontinent, crossing the vast Bay of Bengal, entering the piratical Melaka Straits, and navigating along perilous coastal Vietnam, to Southern China. In the maritime world too, we see a number of interaction spheres in which each of them had its own commercial and social connections and rules. This sectional trade network connected the classical world with the Far East. Although they generally thought of the other as an unknown world beyond reach, they were united by the powerful trade network that could move a tremendous amount of goods across an enormous space between two sides of the ancient world.

In this ancient cosmopolitan maritime trade network, Peninsular Siam and Southeast Asia in general played a vital role. Located between the Indian subcontinent and China, the local communities in this region seized the opportunity to actively participate in the Trans-Asiatic trade across oceans. This chapter is, therefore, dedicated to exploring the relationship between

Peninsular Siam and the ancient trade network which is a significant in the emergence of Tambralinga. Tambralinga appeared as a place name in an Indian document as a destination of merchants since the second or third century CE (Wheatley 1966: 237). This early state thrived in the seascape of dynamic social interaction in the maritime trade. Situated in the isthmian tract between the two oceans, Tambralinga had the openness of an island to cultural influences and thrived in the maritime trade since the late centuries BCE.

This chapter explores the nature of the Trans-Asiatic maritime trade network, examines the role of communities in Peninsular Siam in such trade, and demonstrates that the maritime trade across the ancient world was well-established, involving many coastal ports and groups of people. It will examine the archaeological evidence to identify the finds related to trade, to determine their contexts, and to reveal their distributions. Historical documents are also incorporated to provide a better understanding of the nature of the maritime trade. The discussion will include the trade in the Roman Red Sea, the Indian Subcontinent, Southeast Asia and finally China. It is important to note that along with the main trade routes across maritime Asia in the east-west direction, there were also local and regional trade routes that spread out organically in every direction from the major ports. Taken together, these routes formed an enormous trade network that transformed the ancient world, the process similar to globalization today.

Peninsular Siam and Southeast Asia

Kang-Tai and Chu-Ying led an embassy sent by the ruler of the state of Wu in southern China to the countries in “the South Sea” in the middle of the third century CE (Wheatley 1966: 14), and part of their report for the court is as follows:

More than 3,000 *li* from the southern frontier of *Fu-nan* is the kingdom of *Tun-sun*, which is situated on an ocean stepping-stone. The land is 1,000 *li* in extent; the city is 10 *li* from the sea. There are five kings who all acknowledge themselves vassals of *Fu-nan*. The eastern frontier of *Tun-sun* is in communication with *Chiao-chou* (Tong-king), the western with *Tien-chu* (India) and *An-hsi* (Parthia). All the countries beyond the frontier come and go in pursuit of trade, because *Tun-sun* curves round and projects into the sea for more than 1,000 *li*. The *Chang-hai* (Gulf of Siam) is of great extent and ocean-going junks have not yet crossed it direct. At this mart East and West meet together so that daily there are innumerable people there. Precious goods and rare merchandise – there is nothing which is not there. Moreover, there is a wine-tree which resembles the pomegranate. The juice of its flowers is collected and allowed to stand in a jar: after a few days it becomes wine. (Wheatley 1966:16)

This passage of the report describes a blossoming port-city called *Tun-sun* believed to be located in the northern part of Peninsular Siam, perhaps in the site of Khoa Sam Kaeo that will be discussed later. Peninsular Siam is viewed as a “stepping stone” from one ocean to the next and the as a lively market where “East and West” met together and where one could find anything. Occupying the strategic location between Indian and Pacific Oceans and possessing valuable resources, Peninsular Siam was one of the most significant regions in the ancient maritime Trans-Asiatic trade network developed in as early as c. the middle of the first millennium BCE. The Trans-Asiatic trade was part of the cosmopolitan trade network that involved most regions in the ancient world including the Mediterranean region, Northeast Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and China. In the Mediterranean World, the Middle East, and the west coast of Indian subcontinent, these communities rapidly developed and were linked to one another more closely and extensively under the larger maritime trade network in around the third millennium BCE. However, according to the archaeological evidence discovered thus far, there is no firm indication

suggesting that Southeast Asia was part of the maritime cosmopolitan trade network in this period of time. The earliest evidence that indicates the integration of some areas in Southeast Asia into the cosmopolitan trade network is dated to around the middle of the first millennium BCE (Bellina-Pryce and Silapanth 2006).

Most of trading communities in this network developed from fishing communities in which each of them had its own enduring cultural histories (Ray 1996). Similarly, the evidence of exchange in Southeast Asia demonstrates that there already existed the intra-regional long-distance exchange system in which local communities in this region circulated their resources and goods prior to the integration of this region into the greater Trans-Asiatic trade network.

This Trans-Asiatic trade not only facilitated the flows of people, goods, and ideas in its network but also encouraged the economic and socio-political development of societies in Peninsular Siam which led to the emergence of earliest port-cities in this region. These port-cities then became the centers of economic activities and the pivotal places of rapid socio-political development in the region. According to archaeological evidence, the people of these port-cities were not just the transporters of trade items from one coast to another but also consumers of foreign goods, providers of forest and marine products valuable to foreign merchants, and producers of merchandise themselves, especially jewelry and metal objects. The historical record also mentions that people in this region were experienced sailors who had irreplaceable skills of marine and riverine navigations crucial to the transportation of trade goods (Manguin 2004). They were active agents who supported the existence of the cosmopolitan trade network.

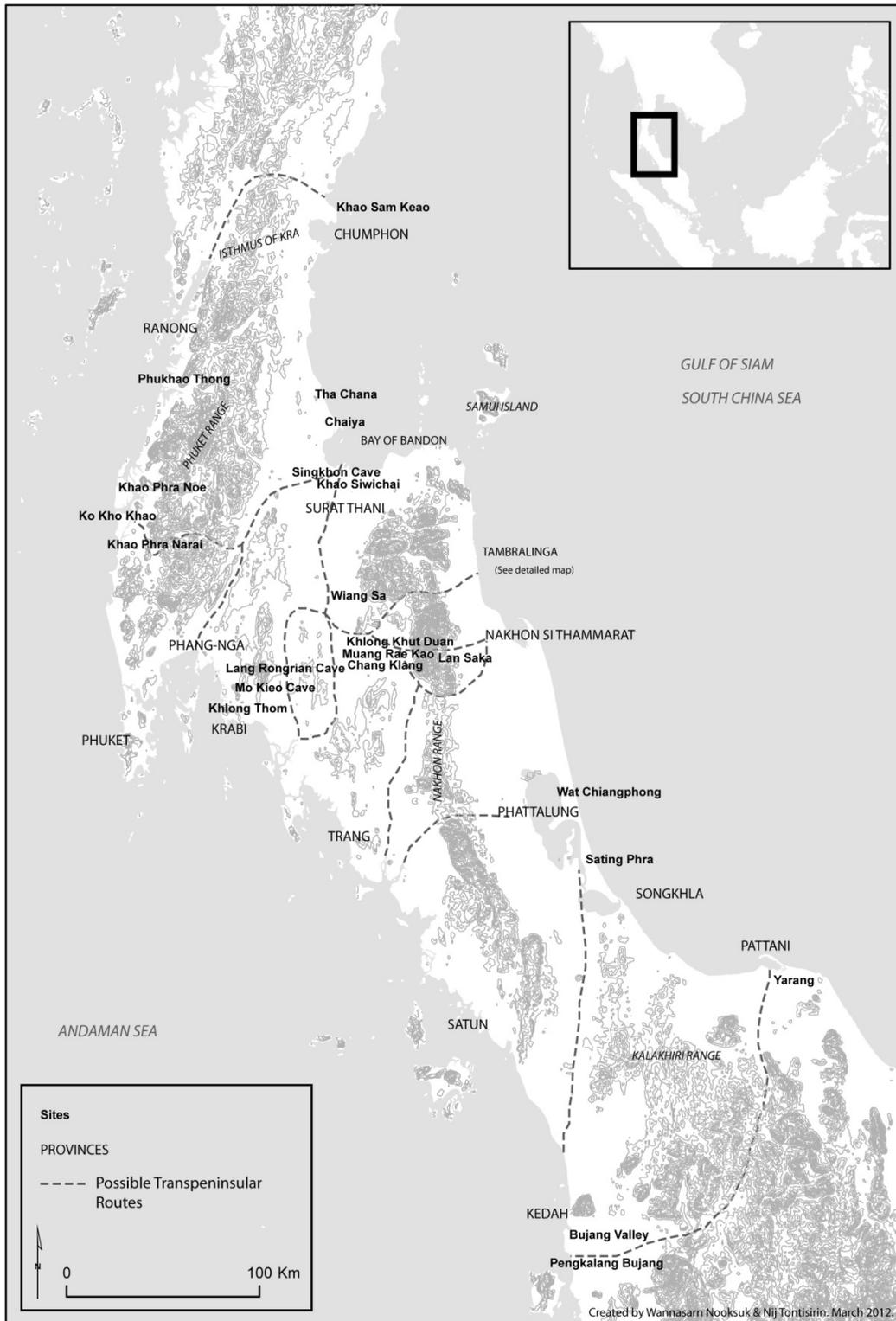
Geographic Overview of Peninsular Siam

Peninsular Siam⁶ or Peninsular Thailand is located in the northern part of the Malay Peninsula (Map 1.2). It is an isthmian tract that, in fact, includes the southern part of Burma and Thailand, and the northern part of Peninsular Malaysia. The largest portion of this isthmian tract is Southern Thailand, comprised fourteen provinces. Peninsular Siam is an improbably thin ribbon of land wedged between the Andaman Sea of the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Siam of the Pacific Ocean. It runs from north to south from the Asian landmass starting at the flat plain of the Chao Phraya Basin in central Thailand. Defined by broad coastal plains on the east, a narrow strip of mountains in the middle, a jagged coastline on the west, and riverine systems flowing to both sides, this geography allows for passage across the peninsula. It differs from the southern part of the Malay Peninsula which is very mountainous, densely forested, and almost impossible to cross (O'Connor 1996:596).

Three major mountain ranges serve as the spine of the isthmian tract: the Phuket range, the Nakhon Si Thammarat range, and the Sankala Khiri range. The western slope of the Phuket range drops abruptly to the sea through the effect of submergence. The coastal plain in this area, therefore, does not extend very far and banks are adjoined with many islands and islets. However, with its irregular and wavy shoreline, the coast has provided shelters to ships since the distant past (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 9).

The Nakhon Si Thammarat range is more fragmented than the Phuket range and yields many rivers that can be used as waterways across the peninsula. The eastern slope of the range is mainly created by the alluvial and coastal wave-dominated deposits. These deposits form the smooth and relatively large eastern coastal plain or an emergence coast, as opposite to a

⁶ This region is also called the Southeast Asian Isthmus (see L. Andaya 2008:18).



Map 1.2 Peninsular Siam, Provinces, Possible Trans-Peninsular Routes, and Archaeological Sites

submergence coast in the west. This eastern coastal plain offers suitable areas for the development of lowland rice agriculture and, thus, larger polities.

The peninsula has plentiful forests due to the high annual rainfall brought to the area by the monsoons. The west coast of the peninsula also has the healthiest mangrove forests in Thailand (P. Noonsuk 2001a: 28). This rich environment would have certainly provided valuable resources for trade of forest and marine products. The monsoon system is a system of seasonal winds. They are considered to have extensive impact on the rhythm of the lives and activities of the people on the peninsula as well as on maritime trade. Two monsoons are instrumental in trade patterns. From May to November, the peninsula is under the influence of the southwest monsoon. This monsoon is believed to have brought Indians and Westerners across the Bay of Bengal to the peninsula, and to have supported sea travel from the peninsula to the Mekong delta, the Chao Phraya Basin, the Cham territories, and China. From December to March, the northeast monsoon is dominant and runs from northeast to southwest facilitating the travel of trading ships from China and the Mekong delta to the isthmus. April is the month of transition between the two monsoons. (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 18; P. Noonsuk 2001a: 11; Wheatley 1966: xix).

In sum, the geography of the isthmian tract had influenced the historical trajectory and social life of this region, especially in terms of trade, communication, and subsistence patterns. Its strategic location between the Pacific and Indian Oceans made it a major gateway for sailing ships trading between China, Southeast Asia, and India. The trans-peninsular routes were established in several places throughout the isthmian tract in order to transport goods, merchants and travelers from one ocean to the other. These routes linked the large markets and production centers in the East and West together.

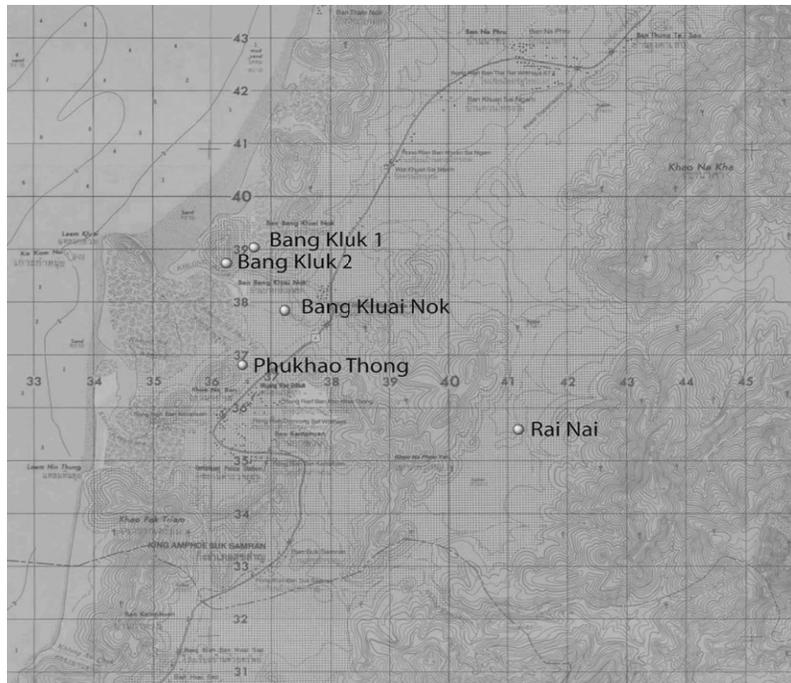
The isthmus not only occupied a strategic position but also possessed important resources for trade and sailors whose skills of marine navigation were irreplaceable. It possessed forest goods, marine products, and minerals that were of value to traders and people all over the world since the late prehistoric period. The Indian and Chinese merchants risked their lives across the unpredictable seas to come to the isthmus and elsewhere in Southeast Asia to search for spices, perfumes, aromatic woods, pearls, metals, precious stones, rhinoceros horns, elephant tusks, and other kinds of forest products (Wheatley 1966). The most important metals found in the peninsula (which were of great attraction to merchants from India and the west) were gold and tin. Today, the region does not rank as an important producer of these metals, but in the ancient world, these metals were much rarer than today and it proved profitable for the craftsmen in the peninsula who used them in their products (Wheatley 1966: xxi). Travel to the peninsula in the period of sailing junks was facilitated by the monsoons. The rhythm of the seasonal winds required that ships traveling between India and China stop at the isthmus.

It was, therefore, necessary for peninsular societies to develop entrepots where goods could be stored from one season to the next (Wheatley 1966: xix). Archaeologists have already identified at least four early large entrepots in the isthmian tract including Phukhao Thong and Khao Sam Kaeo in the upper part and Khlong Thom (or Khuan Luk Pat) and Tha Chana in the middle part of the Isthmus of Siam (see P. Noonsuk 1997a). These four sites can be said to be cosmopolitan port-cities where facilities for productions of goods and commercial activities were located. According to the archaeological record discovered so far, it can be assumed that Phukhao Thong and Khao Sam Kaeo had developed as port-cities earlier than Khlong Thom and Tha Chana. Whereas the late-century BCE artifacts like Northern Black Polished Ware (hereafter NBP) have been found in Phukhao Thong and Khao Sam Kaeo, these kinds of artifacts

have not been found in Khlong Thom and Tha Chana. The artifact assemblages of Khlong Thom in Krabi Province on the west coast and Tha Chana in Suratthani Province on the east coast are quite similar in the way that they both were dominated by items from the Roman World and India of the early centuries CE (e.g. P. Noonsuk 1997a:197, 281). It is possible, therefore, to identify two pairs of major ports of earlier and later periods as they are situated on the opposite sides of the peninsula and were most likely connected to each other through the trans-peninsular routes using rivers and overland paths across valleys and mountains. This section will explore these four major entrepôts.

Phukhao Thong and the Kluai Port Complex

The archaeological site of Phukhao Thong or Golden Hill is situated on the southern bank of ancient Kluai Bay, which is now mangrove forest, on the west coast of the upper part of Peninsular Siam (see also Chaisuwan 2011) (Map 1.3 and Figure 1.1). This ancient bay, protected by small islands (such as Kluai Island) from the Andaman open sea, is located approximately around 20 km. from the mouth of Kraburi River by which one may find the shortest path to cross the Isthmus of Kra to the east coast using the Kraburi river system and short-distance overland routes. There are many small rivers and waterways running from the southwest to the bay and, finally, to the sea, but the major ones are Khlong Bang Kluai (the Bang Kluai River) and Khlong Na Phru Yai (the Na Phru Yai River) which is now almost dried up due to the disturbance of highway (No. 4) construction and shrimp farms. Both the Bang Kluai and Na Phru Yai Rivers receive water from Khao Na Phru Yai (the Na Phru Yai Mountain) and the Phuket Range that run in north-south direction as the backbone of the peninsula from the



Map 1.3 Kluai Bay and Archaeological Sites



Figure 1.1 Aerial Photograph of Kluai Bay

Tenasserim Range in Burma to Phuket Island. These two rivers and the Kraburi River may provide potential transportation and communication passageways between the sites around ancient Kluai Bay and the hinterland communities and also the settlements on the east coast of the peninsular upper part.

Located around Kluai Bay, several archaeological sites are found on the high grounds or hills. They all yield a variety of artifacts which mostly are related to ornament production, including (but not limited to) finished and unfinished glass and semi-precious stone beads and ornaments, fragments of metal items and tools, gold ornaments, and considerable amount of pottery sherds. These sites embrace, from south to north, Phukhao Thong, Bang Kluai Nok, Bang Kluk 1, and Bang Kluk 2. There is also a site, Rai Nai, situated near the Phuket Mountain Range short-distance inland from the Kluai Bay. Among these sites, Phukhao Thong is the most important site that deserves detailed discussion here.

Phukhao Thong

Phukhao Thong (coordinate E0436520 N1036908) is a small hill located in Ban Kam Phuan. The northwest and the west sides of the site face Kluai Bay, while the northeast juxtaposes the Na Phru Yai River. A large amount of surface finds can still be found throughout the hill especially on the small slopes on the northeast next to the Na Phru Yai River and the north adjacent to Kluai Bay. It is noticeable that the north side of the hill had been shaped to create a three-stepped terrace or platform which does not seem to be the work of natural process. These terraces and the river bank on the northeast have been looted for almost 30 years. The site has been largely destroyed.

The site of Phukhao Thong provided a variety of artifacts including Indian wares, local pottery sherds, beads and ornaments, and metal tools. A large number of finished and unfinished beads and ornaments have been discovered. They were made of, for instance, semi-precious stone (e.g. agate, carnelian, amethyst, and rock crystal), glass of various colors, bronze, and gold. A good portion of the semi-precious stone beads found in this site demonstrate a high-quality production which is time-consuming requires highly skilled craftsmen while some are quite ostensibly of lower-quality. Some important artifacts found so far at Phukhao Thong both from the ground survey and from private collections of villagers near the site will be presented as follows:

Indian and Indian-Styled Wares

As previously noted, Phukhao Thong has been heavily looted for a long period of time. Yet, fortunately for us, looters left a huge amount of pottery sherds behind since they are worthless for them (but priceless for us), in which we found a number of NBP and Rouletted Ware (hereafter RW) (Figures 1.2 and 1.3). These similar-types of Indian wares have also been found at Khao Sam Kaeo archaeological site on the opposite side of Isthmus of Kra from Phukhao Thong. NBP may be preliminarily dated to the 5th century BCE to the 3rd century CE, while RW the 2nd century BCE to the 3rd century CE (Bouvet 2011:71-72).

One inscribed sherd with Indian scripts has been found in a looting pit at the northeast side of the hill by the author, who worked in the Thai-French archaeological team of Khao Sam Kaeo mission in April 2006 (Figure 1.4). The inscription on the sherd was read and commented by Iravatham Mahadevan (personal communication⁷), an authority in Indian paleography of the Indian Council of Historical Research, as follows:

⁷ Berenice Bellina forwarded Iravatham Mahadevan's email to Wannasarn Noonsuk and Boonyarit Chaisuwan on 1 June 2006.



Figure 1.2 Northern Black Polished Ware from Phukhao Thong



Figure 1.3 Rouletted Ware from Phukhao Thong



Figure 1.4 Inscribed sherd with the Tamil-Brahmi scripts

The language is Tamil and the script is Tamil Brahmi of ca.2nd century A.D. These conclusions are based on the middle letter which is Tamil Ra, which does not occur in Brahmi script or Prakrit language.

As regards the reading, the first two letters from the left are clearly tuu Ra . . .

I think I have now been able to decipher the whole text including the third letter as follows:

. . . tuu Ra o . . .

According to the rules of Early Tamil inspirational orthography, the occurrence of an initial vowel in the middle of a word as in the present case signifies the addition of a pronominal suffix indicating number, gender and person. Accordingly we can infer that the fourth letter which is lost presumably completes a pronominal suffix-like.

The interpretation is admittedly somewhat speculative as it depends on the supply of the 4th letter which is lost. However the reading of the three extant letters on the sherd is firm.

I. Mahadevan also hypothesized that “tuu Ra o” may possibly be part of the Tamil word for “monk.” He noted “it is possible that the inscription recorded the name of a Buddhist monk who travelled to Thailand from Tamil Nadu.” This inscription is not only the first-found Tamil inscription on pottery sherd but also the earliest Tamil inscription found in Southeast Asia.

Amphora-Shaped Glass Vessel

A small amphora-shaped vessel (Figure 1.5), perhaps perfume container, was found and kept by a villager living near Phukhao Thong. There appears an inscription on this green glass vessel, in which I. Mahadevan (personal communication⁸) gave an interpretation and comments based on its rubbing as follows:

There are 6 characters in the inscription divided by spaces after the first and the third characters. Character No.1 may be *yu* if one disregards the wavy line on the left and two other lines at the bottom. No.2 may also be *yu* if one disregards the slanting line at

⁸ Iravatham Mahadevan emailed Wannasarn Noonsuk and Berenice Bellina on 23 July 2006.

bottom left. No.3 is clearly *ta*. No.4 is damaged though your eye copy shows it to be *ta* which I doubt. Nos. 5 and 6 are clearly both *ta*. The reading may be *yu yuta ?tata*. I am unable to interpret the inscription as read above. However, the script appears to be Brahmi of about 4th – 5th cent. CE. The inscription may be in the local language which I do not know.



Figure 1.5 A small amphora-shaped glass vessel

On the other hands, Professor Mukerjee, another authority in Indian palaeography, suggests⁹:

The inscription is in Northwest Prakrit and is a variety of Eastern Kharashti and palaeographically datable to c. 2nd Century A.D. The Inscription can be read, Sanskritised and translated as follows:

Text:

Kapiseka Daja Jaksna (I)

Sanskritisation:

Kapisake Dajah Yakshan

Translation:

“The Jaksha (= Yaksna) (named) Daja is a resident of Kapisa.”

⁹ Professor Asok Datta sent Wannasarn Noonsuk the interpretation of this inscription which was given by Professor Mukerjee on 12 November 2006.

The term Yaksha here demotes a Demi-god or a rich person of Kapisa. The country can be identified with the areas around Begram in Eastern Afganisthan.

This inscription, thus, may reconfirm that the port-city of Phukhao Thong flourished at least until the 2nd century AD and was part of the cosmopolitan trade network in which important people and/or luxurious objects from Central Asia, located rather far from the seas, can made their ways to the isthmian site.

Possible Roman Artifacts

Phukhoa Thong also provides some possible Roman intaglios. However, it is also possible that these items may have been made in the Indian subcontinent. The first is with a figure of a woman (perhaps carrying a child) (Figure 1.6). The second is a man on a horse (Figure 1.7) while the third is the Greek hero Heracles standing and carrying lion's skin (Figure 1.8). These Roman finds reaffirm that Peninsular Siam was in the same enormous maritime trade network with the Mediterranean World at least in the early centuries CE.

Another evidence of the Roman connection in this site are the fragments of a glass vessel found in the recent excavation conducted by Boonyarit Chaisuwan of the Fine Arts Department in 2005-2006, in which I was fortunate enough to participate in 2006. Although the full report has not been completed yet, the preliminary observations on the excavations show that they have unearthed some Indian pottery, including NBP and RW, a number of beads and ornaments, and glass fragments.

James Lankton, an archaeologist and glass expert of University College London, has studied the glass artifacts from Phukhao Thong excavations and offered very important



Figure 1.6 Intaglio with the figure of a woman, perhaps carrying a child, from Phukhao Thong



Figure 1.7 Intaglio with the figure of a man on a horse from Phukhao Thong (Photo Courtesy of Boonyarit Chaisuwan)



Figure 1.8a Intaglio with the Greek hero Heracles standing and carrying lion's skin from Phukhao Thong (Photo Courtesy of Boonyarit Chaisuwan)

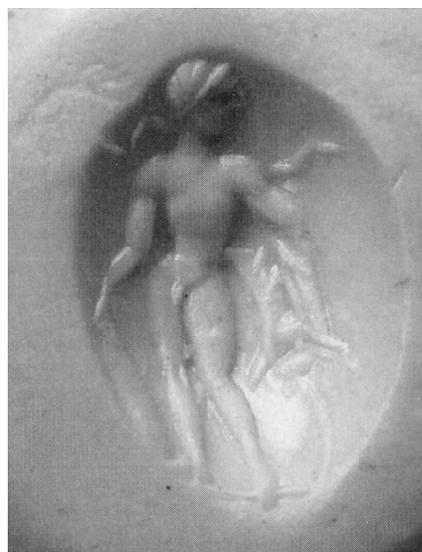


Figure 1.8b Impression of Figure 1.8a (Photo Courtesy of Boonyarit Chaisuwan)

comments (personal communication¹⁰). The author has no better way to describe the nature and significance of Phukhao Thong glass than Lankton's own words and I shall paraphrase his comments here. He notes:

The glass evidence from the two excavation sites, plus that found on the surface and through illegal digging, suggests an active glassworking industry with an emphasis on the production of small, monochrome, drawn beads that appear to be of the Indo-Pacific type. Craft workers at Phu Khao Thong were using a variety of types of glass, as shown in the graph on the attached Excel sheet, with low-lime potash glass the most common type at 38% of the measured samples. This glass type is closely associated with Dong Son sites in northern Vietnam, but was relatively common throughout Southeast Asia at least until the second century CE. Although there appears to be no potash glass at Khlong Thom, it is relatively common in Iron Age burials in Myanmar, as is found as well at Khao Sam Kaeo and Giong Ca Vo.

In addition to the remains of beadmaking, there are a number of glass vessel fragments, of five different compositions, at Phu Khao Thong. Two of the vessel glasses found at Phu Khao Thong merit special interest: The first is a pair of green and yellow mosaic glass pieces that appear to have been part of the same mosaic glass vessel. Laure Dussubieux at the Field Museum in Chicago has analysed one of these fragments by LA-ICP-MS, and it is fully consistent with late Roman mosaic vessel glass, most likely of the type produced in Egypt until at least the fourth century CE. To our knowledge, these are the first mosaic glass vessel fragments recovered in Thailand, and are one more form of evidence for at least indirect contact with the Roman Empire in the first half of the first millennium CE.

The second very unusual vessel fragment found at Phu Khao Thong is a medium blue potash glass fragment, similar in composition to potash glass ordinarily used by beadmakers, but never before found in blown glass. Where the vessel itself might have been made is unknown, since there have been no glassblowing workshops identified in Southeast Asia, and this type of glass is rather uncommon in South Asia. Combining the

¹⁰ James Lankton emailed Wannasarn Noonsuk on 20 September 2006.

discovery of a relatively large amount of blown vessel fragments, of at least four different imported compositions, with this unique find of a blown vessel made from potash glass, we may wonder whether the artisans at Phu Khao Thong might have included at least one immigrant glass blower, making glass vessels from whatever type of glass was available. Only further archaeological excavation will help to distinguish this scenario of local production from the more common assumption of imported complete vessels for use or exchange, or vessel fragments destined for recycling.

Lankton's comments reaffirm the significance of Phukhao Thong as a port and production site in the early cosmopolitan trade network and at the same time add more complexity to the questions surrounding the nature and process of production of this once-prosperous community. Although a considerable amount of hard work is still needed to answer these questions, it is clear that the Roman vessels had made their way to Peninsular Siam in the early centuries CE through a well-established trade network across the Bay of Bengal.

Kluai Port Complex Revisited

Phukhao Thong was not a stand-alone site but rather part of a protohistoric port complex around the Kluai Bay, which shall be called the Kluai complex in this chapter. The Kluai complex includes ports, communities, and production areas that are located around Kluai Bay as suggested by the evidence found in Phukhao Thong (Figure 1.9), Bang Kluai Nok, Bang Kluk 1, and Bang Kluk 2 and embraces an area of at least around 5x5 km². The rise of this complex was supported by inland communities like Rai Nai that could provide it with foodstuffs and help facilitate the transportation of goods across the peninsula.

Phukhao Thong, according to the archaeological evidence available to us, seems to be the most eminent site in this complex. It provides very important artifacts related to overseas trade



Figure 1.9 A lump of agate that was carved to make a bracelet from Phukhao Thong

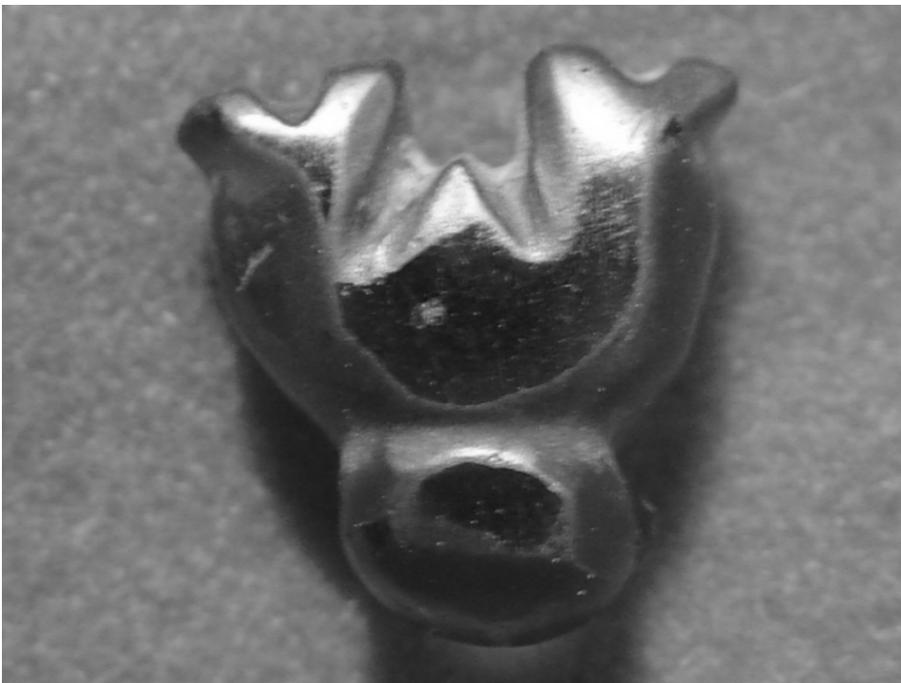


Figure 1.10 A Triratana bead made of amethyst from Phukhao Thong

including Indian wares, Indic symbols (e.g., Triratana and auspicious animals) (Figure 1.10), and Roman items. The close connection between Phukhao Thong and the trans-Asiatic trade which is part of early global trade network may allow the flow of Indic religions and religious

experts, especially Buddhism and Buddhist monks, to this ancient community if ones believe in I. Mahadevan's comments and regard the Triratana pendants as Buddhist symbols. However, further archaeological investigations are required in order to discuss the religious practices in Phukhao Thong.

Based on the evidence presented so far, we may preliminarily assume that there are at least two periods of the development of the Kluai complex, namely the late first millennium BCE and the first half of the first millennium CE. The evidence from the site of Phukhao Thong demonstrates that it first developed in the late first millennium BCE if not earlier. The evidence of this period comprises NBP and RW which have been compared to the similar dated materials found at Khao Sam Kaeo. It is significant to note that these materials have never been discovered in other sites in the Kluai complex. The ancient community at Phukhao Thong also continued into the first half of the first millennium CE. The evidence of this period includes the late Roman mosaic vessel glass and the two Indic inscriptions, one on pottery and one on glass vessel. This later period also saw the growth of settlements around Kluai Bay, perhaps to produce more goods for the growing market in the early centuries CE which is also the period of the rise of the Roman trade in the Indian Ocean.

Khao Sam Kaeo

This site is situated in Amphoe Muang, Chumporn Province on the east coast of Peninsular Siam (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 82, P. Noonsuk 1997: 149). It is a large archaeological site which includes four low hills aligned in the north south direction. These hills are 20-30 meters high above the sea level. There are small valleys between each hill. The area of the hills and valleys that constitute the site altogether is approximately 3 km². The site is now

around 5 km. from the sea (Glover and Bellina 2011:21). The west side of this site is adjacent to the Tha Thapao River which is connected to the Tha She and Rub Ro Rivers from inland and flows to the Gulf of Siam in the east. These rivers originate from the Tenasserim Range and, therefore, provided the ancient communities at the site the passage way to the backbone of the peninsula where they could find forest products and also to the opposite shore on the west coast through the river network that constitutes the trans-peninsular routes. The site of Khao Sam Keao is virtually on the Isthmus of Kra which has the estuary of the Kra Buri River on the opposite coast where Phukhao Thong is situated. It is the shortest point to cross the peninsula.

Recent research of the Thai-French Archaeological Mission shows that the hilltops are relatively flat (around 150 x 150 m. and 200 x 200 m.) and partially enclosed by ramparts, embankments and ditches partly using the natural ravines. The population at the site mainly settled on gentle slopes on the hills within the ramparts (Glover and Bellina 2011:21). These ramparts may have been used for defense or water management. The hills were suitable for settlements because the remote sensing analysis shows that the surrounding lowlands of the hills were subject to flooding in ancient times. While this site was never coastal, it had easy access to the sea via the Tha Tapao River (Bellina-Pryce and Silapanth 2006:268).

Although there is no reliable dating for the ramparts, there are radiocarbon dates for the occupation layers associated with them. These c-14 dates suggest the period between the very early 4th and 2nd centuries BCE, was the time of greatest human activity at the site. However, based on the paleographic dates of inscribed items, this site may have continued to be occupied until the early centuries CE although with lesser population and activity. In the late centuries BCE, Khao Sam Kaeo also demonstrates signs of urbanization with different zones of activities. The complex rampart system and the presence of water tanks suggest great communal

investment to build and maintain them. The large size of the settlement (54 hectares) and the complex activities in it indicate that Khao Sam Kaeo may have been an important urban center comparable to those in South Asia, such as Nagarjunakonda in Andhradesa, Rajgir in Bihar, and Sisupalgarh in Orissa (Bellina-Pryce and Silapanth 2006:272, 283).

It is unfortunate that there have been serious looting activities in this site since the late 70s and this has caused the destructions of archaeological contexts of the site and the disappearances of important artifacts for the black markets. Some important artifacts that have been found are very similar to Phukhao Thong as it includes, for example, semi-precious stone beads, Indic symbols, gold and bronze ornaments, iron tools. Three Dong Son Bronze Drums and Lingling-o earrings produced in Vietnam in the late prehistoric period around mid- to late first millennium BCE were also found in this site and suggest a pre-existing intra-regional exchange network in Southeast Asia in which the Dong Son Drums and Sa Huynh items were widely circulated.

Khao Sam Kaeo provides a large amount of evidence of productions of semi-precious stone and glass ornaments, iron tools, and ceramics¹¹. These productions point to the transfer of technologies between this site and other communities in the Trans-Asiatic trade network. For the semi-precious stone ornament production (especially agate and carnelian), evidence reflecting different stages of manufacturing has been found including raw lumps of stone, sawn or knapped pieces, stone flakes, unfinished ornaments and grinding stones. The beads seem to be perforated with a diamond-tipped drill bit that made very small holes (Figure 1.11). Bellina (2003) suggests that these beads were made with sophisticated Indian technologies responding to the demands of Southeast Asian elites. Similar beads were found in several other places in Southeast Asia, but

¹¹ A remarkable collection of articles on Khao Sam Kaeo and its productions can be found in the *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Tome 93, 2006.



Figure 1.11 Semi-precious stone beads from Khao Sam Kaeo

without evidence of production: Ban Don Ta Phet at the head of the peninsula, some sites in Central Thailand, the Sa Huynh sites in Vietnam and the Tabon caves in the Philippines. In this network of trade, Khao Sam Kaeo was an important manufacturing center for semi-precious stone ornaments, probably with Indian craftsmen settled on the site at least at its initial stage (Glover and Bellina 2011:40). The current author may add that Phukhao Thong was also another important production center since the similar finds related to the ornament manufacture are overwhelming there as well.

The archaeological assemblage at Khao Sam Kaeo is quite similar to that of Ban Don Ta Phet (BDTP) which suggests their relationship. BDTP is a late prehistoric site dated to the 4th century BCE and located at the head of Peninsular Siam in Kanchanaburi Province. Its complex cemetery has been excavated but no habitation area has been identified (see Glover and Bellina 2011). The semi-precious stone beads found at BDTP seem to be similar in shapes and made with the same techniques as those of Khao Sam Kaeo and it is possible that they were imported from the latter site. The excavations at BDTP have yielded various significant finds. A small carnelian “leaping feline” figurine was found and was originally believed by Glover to be a lion

representing the Buddha as he was Sakya Simha or the lion of the Sakya clan. Glover (1990:28) compared this figurine to a crystal crouching lion figurine found in a stupa in Taxila. However, the feline pendant from BDTP is more morphologically similar to the carnelian leaping tiger figurines found in the largest quantity at Halin, Binnaka, and the Samon Valley in Central Burma. Hudson (2004:84) proposes that these tiger figurines have a close morphological relationship with the bronze “Tally Tigers” of the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BCE) of China, which were used as symbols to denote military office. In the isthmian tract, this kind of feline pendant is also found at Khuan Luk Pat and Tha Chana but they are thinner, smaller and different in shape. These sites are also younger by several centuries than BDTP. Therefore, their pendants may not be directly related to the BDTP figurine.

Bronze vessels found at Khao Sam Kaeo and BDTP also show similarities. A knobbed bronze vessel found at Khao Sam Kaeo is comparable to those found at BDTP (Glover and Bellina 2011:35). It has a central cone on the bottom surrounded by a series of concentric rings which led Glover (1990) to believe that it represents Mount Meru. These vessels were made of high-tin bronze (23-28 percent Sn.) like most of bronze vessels found at BDTP. Glover (1990) originally suggests that these high-tin bronze vessels were produced in Thailand where tin was abundant and exported to India where tin was rather short. However, in the light of his new research he suggests that rather similar compositional types and forms of high-tin bronze bowls were both earlier and more widespread in India than he realized, and it is not certain where these bowls were produced (Glover and Bellina 2011:35-36). In any case, the Indian-styled decorations on the bowls indicate the close relationships between BDTP and Indian sites since the 4th century BCE.

Recent research on Indian and Indian-styled ceramics found at Khao Sam Kaeo also suggests the presence of Indian craftspersons at the site. Bouvet (2011:74-75) points out that the similarities, in terms of paste and style, between some of the wares at Khao Sam Kaeo, such as the kendis and black polished wares, and those of the Indian subcontinent could indicate the work of Indian craftspersons working on this site, who could have used the locally available raw materials and fashioned the ceramics using their technical knowledge. However, some morphological types of the black polished wares at Khao Sam Kaeo are different from the Indian Northern Black Polished Wares (NBP) which suggests an alteration made by local potters as well. In any case, Bouvet (2011:74-75) states that the relationship between potters at Khao Sam Kaeo and those producing NBP in South Asia was well established, especially with those at Mahasthangarh on the head of the Bay of Bengal in Bangladesh, in the 4th to 2nd centuries BCE.

Regarding the Rouletted Wares (RW) found at Khao Sam Kaeo, Bouvet (2011:73-74) suggests that they show homogeneity in paste, surface, and production technique and thus indicate one center of production. They are also similar to RW found in India such as Arikamedu and she assumes that they were imported from India to Khao Sam Kaeo at some point during the 4th to 2nd centuries BCE. RW spread in a large area along the Coromandel Coast from Bangladesh to Sri Lanka and in maritime Southeast Asia. Manguin points out that the quantity of RW found in Southeast Asia is too small to regard them as a major trade item: he says “for some four centuries of exchange activities, enough whole dishes (of RW are) to set tables for only five dozen people” (2011:xxi). These wares may have been carried along by the Indian merchants to Southeast Asia and served specific purposes for them, perhaps in religious settings.

Besides the Indian and Indian-styled wares, the excavations and survey on Hills 3 and 4 at Khao Sam Kaeo also yielded several sherds of Han-related pottery, suggesting the contact of this site to the regions further east. This contact is also indicated by other artifacts found at the site, such as a fragment of a bronze mirror, an arrow head, and a swallowtail bronze axe (Bellina-Pryce and Silapanth 2006:278). The unglazed Han sherds are decorated with stamped marks on the external surface and can be dated to the Western Han Period (206 BCE-8 CE) (Thammapreechakorn 2008:1).

Food supply is another important issue for the trading centers with relatively high population. An important pioneer research on the archaeobotany at Khao Sam Kaeo by Cristina Castillo suggests that the Indian origin domesticates *Vigna radiata* (Mung bean) and *Macrotyloma uniflorum* (Horse gram) and the Northern Chinese cereal *Setaria italica* (Foxtail millet) were present in the excavated layers at the site dated to the 4th-2nd centuries BCE¹². Mung beans are also present at Phukhao Thong. They seem to be brought by Indian people to the Isthmus because this species of mung beans is native to India and different from the local ones. However, the species of rice from the excavations at Khao Sam Kaeo is not Indian but native to Thailand. It is a kind of rice grown in the drier, high ground. Therefore, it may be assumed that the local people supported this urban center with rice grown on the hill slopes in the nearby areas.

¹² This information derives from Castillo's abstract and presentation entitled "Rice in Thailand: The Archaeobotanical Contribution" at the conference entitled "Rice and Language across Asia: Crops, Movement, and Social Change" held at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York on 25 September 2011.

Khlong Thom or Khuan Luk Pat

Khuan Luk Pat which means 'the Bead Mound' is also known as the Khlong Thom archaeological site. It is a natural mound and has the Khlong Thom River passing through in the southern side. The mound is 1.5 km² and around 8 meters higher than sea level. The Khlong Thom River may have offered a line of passage to the hinterland and also formed a part of the transpeninsular routes across the peninsula. One may navigate the river upstream to the northeast and reach the source of the Tapi River, which leads to the Bay of Bandon on the east coast where several other ancient communities were situated (Veraprasert 1992: 150).

In 1983, Mayuree Veraprasert conducted an archaeological excavation at the site and proposed that the site had been occupied since the late prehistoric period. In the early centuries CE, it became an important trading and manufacturing center in the maritime trade network that involved the Roman Empire, India, Southeast Asia, and China (Veraprasert 1992: 159). Although her conclusion seems valid, scientific dating from the site is still required in order to create a more precise chronology.

Artifacts that have been reported and collected in the temple museum include a bronze mirror of the Han Dynasty, Indian and Roman gold and bronze coins, Indian seals, Roman intaglios and seals, Chinese and Middle Eastern ceramic sherds, metal ornaments and tools, molds for earrings and rings, lumps of raw glass, glass slag, tin and lead ingots, and a variety of beads made of gold, lead, glass, and semi-precious stones (Figure 30) (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 85; P. Noonsuk 1997: 183). The presence of Middle Eastern ceramics on this site further suggests that it may have involved in overseas maritime trade until the ninth century AD (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 89).

Khuan Luk Pat is the archaeological site that produces the most Roman or Roman-styled artifacts, mostly intaglios and coins, in Peninsular Siam. These finds have been generally dated to the last centuries BCE to the early centuries CE¹³. They include: an intaglio with the figure of Perseus holding the head of Medusa (Figure 1.12), an intaglio with a figure of a well-adorned person with diadem, originally a sign of the Hellenistic King, but taken over by Romans (e.g. Victorinus) and later into Byzantine (Figure 1.13)¹⁴, an intaglio with the figure of the Goddess Fortune carrying the horn of plenty in her right hand and holding a rudder in her left hand (Figure 1.13)¹⁵, an intaglio with figures of two roosters (Figure 1.14), an intaglio with the figure of seated Diomedes holding the Palladion (Figure 1.15), an intaglio with the figure of standing Heracles holding a club and wearing lion skin (Figure 1.16). There is also a possible Roman coin which we only have a vague photographic record (Figure 1.12).

Tha Chana

Tha Chana is in Surat Thani province on the Gulf of Siam immediately north of the Bay of Bandon. It is situated on the ancient sand dune running in a north-south direction parallel to the eastern shoreline. This sand dune may have been a good location for ancient settlements since it is sided by fertile plains and cannot be flooded in rainy seasons. There is evidence of many settlements of different periods on this kind of geography. Several rivers originate from the Phuket range that pass this area to the Gulf of Siam. These rivers can provide communication channels between the site and the communities in the Bay of Bandon, the hinterland groups, and the sites on the west coast across the peninsula.

¹³ These items were identified for the author by Professor Annetta Alexandridis in personal communication.

¹⁴ Personal communication with Professor Andrew Ramage.

¹⁵ Goddess Fortune may have been popular among sailors because she is holding a rudder, indicating that she is directing the way the boat is going and symbolically representing that she is directing your faith.



Figure 1.12 A collection of Roman intaglios and coin, and Indian coins from Khuan Luk Pat. The middle is an intaglio with the figure of Perseus holding Medusa's head while the lower right is a possible Roman coin. The upper right is an intaglio with the figure of a well-adorn Roman (also see Figure 1.13). (Photo from A. Srisuchat 1996)



Figure 1.13 Intaglio with a figure of a well-adorned person with diadem, originally a sign of the Hellenistic King from Khuan Luk Pat (Photo from A. Srisuchat 1996)



Figure 1.14 Intaglios with the figure of two roosters and of the Goddess Fortune from Khuan Luk Pat (Photo from A. Srisuchat 1996)

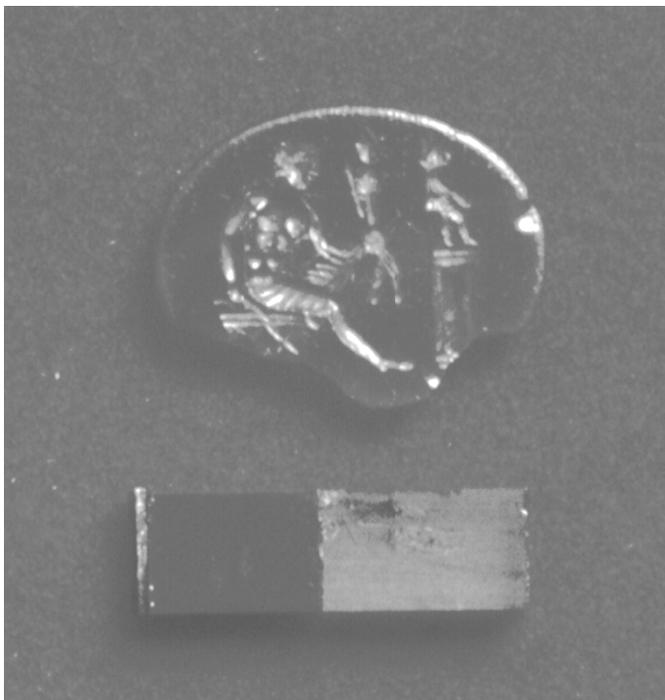


Figure 1.15 Intaglio with the figure seated Diomedes holding the Palladion from Khuan Luk Pat



Figure 1.16 Intaglio with the figure of Heracles holding a club and wearing lion skin from Khuan Luk Pat (Photo Courtesy of Boonyarit Chaisuwan)

Unfortunately, the Tha Chana site has been looted at least since 1977 and, thus, the archaeological context of the site has been almost totally destroyed. There are only a small number of artifacts left in the hands of villagers nowadays, who are still looting and willing to sell them. The artifacts include as follows: iron tools, etched beads, a Lingling-o earring, several forms of gold, glass, and semi-precious stone beads and bracelets, feline pendant, pottery sherds, grinding stones, lumps of raw glass, and glass slag and unfinished semi-precious stone beads and ornaments. Some of the artifacts are believed to be representative of sacred animals (e.g., goose) in Buddhism.

The Tha Chana site had also developed into the early historic period (500-1000 CE) as suggested by several religious images, such as lion pendants and other auspicious animal

figurines in Buddhism, found at the site (P. Noonsuk 1997: 282). The development of Tha Chana site, therefore, suggests the socio-cultural continuity from the protohistoric to early historic period in which people of the community who engaged in maritime trade in the protohistoric period evidently adopted the Indic religion in the early historic period possibly through the process of local selection over a long period of time. However, there is no evidence of Roman finds in this site.

A Note on Trans-Isthmian Routes

Based on similar artifacts related to early trade found on both sides of the isthmian tract, it can be assumed that a series of trans-isthmian routes were used to transport goods and people in the Trans-Asiatic trade network from the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea (see Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 30-49; Wheatley 1966:xxvi). These routes may have been changed through time due to the changes in trade patterns, socio-political circumstances, and topography. For example, the silting of rivers and shifting of sandbars would have caused the decline of the ports, which were termini of particular trans-isthmian routes, so that the routes would have been affected too. The earliest route seems to be established at the Isthmus of Kra to link Phukhao Thong and Khao Sam Kaeo, which were the earliest trading centers in the isthmus, together and to facilitate flow of imported goods, raw materials, merchants, and craftspersons from the Indian subcontinent to Khao Sam Kaeo on the Gulf of Siam. Although the Indian merchants seemed to play a vital role in penetrating into the Gulf of Siam, their attempt would have failed without the assistance of the local people. To cross an unknown terrain full of forests, high mountains, and other dangerous obstacles, the Indians needed help from the indigenous forest people. These people are called Orang Asli or Sakai who have lived and acquired their intimate knowledge of

the forest and mountainous landscape for generations. They acted as collectors of forest products valued highly by foreign merchants, and also as guides for foreigners, and as porters of trade goods across the isthmian tract. They were difficult to control by coercive force because they were mobile and could escape to the deep forests. To guarantee their service and the flow of goods across the Isthmus, the coastal trading polities and traders had, therefore, to earn their loyalty and respect by offering them reasonable returns of materials and prestige (L. Andaya 2008:202).

A Note on the Sources of the Semi-Precious Stone Beads

Although Bérénice Bellina (2003) makes it clear that the manufacture of the semi-precious stone beads from Khao Sam Kaeo and other sites in Southeast Asia was based on the Indian technology, there still exists a debate about where the raw materials of these beads came from. Theunissen et al. (2000: 84) propose that a complex multi-source origin, involving some local Southeast Asian and Sri Lankan providers. They conducted geochemical sourcing research using samples from two sites in Thailand, including the sites of Ban Don Ta Phet in the immediate north of Peninsular Siam and Noen U-Loke in Northeast Thailand, to compare with those in India and Sri Lanka during the period 500 BC to AD 500. The result of this research demonstrates that the agate and carnelian sources of beads at the Thai sites may have come from Southeast Asia, possibly from the Thai sources themselves, rather than from India, through an intra-regional exchange network (Theunissen et al. 2000: 102).

However, recent research conducted by Alison Carter (2011) based on LA-ICP-MS analysis of stone beads and geological sources from South and Southeast Asia convincingly argues that the sources of the raw materials for semi-precious stone beads from several sites in

Southeast Asia, including Khao Sam Kaeo, came from the Deccan Traps in the central part of India instead¹⁶. This ongoing research will continue to shed light on this subject in the future as she acquires more samples and data.

Possible Roman Artifacts in Other Sites in Southeast Asia

There have been several Roman artifacts found in other sites in Southeast Asia. A glass intaglio of Perseus holding the head of Medusa (ca. second or third century CE), almost identical with the one from Khuan Luk Pad, is reported to have been found in the heartland of Burma at Srikshetra where many Indian or Indian-inspired artifacts and ornaments have been discovered as well (Di Crocco 1996:165). In western Thailand at the site of Pong Tuk, an early Byzantine lamp was discovered in 1927 (Figure 1.17). This lamp is believed to have been produced in Egypt in around the fifth to sixth centuries CE (Borell 2008:8). In central Thailand, a copper coin of Emperor Victorinus (reigning from 268 to 270 CE) was discovered at the site of U-Thong (Figure 1.18) and several terracotta lamps (Figure 1.19), produced after Roman-style lamps, were found at Nakhon Pathom and Tha Kae (in Lopburi). This kind of lamp was found at Pagan in central Burma and Angkor in Cambodia as well (Indrawooth 1999:60; Miksic 2003:25). To the east, several Indian and Mediterranean finds have been found at the ancient port of Oc Eo in the Mekong Delta, now in Southern Vietnam. Oc Eo thrived on maritime trade and, based on archaeological evidence, was a manufacturing center for a variety of goods (gold and bronze ornament, beads, potter, and etc) for inland and overseas markets (Manguin 2004:300). Three

¹⁶ This information derives from Alison Carter's presentation at the conference of the Council on Thai Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on 30 October 2010, and from her paper, entitled "Proveniencing Stone Beads: New Insights from LA-ICP-MS Analysis of Stone Beads and Geological Sources from South and Southeast Asia", presented at the 74th Annual Society for American Archaeology annual meeting, Sacramento, California in 2011.



Figure 1.17 Byzantine Lamp of the fifth or sixth century CE from Pong Tuk (from Borrell 2008)



Figure 1.18 Copper coins of Emperor Victorinus (reigning from 268 to 270 CE), (a) is from Cologne, Germany, but it is mistakenly shown as reverse in this photo, and (b) is from U-Thong in central Thailand. (Photo Courtesy of Phasook Indrawooth)



Figure 1.19 Terracotta lamp from Nakhon Pathom in central Thailand (Photo Courtesy of Phasook Indrawooth)

Roman gold medallions, plus bronze medallions, one apparently issued by Antoninus Pius dated 152 CE, another by Marcus Aurelius (161-180) were found at this site (Miksic 2003:21) highlighting Roman trading activities in the Antonine period as also mentioned in the Chinese account (Young 2001:34). At Oc Eo, besides some possible Roman glass beads and ornaments, according to Malleret, at least five intaglios carved on carnelian were indisputably Roman, as well as at least four others which were decisively Mediterranean in the style of the periods of Augustus and Hadrian (cited in Miksic 2003:21).

Miksic (2003:25) also mentioned some Roman finds in northern Vietnam which was under Chinese control in the last centuries BCE including: a large bronze of Maximin the Goth of the third century CE at My-tho, a statue of Poseidon at Tra-vinh, Indianized statues of Dionysius and Pan found in a Han-period grave at Thanh-hoa, and finally, found somewhat to the west of Hanoi, a wooden box contained five coins including one of Antoninus Pius (138), and one of Constantine I (306-337) or perhaps Theodosius II (415-450) and a fifth-century

Byzantine piece. These finds suggest the significance of northern Vietnam as a major gate to China for maritime merchants. This strategic location in the maritime trade of northern Vietnam led the Chinese to have interest in and finally conquer this region in 111 BCE (Higham 1989:290) in order to have direct control of the flow of goods from maritime Southeast Asia. It is important to remember that it was from this region that the first Roman envoy of 166 CE arrived in China according to the Chinese record.

The Roman artifacts found in Southeast Asia clearly suggest a connection between this region and the Mediterranean World through the maritime trade network. However, the question of how these artifacts arrived in Southeast Asia and what the nature of the trade network was like deserve more explorations. These questions bring us to the Roman Red Sea.

The Roman Red Sea

The Mediterranean World had acquired goods from the east long before the Roman time. Cotton from India and silk from China appeared in this region since the fifth century BCE attesting to the extensive trade networks of the Greeks. Several purple and white silk textiles were found in a late fifth-century BCE tomb in Athens (Welters 2006:693). However, it is still unclear how these Far Eastern goods came to the Mediterranean.

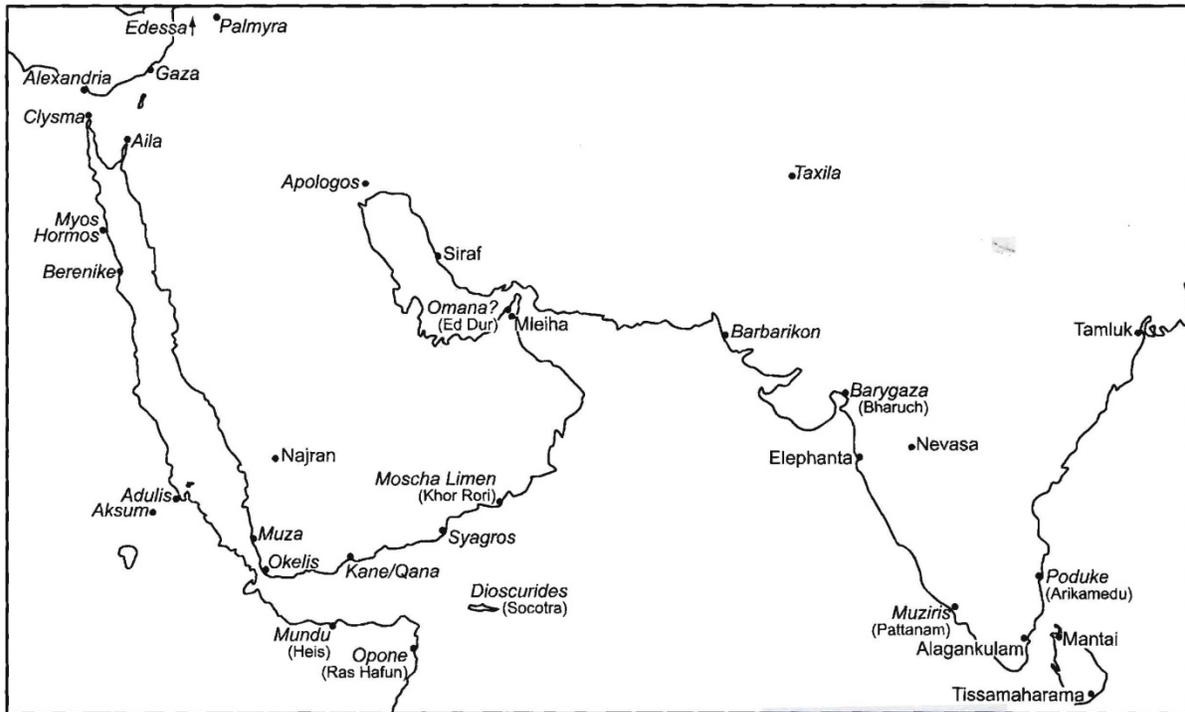
The desire in the West for goods from India was fuelled by the legend of Alexander the Great's Indian campaign of 327 BCE. The Romans, especially, had an appetite for the Eastern goods for various reasons. Ostentatious consumption of goods, such as gems and silk, may represent the luxury end of the Roman market, while pepper and aromatics became necessities for the Roman way of life as they were required for medicinal, religious, and culinary uses

(Tomber 2008:16). The goods in the luxury and other categories, however, sometimes overlapped.

Luxuria can include items for the production of clothing and adornment such as silks, decorated cotton, pearls, various gemstones, shells, tortoiseshell, coral and ivory; items for the production of perfumes and unguents such as myrrh, nard and aloe; and exotic items such as tigers and ostriches (Young 2001:15). Some writers in the Roman republican period criticized what they saw as a corrupt luxurious way of life, but with little effect, however (Young 2001:15). Goods used for medicinal purposes consist of myrrh and oil of myrrh, cinnamon and cassia, nard, malabathron, and several others, while goods used in a religious practices included the Arabian aromatics such as frankincense and myrrh burned in honor of the gods at temples and at funerals (Young 2001:16-17).

It is important to note that many of the Eastern goods arrived at the Roman Empire as raw, unfinished materials. These goods were not generally sold in this form but reprocessed in the Roman workshops. This kind of reprocessing added a considerable amount to the value of the Eastern items. The bulk of money which was spent on the goods, said Young (2001:23), “may very well have gone not to foreign traders or ‘middlemen’, but rather those who traded in and reprocessed the goods within the empire itself.”

The main channel for the Eastern goods to enter the Roman Empire was the Red Sea (Map 1.4). Although it had been used by the Ptolemaic Empire since the late centuries BCE as attested both by the historical record and the Ptolemaic finds in the archaeological record at the ports of Myos Hormos and Berenike, it was not until Augustus annexed Egypt in 30 BCE that the systematic exploitation of trade routes in the Red Sea for primarily economic purposes commenced (Tomber 2008:18, 60, 71). The unification of the Mediterranean basin under a



Map 1.4 Key sites in the Red Sea and the western side of the Indian Ocean (from Tomber 2008: Figure 1)

single government and the cessation of the Roman civil wars accomplished by Augustus (reigning from 27 BCE to 14 CE) promoted peace and prosperity and greatly increased the market for the Eastern goods. Besides the political reasons, the volume of the Eastern trade also increased as a result of the discovery of the monsoon sailing by the Greek captain, Hippalos, around the transition between BCE and CE. This lowered the costs as the maritime merchants could now transport their goods directly between the Red Sea and India, thus avoiding a long and dangerous coastal voyage (Bjorkelo et al. 2007:5; Young 2001:20, 26). The combination of a strong market and the means of effectively servicing that market clearly explain the prosperity of the Eastern trade under the Roman Empire (Young 2001:26).

There are several historical documents on the Roman maritime trade in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. The best known and reliable source is the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (*PME*) of c. the first century CE, written by an anonymous Greco-Egyptian merchant or ship captain living in Alexandria (Bjorkelo et al. 2007:3; Tomber 2008:20). As a practical guide aimed at merchants, its 66 short sections not only provide geographical information and sailing directions from the Roman Red Sea ports to India and East Africa but also itemize the goods coming in and out of these ports and the people encountered at each (Bjorkelo et al. 2007:3; Tomber 2008:20). The *Periplus* is, therefore, a vital source for ancient cultural studies.

Other classical sources include, but are not limited to: (1) the *Natural History*, completed in 77 CE by Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE), describing Indian Ocean commerce including the voyage from the Red Sea to India and listing the natural products from the region. It adopted a moralizing tone bemoaning the effect of the Eastern trade on the Roman society; (2) the *Geography* written by Strabo (c. 64/3 BCE—23 CE) in Greek around the early decades of the first century CE with much of the information from earlier writers; (3) the *Geography* of the mid-second century CE by Claudius Ptolemy, an Alexandria-based Egyptian, writing in Greek and providing a world map and 26 regions that were used until the Age of Exploration; (4) the *Christian Topography* written by Cosmas in the eleventh century CE; (5) the *Muziris Papyrus*, dated to the mid-second century CE, a maritime loan contract for a journey between Alexandria and Muziris on the Malabar Coast of India, providing detailed instructions for transporting goods from the Red Sea to Alexandria (Tomber 2008:19-30). These sources are vital when incorporated with the archaeological record in order to understand the nature of the maritime trade in the Indian Ocean.

Ports and Material Remains

There are many ports of Eastern trade in the Red Sea such as Clysma and Aila but Myos Hormos and Berenike seem to be major ones. The *Periplus*, for example, mentions only these two ports in the mid-first century CE. Myos Hormos is now Quseir al-Qadim while Berenike is Bernis in Egypt. Recent excavations suggest that Myos Hormos was mainly active between the late Augustan period and the mid-third century CE. However, some finds such as one coin of Ptolemy III and few Ptolemaic sherds suggest an earlier period of occupation. Most of the pots from this site were Roman amphorae of Egyptian and Italian origin dating to the late Augustan period. It is striking that Myos Hormos, despite its prominent role in the Red Sea and its over-200-year occupation, lacks a well-established street system and substantial architecture; only few structures of ashlar, or coral from the adjacent reef, or mudbrick were identified (Tomber 2008:58-61).

Recent excavations at the Berenike, located 300 km. further south, suggest a longer history from the mid-third century BCE to early sixth century CE. Stone architecture was fairly common, composed of ashlar or coral or mudbrick as at Myos Hormos. The settlement gradually migrated eastwards and southwards as a response to silting from the wadi and the shore, with the most intensive occupation from the mid-fourth century onwards. Both Myos Hormos and Berenike individually had access to the Nile through inland stations to transport goods to Alexandria. There is also a road, *Via Hadriana*, that ran along the Egyptian Red Sea connected the ports together. It started at Antinoopolis on the Nile and ended at Berenike although the main purposes of this road were military and administrative.

It has been assumed that the reason why these two ports were situated close to each other is because the northerly winds of the Red Sea were infamous and it was sometimes safer to

disembark at the more southerly location of Berenike where merchants could take a land route to Myos Hormos. Indian skippered ships may have had more difficulty reaching the northern port given their unfamiliarity with the winds; however, social factors like personal and family connections may have also convinced merchants and sailors to stop at Berenike (Tomber 2008:63).

The material remains of the Eastern trade in both Myos Hormos and Berenike are quite similar. In the Ptolemaic layers, exported items are almost absent; most of the remains are Egyptian sherds. This evidence contrasts starkly with that of the Augustan period in which we see the flowering of the Eastern trade in this region, as during their period of co-occupation, particularly between the late first century BCE and the late first century CE, the two ports shared an impressive range of Eastern imports from India, South Arabia and East Africa (Tomber 2008:71).

The small, drawn, monochromic glass “Indo-Pacific” beads, produced in South India and Sri Lanka, are common in Berenike. First, they were imported in small numbers during the Early Roman period but by the Late Roman period, numbers increased greatly. Rice is found in both ports and is believed to be consumed by the resident Indians. Basketry, matting and bamboo, seemingly from North India, were also discovered at Berenike¹⁷.

Important Indian finds are graffiti in Indian languages on pottery sherds that may imply the existence of Indian residency on the Red Sea. Five inscribed sherds have been found so far, four from Myos Hormos and one from Berenike. Three of those from Myos Hormos were inscribed with Tamil-Brahmi graffiti dated to around the first century CE, suggesting a connection with the far south of India where Tamil was spoken and written. The other one

¹⁷ The imbalance of the archaeological record between Myos Hormos and Berenike, said Tomber (2008:71), may be due to the scale of excavations, and not necessarily due to the actual activities in the past.

graffito from Myos Hormos is inscribed with Parkrit-Brahmi, a northerly South Indian script dated to the second or third century CE, perhaps from the Deccan region in India. The only one from Berenike is inscribed on a Roman amphora of the common Dressel 2-4 type with Tamil-Brahmi script also dated to around the first century CE (Tomber 2008:73-74). These graffiti, with personal names on most of them, imply the presence of Indian communities rather than trade in ceramics or their contents. This assumption is also supported by the evidence of other Indian pottery in the two Egyptian ports.

The earliest Indian pottery in the Red Sea are the two Red-and-Black Megalithic Wares found at Myos Hormos, indicating the pre-Roman contact between India and the Red Sea. Besides them, the major Indian wares that were contemporaneous with the Indo-Roman trade are Rouletted Wares (RW), Coarse Red-Slipped Wares (CRSW), and Organic Black Wares; all of them have been unearthed in Myos Hormos and Berenike. RW, an Indian fine ware probably produced in eastern India in the Chandraketurah-Tamluk area in around the second century BCE to third century CE, is found almost exclusively at the two ports in contexts of the late first century BCE or first century CE. CRSW, a coarse ware produced in several places, at least in Kerala in southwestern India, is much more common in the Red Sea, especially during the Early Roman period. Also dated to the first century CE, the Organic Black Ware from the Gujarat region in northwest India is found in both ports although less common than CRSW. There is an exceptional example of the Indian storage jar with 7.5 kg of South Indian black pepper found *in situ* in a first-century CE courtyard immediately north of the Serapis temple. This discovery indicates that some Indian pottery arrived in Egypt as containers and pepper was also used for ritual purposes, not just for cooking. It is important to emphasize that finds of Indian coarse wares are restricted to port sites (with the single exception of a sherd found at the first road

station of Vectus Hydreuma between Berenike and the Nile), indicating that their usage was predominantly for Indians who resided at the Roman Red Sea ports (Tomber 2008:74-76).

Although the trade between the Roman Red Sea and India could be operated directly using the monsoon winds, the merchants from both places could stop on the way at Opone in East Africa for slaves and rice and also at South Arabia in ports such as Qana, Syagros, and Khor Rori to trade for frankincense, myrrh, and Persian wine. There existed in Indian ports the so-called Torpedo jars, probably produced in Mesopotamia to contain Persian wine, which testify to direct maritime trade between South Arabia and India as well (Tomber 2008: 100-116).

The Indian Subcontinent

The complex social interactions in the Indian Ocean existed long before the emergence of the Indo-Roman maritime trade. In the third millennium BCE, the civilizations of Mesopotamia and the Indus valley developed a sophisticated network in the northwestern part of the Indian Ocean. This seaborne network involved several communities including those in Oman and Bahrain in the exchange of resources (Bjorkelo et al. 2007:4). The maritime network in the Indian Ocean seems to develop through time with a rhythm of flourishing and recession like anything else in the world. The Indian Ocean network, therefore, should be seen as an enormous web of commercial and social interactions between many groups, cities and states, with a life of its own. It transcended the life of any state and was never controlled by any empire. The network peaked when merchants of the Roman Empire entered the pre-existing maritime network (Bjorkelo et al. 2007:5). The expanding Roman market for natural resources, spices, gems, and other kinds of *exotica* from India and the discovery of the monsoon navigation made the maritime trade between the Roman Red Sea and the Indian subcontinent blossom. In

response, trading stations and ports were developed throughout the Indian subcontinent. They were linked to one another generally through the pre-existing internal trade routes. Tomber (2008) outlines six regions as related to the trade:

First, the northwest region is the area between the Indus and the north of the Hindu Kush with Taxila and Begram. Taxila, the capital city of the Kushan Empire (second century BC to 230 CE), occupied a strategic location between the routes from Bactria and Central Asia. Although dominated by overland routes rather than maritime ones, Taxila also had access to the Indus system that led to the Arabian Sea. It was in this city that the Iranian, Indian and Hellenistic element merged and that Gandhara Art emerged. Taxila had a Western-inspired local gem-carving industry as well. Further inland in what is now Afghanistan, Begram was the crossroad for caravan routes between the Mediterranean, India, and China. There, an exceptional cache, so-called “the Begram treasure”, was found in what is believed to be a royal palace containing bronze, rock crystal glass and plaster models for metalworkers from the Mediterranean in association with Indian and Chinese objects. Some of the glass found there was analyzed and it appeared to have come from Egypt. The treasure was thought to date within a generation of 100 CE (Tomber 2008:122-124). It should be noted also that the amphora-shaped glass vessel from Phukhao Thong in Peninsular Siam, mentioned earlier, may be inscribed with the title of an elite person from Begram (Kapisa). This region provided a passageway between both the overland and maritime trade routes.

Second, Gujarat and the Konkan Coast are located on the Indus and Narmada that can provide an access to central India. There were two major ports in this region; both were mentioned in the *Periplus*. The first is Barbarikon located at the mouth of the Indus in modern Pakistan. The second is Barygaza (Bharuch), the port that was mentioned most frequently in the

Periplus, situated on the northern bank of the Narmada which connected the port with the rich hinterland and with three different routes to Bactria, the Ganges Valley, and the lower Krishna Valley. Not only was it a port but also a manufacturing center. Barygaza yields a variety of imported amphorae including those dating to the Early and Late Roman period and others from Mesopotamia. The Torpedo jars are also present here. A small amount of Roman coins was reported. They may have served as bullion where the local coins of precious metal were rare. Other small Roman objects include an Early Roman quartz cameo from Karvana and a bronze jug handle with a relief figure of Eros straddling an amphora from Akota (Tomber 2008:124-128).

Third, Tamruk and Chandraketurah were important sites in the northeast. This region is on the Ganges and had been largely autonomous except during the Maurya and Gupta Empires. Roman evidence in this region is thin; however, two Latin seals from Rajbadidanga with personal names, 'Oaborra' and 'Horae', were reported but are no longer available for inspection. Despite the absence of the Roman finds, this region produced significant items for the Indo-Roman trade. Gangetic cotton is mentioned by the *Periplus*, while Gangetic nard by the *Muziris papyrus*. The Tamruk-Chandraketurah area may be the epicenter of the rouletted ware (RW) production as well. It is believed that the Roman contact with this region was indirect, particularly through southeast India. This northeast-southeast connection is supported by the distributions of the Indo-Pacific beads from the south and the RW from the north. The Gangetic region was crucial in the interactions with Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka. It seems that this region was the vital source of Indian goods and Buddhism in Southeast Asia. Tamruk was also an important port that had connection with China; embassies were sent from this port to China in

the third century CE and Chinese pilgrims, including Fa-hsein (or Faxian), of the early fifth century CE stayed here as well (Tomber 2008:128-130).

Fourth, the Deccan includes the area between the Krishna and Godavari Rivers and the Satavahana Empire (200 BCE to 250 CE) had its capital at Paithan (Tomber 2008:130). Nevasa, Kolhapur and Ter were important sites. Kolhapur yielded one of the most exciting groups of Roman finds in India. This was a collection of indigenous and imported metal sculptures; however, this group seems to be not chronologically homogeneous as one of them (a statuette of Poseidon) may be dated as early as the third century BCE. More reliable finds are fragments of imported amphorae found at Nevasa, a major center and manufacturing site located at the junction of trade routes leading from the interior to the coast, in which 15 sherds can be dated to between the first and third centuries CE (Tomber 2008:130-132).

Fifth, Tamilakam politically comprised the three chiefdoms of Chola, Pandya and Chera; they all used Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions. The most important ports are Arikamedu, Alagankulam and Pattanam. Arikamedu is located on the Ariyankuppam River on the Coromandel Coast. It has occupational layers dating from before the Roman trade. An earlier Megalithic phase fishing community was found. Arikamedu was not only a port but a center of production, with its peak between 50 BCE and 50 CE, in which a number of workshops have been identified including workshops for metal, glass, gemstones, ivory and shell in the Southern Sector of the site¹⁸. Roman finds are common in this ancient port including intaglios and pottery fragments. Excavations at the site reveal a number of Roman *sigillata* sherds derived from Italy and the Eastern Mediterranean (ESA, ESB). They vary in date between c. 10 BCE and 50 CE. Greek Koan amphorae dated to between the first century BCE and the Augustan period were found. A

¹⁸ This site was extensively excavated by Sir Mortimer Wheeler and later by V. Begley. For more information, see Wheeler et al. (1946) and Begley (1996-2004).

wide variety of pottery from the West found at the site include Eastern (Kos, Knidos, Rhodes, Turkey) and Western (Italy, Gaul, Spain, North Africa) Mediterranean pottery, amphorae from Egypt (both Nile Valley and Mareotis products), and an Organic Storage Jar from the Hadramawt. Other Mediterranean finds are coins (with questionable provenance), lamps, glass vessels and beads (including gold foil) (Tomber 2008:132-137). Because of the early date of some of the Mediterranean material and the suddenness with which it is superimposed upon a purely native culture, Wheeler (1955:150) believed it indicated the essentially Augustan organization of regulated monsoon traffic; while the remoteness of the site from the Roman Empire emphasizes the range of this new organization which was reaching out eastwards to the sources of pearls and silk.

Alagankulam, located on the Vaigai River leading to the turbulent Gulf of Mannar, was an important trading site. It yielded a range of Roman pottery, including three sigillata sherds from Italy and Asia Minor (ESB), and six Roman coins from the late 4th and early 5th century. This site may have superseded Arikamedu. Important resources of the Coimbatore region were pearls (from the Gulf of Mannar), beryls (aquamarine and emerald), and other gems as well. The Coimbatore area has the greatest concentration of Roman coin hoards, primarily Julio-Claudian coins. Three hoards comprising issues of Augustus, Tiberius and Claudius were found in the Karur area. Around 4,500 Late Roman bronze coins have been collected from Karur and Madurai, while recent excavations at Karur have produced a Roman silver coin and amphorae from both Early and Late Roman periods. A hoard of gold jewelry founded at Vellalore dated to the 1st century BCE/CE has been attributed to a mixture of Roman and Indian craftspersons. Foreign craftspersons, as elsewhere, seemed to inspire the local artists in Tamil Nadu as they imitated their objects (Tomber 2008:140).

Muziris was recently archaeologically identified with Pattanam located 1 km southwest of the Paravur Thodu. The occupation of the site seems to range from the late 1st century BCE to the 3rd century CE. Some Roman amphorae and Italian *sigillata* are found along with RW and Paddle Impressed Wares from eastern India. Four coin hoards are also found in vicinity of Pattanam (Tomber 2008:142-144).

Sixth, Sri Lanka or Taprobane called by the Greeks and Romans was strategically located as a commercial intermediary between China and the West. Coins are the most prolific Roman find in Sri Lanka; only a handful of Early Imperial coins have been found, in contrast to the over 200,000 'third brass' and Indo-Roman imitations dating to the fourth and fifth centuries recovered particularly on the west coast (Tomber 2008:145). Three important sites should be mentioned here: Mantai, Anuradhapura, and Tissamaharama. Mantai, located in the north, was the main port of the island, with a long period of significance from the Mesolithic period to the 10th century CE. Sherds of Italian and West Asian *sigillata* are found here.

The Sinhalese royal capital of Anuradhapura, located inland, has a long chronology from the 5th century BCE to 1100 CE¹⁹. The most prolific imports at Anuradhapura come from Mesopotamia, mostly of Sasanian and Early Islamic date, including Torpedo jars and Glazed Ware (both were also recovered from Mantai). Other Western finds from excavations comprise of five Late Roman bronze coins and five fragments of Eastern Mediterranean glass dated to between the first centuries BCE and CE (Tomber 2008:146).

The ancient capital of Ruhuna²⁰, Tissamaharama or Mahagama, on the southern coast was a major port from c. 400 BCE to after 500 CE. Roman finds are more prolific here than at

¹⁹ See also Coningham (1999-2006) for more information on the recent excavations at Anuradhapura.

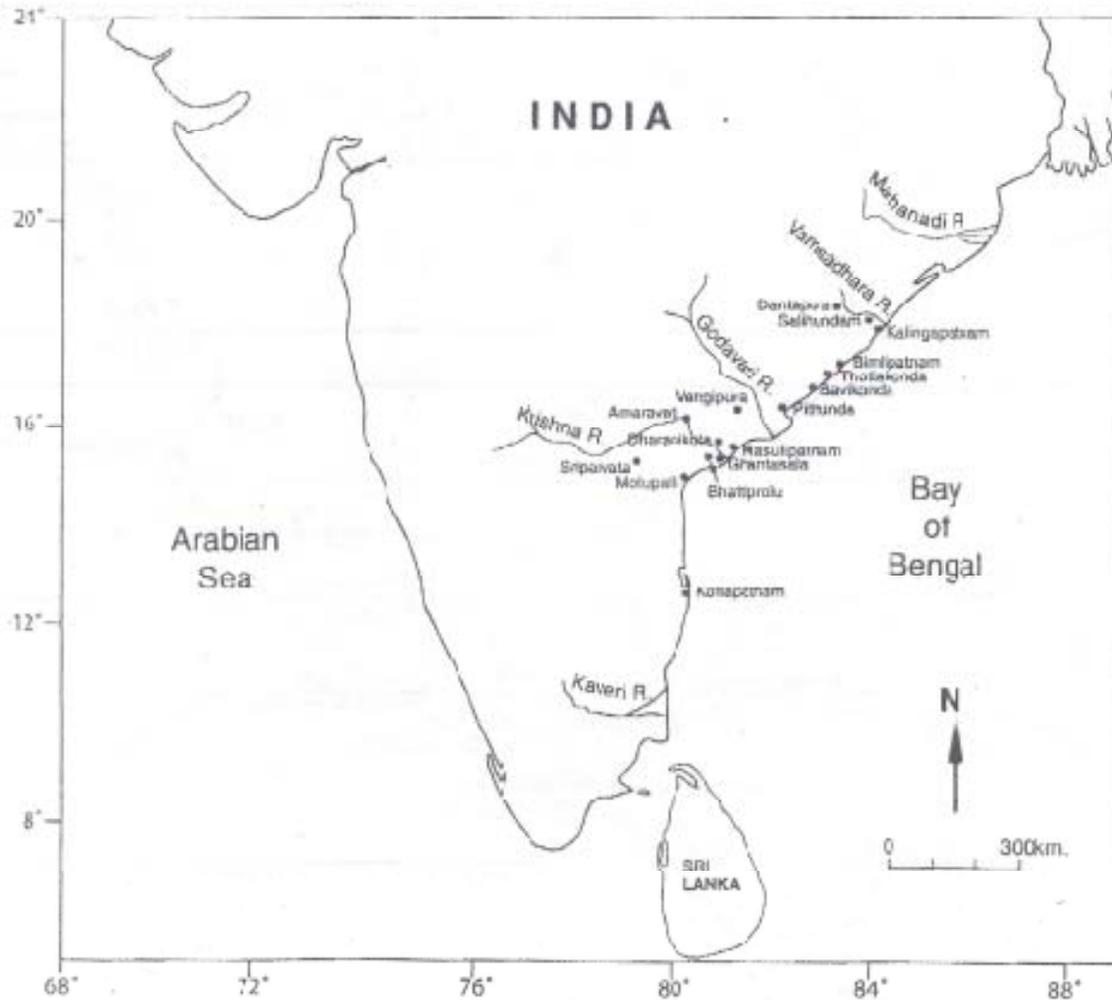
²⁰ This site was extensively excavated and studied recently. See Weisshaar et al. (2001).

Anuradhapura, including early and late Roman amphorae and over 470 Roman coins from the region in which over 40 coins, primarily of the 4th and 5th century CE, have been discovered. Torpedo jars from the Sasanian and Early Islamic periods are also found at the site (Tomber 2008:146-147).

Based on the archaeological evidence summarized from Tomber's remarkable work (2008) above, one can see that the volume of the trade between the Roman Empire and the Indian subcontinent was far greater than that in Southeast Asia and China. India seems to be the destination for most Roman merchants. Arikamedu was highly likely the eastern most port that housed Roman residents although some may have ventured further east to Southeast Asia and China as recorded in the Chinese annals.

Ports of Orissa and Andhradesa

Archaeological finds found at the sites along the Coromandel Coast from Bengal to Orissa, Andhradesa (Andhra Pradesh), Tamil Nadu, and Sri Lanka suggest that this region was crucial in the trade across the Bay of Bengal (Map 1.5). The finds include rouletted wares (RW), knobbed wares, Northern Black Polished wares (NBP), silver punch-marked coins, Roman coins, Kharosthi inscriptions, glass and semi-precious stone beads and ornaments, and can be generally dated to the late centuries BCE to early centuries CE. There are some later trade items as well, such as the Chinese ceramics and coins that may be dated as late as the middle of the second millennium CE, indicating that this region has been active in maritime trade throughout its history until today. As in Southeast Asia, these ports seem to have been developed from fishing communities whose knowledge of the seas and coasts paved the way for the coastal and trans-oceanic trades (Ray 2003:Chapter 2; Saraya 2011:Chapter 1).



Map 1.5 Ports and Trading Centers on the Coromandel Coast (from Tripathi 2009:84)

Sila Tripathi (2002; 2006; 2008; 2009) remarkably identifies two important areas in this vast region including Orissa and Andhradesa which were very active in the early Trans-Asiatic Trade Network. He mentions that the geographies of Orissa and Andhradesa were suitable for establishing trading stations and ports along their coasts as they were characterized by wide deltas protected from strong waves by sand bars and spits projecting out in the sea and acting as breakwaters. The early major trading stations and ports in these areas include, but not limited to, Tamralipti (Tamluk, short distance to the northeast from Orissa), Manikapatna, Kalingapatnam

(perhaps, the capital city of the Kalinga Kingdom), Dantapura, Pithunda, Dharanikota, Motupalli, and Kottapatnam. They generally yielded archaeological assemblage dated from the late centuries BCE to the early centuries CE as mentioned previously. Some of these finds, especially RW, NBP, and glass and semi-precious stone beads and ornaments, testify that these ports were closely connected to those in Peninsular Siam and Southeast Asia as the similar finds are found on both sides of the Bay of Bengal. There are also later ports in these areas as well such as Khalkatapatna and Palur that were active around the 12th-14th centuries CE (Tripathi 2009:81-83).

The coastal ports in these areas were closely linked with the inland trading stations through river systems, and this formed the overland routes across India, such as the route starting from Masulipatnam to Broach, Ter, Paithan and Ajanta that facilitate the Indo-Roman trade from the east to west coasts. The inland sites such as Dantapura and Dharanikota received boats and ships carrying goods from the coastal ports and provided them with resources from the interior. In some places, rock-cut channels were dug to facilitate the disembarkation of the ships (Tripathi 2009:85). The mountain areas, the Deccan Traps, behind the coast provided sources of forest products and semi-precious stones that seem to have been exported to Southeast Asia.

Tripathi (2009:85-86) discussed various facilities at the ancient ports, including wharves, warehouses, jetties and lighthouses at Dharanikota, arikamedu, Kaveripattinam, Ganjam, mahabalipuram, and Chilika. A brick platform, dated to the 3rd century BCE, was found in the excavations at Kaveripattinam, which might have served as a wharf. Brick walls, which might have been part of a warehouse, and possible adjoining docks were discovered along the Ariyankuppam River in Arikamedu. Seaports have wharves made from wooden planks and cross beams resting on huge posts. These were used to load and unload ships during high tide.

The Chilika Lake in southeastern Orissa is particularly important in the settlement of ports. It was a big, deep lake protected by sand bars, once wide open to the sea. Manikapatna and Palur were important ports situated by the lake. In the early times, stone alignments were set up as breakwaters on the bank of the lake and stone anchors with holes inserted with wood or bamboo were put in the lake for boats and ships to tie on to. Some hero stones were discovered around the lake and believed to be commemorative stones erected for dead soldiers in the naval battles, perhaps between the 7th and 9th century CE. A monolithic stone pillar was discovered and believed to have served as a lighthouse with, originally, an oil pot on top. This kind of oil pot lighthouse was also found at Mahabalipuram in South India where an oil pot was originally put on top of Olakkaneswar Temple to facilitate the navigation of ships (Tripathi 2008:387; 2009:88).

Some of the ports in Orissa and Andhradesa may not have been easily accessible to bigger ships due to the shifting sand bars and spits. They may have had to anchor far out at sea and the cargo was hauled to the port by smaller boats. This changing nature of shorelines was partly responsible for the decline of the ports, along with other political and economic reasons (Tripathi 2009:80).

There were several routes across the Bay of Bengal. Ships may have sailed along the coast from Bengal to Coastal Burma and then on to Peninsular Siam, or they may have made their journeys from major ports directly across the Bay to Southeast Asia. Traders would have had to travel from smaller ports to the major ones, such as Palur, Kalingapatnam, Tamralipti, Masulipatnam, and Poompuhar, which were hubs for the overseas journey. Ships may have stopped for replenishment of water and food at the Nicobar Islands (Tripathi 2009:79). Both the Nicobar and, especially, Andaman Islands were infamous for cannibalism. However, this

aggression towards foreigners seems to be a cultural reaction against the Burmese and Malay traders who came to the islands to capture slaves. It is, also, possible that the traders may have, themselves, enhances the notoriety of the islanders to discourage other foreign merchants, so that they can monopolize their trade with the islanders. The most valuable product from the island is perhaps the nest of the swiftlets, which were very highly priced by the Chinese merchants (Cooper 2002:Chapter 2).

Sunil Gupta (2003) proposes that the early trade across the Bay of Bengal in the late centuries BCE to the early centuries CE resulted in the Indianization of Southeast Asia in the middle of the 1st millennium CE. According to him, there are two trade patterns in this early trade. The first is the trade with North India where semi-precious stone beads and later Visnu sculptures were the focus. The second is the trade with South India where glass beads and Amaravati Buddha images were the focus. These patterns of continuing trends in North and South India influenced the cultures of Southeast Asia. However, it may be noted that the north and south cultural divide of India may not be very obvious. For example, Arikamedu in South India yields both the evidence of glass and stone bead productions. Also, the immediate prototypes of the earliest Visnu images in Southeast Asia were in Andhradesa, such as those at Yeleswaram, where Amaravati Buddhist Art was also developed.

China

Although the rather romantic term “Silk Road” was coined by the German geologist Ferdinand von Richthofen at the end of the 19th century to designate the ancient continental trade route between China and the West (Zhang and Ye 1992:191), historians and archaeologists now also use this term to indicate the maritime trade between China and other parts of the ancient

world as well. For example, the historian Xinru Liu (2010:10) defines the Silk Road as a system of commercial routes, on both land and sea, that linked various peoples from China to the Mediterranean. The term “Maritime Silk Road” still encapsulates the significant of silk in the world’s market although this trade route involved various kinds of products, especially spices, aromatic woods, and exotic animal products from Southeast Asia, which had been valued very highly by foreign merchants. Some scholars, therefore, call it “the Spice Route”. Although the overland Silk Road is more famous, the maritime Silk Road in fact surpasses its counterpart on land in terms of length of service and extent of commercial and cultural contact it carried between China and the West (Ting 1996:16). Importantly, both the overland and maritime Silk Roads should be considered as a generic term designating the trade network rather than a solid physical route from the source to the destination (Zhang and Ye 1992:191).

In the formative period of the Silk Road before the 1st century BCE, Chinese silk and other items made its way to the West through a countless series of tributary, gift-giving, raiding, and small-scaled barter trading activities among the Central Asian nomadic groups. Raschke (1978:607-621) discusses the rise of nomadism and the Chinese foreign affairs with nomadic polities in the north and west of China. The period between the 9th and 8th centuries BCE saw the transformation to nomadism by sedentary agricultural and pastoral societies as a far more effective economic utilization of the steppe lands. There was the rise of true nomadic warrior aristocrats who also controlled agricultural communities. Under the framework of Marxist theory, Raschke (1978:611) analyzes that the flow of luxuries from China to the nomadic tribes in the north (Siberia) and northwest was important to the social hierarchical structure of these tribes where, otherwise, there was no clear material distinction among members in the societies. The rising warring aristocrats needed to demonstrate their wealth and power through the

possession of superior, exotic goods from China. These Chinese goods were acquired as booty from raids, as gifts between tribal aristocrats, as tribute, and as items used in barter trade. In this fashion, the Chinese goods could travel in small quantities through the Chinese borders by many natural lines of communication, rather than by a single caravan route, and appear in the elite tombs of those tribes even at the remote corners of Eurasia.

The nomadic tribes had always presented a great threat to Chinese agricultural societies. In the 5th century BCE, seven agricultural states in what is now eastern China were fighting each other for supremacy; three of them in the north had to also cope with frequent incursions of nomadic cavalry which raided villages and towns for grains and silk, a common product in China since sericulture already appeared there in the 3rd millennium BCE. Silk was rare and precious among nomads on the western steppe (Liu 2010:1). The northern states had to build walls along the mountain ranges to defend themselves. The first emperor of the Qin Dynasty (221 BCE) later torn down the inter-state walls but built or connected the walls in the north, which became the Great Wall of China. Realizing the advantage of the nomads' tactics and horsemanship, the state of Zhao, under King Wuling, reformed its army in the 4th century BCE to conform to that of the nomads. Other northern states did this as well. Such reforms increased the need for good horses raised by nomads in the grassland of Central Asia. The Chinese then started to trade silk for horses and formed a partnership with the Yuezhi, a powerful confederacy of nomads which would later become the Kushan Empire in Northern India and Central Asia (Liu 2010:3).

East of the Yuezhi territory, on the Mongolian grassland, lived the Xiongnu (or Hsiungnu), another powerful nomadic confederacy, which first appeared in Chinese records as a tribe in the late 3rd century BCE. The Xiongnu developed swiftly under the strong leader *Mo-tun* who

adopted the Chinese organizational concepts and improved a superior mounted-warrior military technique (Raschke 1978:612). The Xiongnu Empire expanded rapidly in the second century BCE and, unlike the Yuezhi, presented a serious threat to the Qin and later Han governments which had to offer them a series of tributes of silk, luxuries, and even princesses to settle peace. The Xiongnu chief then distributed silk to his followers to demonstrate the political hierarchy of his confederacy and maintain the loyalty among his people. Liu (2010:4) states that in this early commerce, it was largely the ruling elites, whether nomadic or sedentary, and their demand for exotic goods from foreign lands, not the urge to market their own products, that motivated the trade. Silk then became the symbol of power and prestige on the steppe and travelled to the west by a number of different means. Raschke (1978:622) hypothesizes that, beginning as a gift or tribute to the Xiongnu, silk came into the possession of the enterprising Sogdians; it then might have passed through the Parthian or Kushan dominions until it finally ended up in the hands of the merchants of Palmyra and entered the Mediterranean World.

The trade along the Silk Route became more organized for the commercial aim in the reign of Emperor Wudi of the Han Dynasty (140-87 BCE) as he sent a mission to explore Central Asia and acquire nomadic allies. It is important to note that Wudi also seems to be the first emperor who sent envoys to Maritime Southeast Asia and accepted tribute from the countries in that region (Chen 1983:156; Wheatley 1966:8). In this great moment of history, he was responsible for formally opening up China to both the overland and maritime Trans-Asiatic Trade Network. He intended to make China an international market.

To secure China's access to the overland routes to the Western Regions, Wudi had to protect the long corridor (the Hexi Corridor) between part of the Tibetan plateau and the Mongolian desert from Xiongnu raids by extending the Great Wall northwestward all the way to

the Gate of Jade (Yumen), the westernmost garrison town, near Dunhuang. A system of garrisons was established by him all along this part of the Great Wall with its headquarters in a town called Anxi (Tranquil West). This relatively safe route drew many foreign merchants to China. Increasing exotic goods—Roman glassware, Indian cotton textiles, spices and fragrances, gemstones, and woolen textiles of various origins—and information about the foreign lands arrived in the capital city of Chang'an via the Gate of Jade. To meet the demand for luxury goods at either end of this route system, new communities of traders settled along these routes. The merchants often organized themselves into caravans—trading teams that carried goods on pack animals or carts. To facilitate these caravans, cities started to form along the Silk Road beginning around the early first century BCE under Emperor Wudi. These cities began as small communities formed around the oases located between the mountains and the sandy bottom of Talim Basin. Irrigation systems were established to allow these scattered communities to practice agriculture (Liu 2010:9-14). These caravan cities grew into oasis states and outlived any transition of central governments in both China and Central Asia.

As in the maritime trade routes, the overland Silk Road was closely linked to Buddhism. Buddhist institutions in India, under the patronage of the Kushan court, encouraged the accumulation of wealth and benefited from the trade since such wealth also flowed into their monasteries. From the mid-first century to the mid-third century CE, when the Kushans controlled the main portion of the Silk Road, Buddhism spread to China and other Asian countries and left remarkable artworks along the way (Liu 2010:42). Even after the demise of the Kushan Empire, large quantities of silk continued to pass through the Silk Road due to autonomous trading networks sustained by Buddhist institutions, merchants' organizations and

local communities, and from the Mediterranean to China, traders always found sources of goods and supplied markets in spite of military hostilities and dynastic changes (Liu 2010:62).

Although silk was quite well-known in the Roman world, the Chinese court had only vague knowledge of the Roman Empire. Several emissaries were sent to the West, with the explorations of Chang Ch'ien (Zhang Qian) in c. 138 (or 133) to c. 125 (or 123) BCE as the first. Having sent by Emperor Wudi, General Chang Ch'ien reached Ferghana and brought back horses, alfalfa, a Turkish wife, and valuable information about Central Asia (Ferguson 1978:592; Liu 2010:6-7). However, the first direct attempt to reach Ta-Ch'in (the Roman Empire) was in 97 CE by Kan Ying under the order of Pan Ch'ao, the Protector-General of the Western Regions (Leslie and Gardiner 1996:143). Kan Ying gave detailed descriptions of the Seleucid Empire and Characene as he traveled through them using the overland route (Leslie and Gardiner 1996:143). Although when he was about to cross over "the Great Sea" (perhaps the Persian Gulf), a sailor warned him that the sea was very dangerous and this extended sea trip to Ta-Ch'in had taken many lives. He decided not to cross it and returned back home without any success in reaching Ta-Ch'in (Leslie and Gardiner 1996:143-147). Some scholars believe that this sailor was a Pathian and was attempting to prevent the direct contact between the Roman and Han empires by scaring the Chinese envoy not to go to the Roman Empire in order to monopolize the silk trade in this region as middlemen in the overland routes (Ferguson 1978:592).

The overland routes between China and the West, however, only brought a small amount of Roman artifacts to China. Most of the goods were from Central, South and West Asia. There is almost a complete absence of Roman coins in China, especially when compared to India. Apart from a few isolated finds, the only hoard was found at Ch'ang-an (today Xian), the capital city of the Western (or Former) Han Empire. It consisted of sixteen coins ranging from Tiberius

to Aurelian. Some Byzantine gold coins found in Xinjiang, the most northwestern province of China (Warwick 2000:137). The absence of Roman coins in China may be because they were circulated in the regions close to the Roman Empire where the coins retained their highest value and because there were no Roman settlements in China, unlike those in India. One has to consider that the overland Silk Road was never a direct highway connecting the Roman Empire and China. Rather, it was a trade network involving various groups of people exchanging trade goods back and forth between both ends of the ancient world. This sectional nature of the Sino-Roman trade is apparent in the Maritime Silk Road as well.

The Maritime Silk Route had its predecessor in the Neolithic period in around 4,000-5,000 years ago when the supposedly forefathers of the people in the Yue Region, who lived along the southern coast of China navigated the seas to nearby islands to settle or to engage in seasonal production. Several kinds of archaeological evidence such as artifacts and rock carvings suggest maritime navigations and other activities datable to the periods from the late Neolithic period to the Bronze Age (or to the late Zhou Dynasty, 475-221 BCE) (Ting 1996:41).

The maritime navigations and contacts in the South China Sea were tremendously developed in the Qin Dynasty after the Qin rule over the region or Lingnan (Guangdong-Guangxi) in 214 BCE. During this period, Guangzhou (formerly Panyu) was developed as the political, economic, military, and cultural center of this region and its fortune continued to grow for over 2,000 years afterwards (Ting 1996:41). It is, therefore, important to explore the development of Guangzhou as its life was closely associated to the Chinese maritime trade with Southeast Asia and the West.

The geography of Guangzhou considerably worked to underwrite its prosperity as a trading metropolis. Guangzhou is situated on the edge of the South China Sea and has a series of

large and small islands surrounding and protecting its coast from strong winds and the instability of the open sea (Ting 1996:41). Not only having access to the entire South China Sea, Guangzhou also had access by the river to the montane regions to the north since it has been located on the mouth of the Pearl River. Guangzhou also owed its superior position in maritime trade to its large economic hinterland, plentiful material resources, fine craft production, and advanced shipbuilding technology (Yang 1996:27).

From the Qin and Han periods, Guangzhou evolved into an important starting point of the maritime trade route over the South China Sea (Yang 1996:27). A large shipyard was also built in Zhongshansilu in Guangzhou. It is assumed that this shipyard could build ships that were 3-6 meters wide and could carry a cargo of 25-30 tons (Ting 1996:46). The shipbuilding technology and navigation techniques were improved significantly in the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE). It was said that within the South China Sea, no place was out of reach of the sea-going vessels of the Han Dynasty (Zhang and Ye 1992:192).

The earliest recorded official navigation from China to Southeast Asia was in the time of Emperor Wudi of the (Former or Western) Han Dynasty (140-87 BCE). The fleets commanded by envoys of the Western Han government, carrying huge quantities of gold and silk goods to exchange for local products of other countries, set sail from Rinan (Northern Vietnam), Xuwen, and Hepu (these ports were soon replaced by Guangzhou) and followed the coastline around to Indochina, the Malay Peninsula, the southeastern coast of India and Sri Lanka (Chen 1983:156; Zhang and Ye 1992:193). This record reflects that the Han government paid attention to the maritime trade and political relationship with countries in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean. The Chinese used silk products as gift to the heads of other countries to establish formal relationship and as currency to trade with foreign merchants for exotic items.

The Chinese maritime trade for exotic items such as precious stones has been confirmed by recent archaeological discoveries in Southern China. Semi-precious stone and glass beads have been unearthed from several Han tombs in Guangzhou and other port-cities in Southern China. These beads were mostly made of glass and from carnelian and agate and are similar to those found in Southeast Asia, India, and Sri Lanka in terms of material and style (and perhaps technique of production). Among these ancient jewelries, there existed Lion pendants that were almost identical to those found in India and Southeast Asia (Yokokura 1993). These pendants and other Indic symbols may represent the early diffusion of Buddhism in the South China Sea during the last centuries BCE to the early centuries CE as mentioned earlier. Most scholars assume that these beads were produced in the Indian subcontinent or Southeast Asia and are the evidence of the maritime commercial contact between China and other countries in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean.

As maritime trade thrived, Guangzhou became the most important port-city in the South China Sea during the period of the Wu Kingdom, Jin Dynasty, and Southern Dynasties in which it acted as the site of embarkation to the Chinese merchants, officials, and commodities going out to other parts of the world. It was the site of ship construction and the site of trading activities that facilitated the foreign merchants and envoys, who came to China in search of wealth and formal relationship. In Tang (618-907 CE) and Song (960-1279 CE) periods, Guangzhou grew into the center of ceramic trade. Many famous ceramic wares made in different parts of China were gathered here for export. The “Silk Route” was then called the “Porcelain Route” as well. The office of *shibosi*, Commission of Maritime Affairs, was also established in Guangzhou in the Tang Dynasty to facilitate the ever-growing maritime trade in the metropolis (Ting 1996:77).

The Maritime Connection with the Roman Empire

Besides the indirect Roman connection through the overland routes to western and central China, the more direct connection appears to be through the South China Sea. The first Roman envoy arrived in the Chinese court in Loyang through this “South Seas” in 166 CE, although it could be a piece of private enterprise pretending to official status, as mentioned previously. This diplomatic/commercial mission may also be seen as an attempt of the Romans to make direct contact with China as the war with Parthia, begun in 162 CE, cut the inland silk trade (Ferguson 1978:594). This first mission was the beginning of a continuous process of direct trade by sea, with Guangzhou as the port of entry. The Chinese annals record at least two more occasions. In 226 CE, a Roman merchant named Ts’in Lun (perhaps just Romanus) came to the court of the Emperor Sun Ch’uan of the Wu State at Nanking, via Chiao-chih (Tongking), and he was granted 20 Negrito-Pygmies to take back with him; however, the plan came to nothing as things turned out, and again in 284 CE, an important Roman business-delegation arrived with 30,000 rolls of thin aghalwood (Ferguson 1978:594-595; Leslie and Gardiner 1996:158-160). Although limited, these events suggest direct contact between the Roman Empire and China with the Romans (or persons who considered themselves Romans) physically present at the Chinese courts.

However, the Roman finds are so far absent on the Chinese southern coasts. The closest Roman finds (only few) to this region are in northern Vietnam. This fact confirms that the maritime trade between China and the Roman Empire was operated through a series of intermediaries. There was no direct trade between the two empires although some Romans did find their way beyond India to China, not so much to establish formal direct diplomatic relations but rather to seek commercial opportunities. China remained largely an unknown world

throughout the Roman history. The right question is, therefore, not what Roman finds we see in the southern coasts of China but rather what Indian and Southeast Asian finds.

The information of the Chinese maritime trade provided above suggests, in turn, the significance of Southeast Asia as the maritime gate between China and the rest of the world. As we have seen, Chinese silk (and subsequently porcelain) was valued worldwide and the Chinese enormous markets drew merchants from all over the world to be part of China's trade network. The Chinese governmental foreign policies and trading markets, thus, undoubtedly also influenced the economic circumstances in Southeast Asian societies.

Interaction Spheres

It is clear from both archaeological and historical evidence that there were a number of interaction spheres in the maritime trade network between the Roman and Han Empires. Most of these spheres of economic and social interaction dated from late prehistory. They thus predated and supported the cosmopolitan trade network which developed out of this framework. One may see the well-established, pre-existing social and economic networks in the Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal, and South China Sea long before the emergences of the Roman and Han Empires. It was on these earlier networks that the cosmopolitan trade network between the two empires later thrived.

It is, therefore, not surprising to see that the Sino-Roman trade network was sectional in nature. This nature implies that it was extremely unlikely that one particular ship or merchant would have traveled across the oceans from the Roman Red Sea to Coastal China. However, some Roman merchants/diplomats did actually make their way there according to Chinese accounts. Chinese traders, on the other hand, did not seem to reach the Roman Empire.

Generally, merchants of the Roman and Han empires concentrated on their own commercial spheres and did not attempt to go beyond them; the Romans focused on the Indian Ocean (especially the Arabian Sea), and the Chinese on the South China Sea. Living in the middle, Indian merchants were an exception since they traded both with the Roman and Han empires.

This sectional nature of the trade network is advantageous in several ways. The interconnected smaller commercial spheres in the much larger cosmopolitan trade network allowed the merchant to focus on their own network without attempting to venture all the way to the other side of the world since they can acquire anything they needed from the entrepôts they were familiar with. For instance, the Romans from Rome can procure the Eastern goods from Alexandria; those in the Roman Red Sea just had to travel as far as the Coromandel Coast of India to obtain silk from China, in which the Indian merchants may have acquired it from the ports in Peninsular Siam; in turn, the Chinese traders can collect the western goods from Southeast Asia. This ancient market system helped reduce the risk for maritime merchants as they did not have to make a long, dangerous trip in the unfamiliar seas to the unknown world.

There are three major interaction spheres in the ancient maritime cosmopolitan trade network between the Roman and Han Empires. The first is the Indian Ocean between the Red Sea and the Malabar Coast of the Indian subcontinent. This sphere represents the most intensive Roman involvement indicated by the extensive classical documents and the intensity of Roman finds in this region.

The swift growth of the market in the Roman Empire and the discovery of the use of the monsoon winds in maritime navigation apparently stimulated the intensity and expansion of the maritime trade across the ancient world in the 1st century BCE/CE. The peace in the empire and the annexation of Egypt achieved by Augustus augmented the Roman market that, in turn,

became an important prime mover of the flourishing trade in the Indian Ocean. The Roman Red Sea then became the major hub of the Eastern trade in the region. However, the trade was not controlled by the government. The Roman government just enjoyed the 25% state importation tax collected from the Eastern trade (Bjorkelo et al. 2007:5). It did not attempt to operate the trade itself beyond providing security for the trading activities and ports. The Red Sea trade was in the hands of merchants; some of them were elites from powerful families in Rome (Tomber 2008). The Eastern goods from the Red Sea flowed through the Nile to Alexandria, the major distributional center of the Roman Empire.

Tomber (2008) proposes two periods of the Indo-Roman trade. First, the Early Roman Trade (1st century BCE to 3rd century CE). Some important ports in the Roman Red Sea, especially Myos Hormos and Berenike, were thriving. Direct contacts to India were established and Indian residences were present in the Red Sea ports as suggested by the distribution of the Indian wares which are concentrated in the ports but not further in the Roman world. Roman artifacts and coins were common in India. South India seems to have close connection to the Red Sea ports as they both had the greatest diversity in amphora sources, not matched by other ports in the Indian Ocean (Tomber 2008:154-160). Second, the Late Roman/Byzantine period (fourth to early/mid-seventh century CE) saw the rejuvenation of the Red Sea coast from the mid-fourth century, after a recess in occupation from the mid-third century. There were more ports on the Red Sea. South India was still important in the trade and in the transshipment to Sri Lanka. Muziris/Pattanam was replaced by other South Indian ports. Late Roman amphorae were found in Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Tissamaharama in Sri Lanka, while the Mesopotamian Torpedo jars were concentrated in North India and Sri Lanka (with some examples from Pattanam and Alagankulam in South India). Late Roman bronze coins exceed the Early Roman

ones in number but not in value; they were discovered in Gujarat, along the Ganges, and in Uttar Pradesh, with the most concentration, however, in South India at Mdurai, Karur, and Sri Lanka (Tomber 2008:161-170). The Indian artifacts are concentrated in the Red Sea ports. They were largely absent elsewhere in the Roman Empire with an exception of an Indian statuette from Pompeii.

The second is the Bay of Bengal where the connections between both the Coromandel Coast, Gangetic region, and Southeast Asia are prominent. One sees less Roman involvement in this sphere than the first sphere. The farthest point in the East that the Roman had direct connection is Arikamedu where the Roman merchants may have lived and worked to guarantee the flow of goods from this sphere to the Malabar Coast and the Arabian Sea which were more familiar and accessible for the Romans.

The maritime connection between the Gangetic region and Southeast Asia across the Bay of Bengal emerged as early as the 4th century BCE as suggested by the historical sources and the presence of Indian artifacts in Peninsular Siam, such as those at Phukhao Thong, Khao Sam Kaeo, and Ban Don Ta Phet. It seems that Indian merchants and craftsmen resided in Peninsular Siam to facilitate the flow of goods and also to produce luxury items, mostly ornaments, as they were specialized in manufacturing them. This luxury trade created a considerable profit for the Indians and was the reason behind the establishment of their production centers in Peninsular Siam was perhaps to serve and satisfy the markets in the South China Sea more closely.

The trade between the two regions was also supported by Buddhism that flourished in the Gangetic region. It is now rather clear that Buddhism came to Southeast Asia through the Buddhist trade network, along with Indian merchants, craftsmen, and goods from different

parts of India. The presence of the rouletted wares, probably produced in India, and a variety of Buddhist symbols in Peninsular Siam may reflect the impact of a Buddhist trade network across the Bay of Bengal. These Indic religious symbols also represent the initial period in which the local people were exposed to the Indic religions. Local people selectively used them in their formation of early polities (Wolters 1999). This trend of the selective adoption of Indic ideas finally led to the development of kingdoms and constructions of religious architectures and statues in Southeast Asia in c. the middle of the first millennium CE, the process which is commonly referred to as “Indianization”²¹.

The last major interaction sphere is the South China Sea where the Roman involvement was almost absent while the Chinese engagement intensified. With Guangzhou as the center for maritime trade, the Chinese actively involved themselves in the South China Sea network and acquired natural products, perfumes, jewelry, and exotic items from Southeast Asia and the West. Silk was the most desirable trade product of China for the West although perceived by the Chinese more as the symbolic gift for diplomatic relation. The Chinese had long been interested in *exotica* and the enormous market of the Han Empire stimulated the growth of maritime trade in Southeast Asia which acted as both the producer and procurer of the exotic items for China. Although not generally participating in the maritime trade in the South China Sea, the presence of several Roman merchants/diplomats at the Chinese court implies that the Romans had at least an interest in this region and also attempted to have the direct connection with the Chinese government, probably not for political/diplomatic but commercial purposes. It is, therefore, not surprising to see Roman items in Southeast Asia although they may have been brought here by

²¹ Manguin recently wrote an exceptional article summarizing and redefining the concept of Indianization. See Manguin (2011).

Indian merchants. Up to this point, it is safe to state that the Romans were present in the South China Sea.

Peninsular Siam played an important role in the Trans-Asiatic trade network between the east and west, even before the Roman times. Until around the 5th century CE, the maritime merchants had to disembark at one side of the peninsula and cross over it through trans-peninsular routes consisting of a series land and riverine routes to the other side in order to continue on their journeys between India and China (Saraya 2011:461). Depending on the monsoon winds, these merchants were forced to stay at the peninsula for one season (6 months) to wait for the next monsoon wind to carry them further. Ports on the peninsula were developed to accommodate the rhythm of the trade pattern. Like India, it acted as an important intermediary facilitating the flow of goods in the trade network. However, the people of Southeast Asia were also producers, procurers, and consumers of trade goods as well. The isthmian ports then became a stepping stone between two worlds where, as the Chinese of the middle of the third century CE wrote, every product could be found.

CHAPTER TWO

TAMBRALINGA: THE EARLY COASTAL KINGDOM

Introduction

Historians usually tend to start their in-depth discussions about Tambralinga as if this kingdom emerged only in the 11th or even the late 12th century (e.g. Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002:chapter XIII; Sumio 2004). This is not surprising because most detailed historical accounts available to us about this kingdom date from the late 12th to the 14th century, the time when this kingdom was very active in the history of South and Southeast Asia. In its heyday in the 13th century, Tambralinga sent several envoys to the Chinese court, acted as an important center for ceramic trade in maritime Southeast Asia, even launched its armada across the Bay of Bengal to attack Sri Lanka, and ended up occupying the northern portion of the island (Sumio 2004:54). Some important questions still remain, however. What was its early history before the late 12th century when there was not much historical record about this kingdom? What was its early development? How did it become a powerful kingdom? To answer these questions, one needs to step across the threshold between academic disciplines to engage oneself with the archaeological investigations.

Since so little has been written about the early history of Tambralinga, I will devote the next three chapters to the excavation of Tambralinga's history prior to the late 12th century. The period after the late 12th century when this kingdom became a significant power in maritime Asia will be discussed in depth in Chapter Five. The data used in these chapters are drawn from the work of previous scholars and the archaeological and ethnographical fieldworks conducted by the current author mainly in Nakhon. While some of the historical and archaeological record

presented predates the 5th century, these chapters will focus mainly on the development of Tambralinga during the 5th to 11th centuries when the formative period of this kingdom can be seen more clearly. In Chapter Two, I will outline the historical and geographical overviews of Tambralinga and discuss the Bronze Drums and Visnu images found in the area. In Chapter Three, I will examine in detail the various sites and clusters of Hindu shrines, and in Chapter Four, the cultural geography of Tambralinga will be explored. It will be argued in these upcoming chapters that Tambralinga emerged and thrived as an important cultural center in maritime Southeast Asia long before the late 12th century. There are archaeological evidence of the rich social interactions and the significance of Tambralinga's area as a center of trade as early as the Iron Age. The evidence also shows that Tambralinga became a significant kingdom and greatly contributed to the cultural development of Southeast Asia especially since the 5th century CE.

The Name and Location

Like the nature of its existence, the name Tambralinga is equally puzzling. In Sanskrit, Tambra can mean red or copper and linga can mean Siva Linga or land or kingdom (e.g. Kalinga) among other meanings. Together, it can mean something like “the Land of Copper” or “the Red Earth Kingdom” or “the Red Siva Linga” or even “the Copper Siva Linga” which signify the prominence of Saivism in this kingdom. As far as we know, Tambralinga was a polity that thrived in the growing network of the maritime trans-Asiatic trade emerging in c. the 5th century BCE. However, the historical record related directly to this polity before the late 12th century CE was scarce and did not offer us much information about its life. The Indian text, Mahanidesa, from the 2nd or 3rd century CE mentioned the placename “Tamali” which is

believed to be Tambralinga, as a destination of the Indian merchants (Wheatley 1966:180), while the Chinese accounts of around the same time did not mention the name at all. The Chinese record, nevertheless, vividly described several other polities on the isthmian tract in the 1st millennium CE as mentioned in the previous chapter. These neighboring countries of Tambralinga, according to the Chinese accounts, shared social similarities and may offer us some clues about the character of Tambralinga itself. According to the Chinese accounts, some isthmian polities, from the 1st century BCE, were already profiting from the trans-oceanic trade between China and India. And, at least by the third century CE, both Buddhism and Hinduism were well established in their lands (Wheatley 1966:Part I). These Indic religions underwrote state rituals and royal display. This was the socio-political and commercial environment in which Tambralinga was flowering.

The name “Tambralinga” perhaps has the longest history among other toponyms in Peninsular Siam. It seems to first appear in the Indian text, Mahanidesa of the 2nd century as Tamali, and perhaps last appeared in the Chinese account, Dao-yi-zhi-lue, of 1351 as Dan-maling (Sumio 2004:52). This means that the name had existed for around twelve centuries. However, neither the Indian nor Chinese texts offer much information on the precise location for this polity. Fortunately, three local inscriptions offer clues as to the location of Tambralinga.

The first is Inscription No. 28 which is kept in the museum of Wat Mahathat or the sacred Great Reliquary (mahadhatu) complex, the most important temple in Nakhon. Its original provenance is unknown. It is significant to note that the preservation sites of old inscriptions and statues may not be the same as their original provenances because, most of the time in Siam, people were afraid to keep the old objects with themselves or at the findspot where they found them. These objects are considered too powerful and might cause bad things to happen if not

properly treated, so they would traditionally bring them to the Buddhist temple in which the highly respected abbot either would keep them locally or give them to a bigger temple or to government officials. The latter might send ancient objects to Bangkok especially in the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910), in part, to construct the national history. Because, however, Wat Phra Mahathat has been the most revered temple in Nakhon and even Southern Thailand, it possesses many important ancient inscriptions and statues that are now preserved in the newly founded temple museum. But, we cannot be certain whether or not these antiquities come from that temple itself. This situation of uncertain provenances is common in Southern Thailand and has been a problem in studies of this region in some cases (see Wales 1976:32).

Inscription No. 28 with its mere ten letters of Pallava scripts has posed a difficulty to epigraphists for almost a century. It was first published by Lajonquière in 1912 and later Coedès paleographically dated it to the 5th - 6th century although he could not translate it due to its fragmentary state (Assavavirulhakarn and Skilling 2006-2007:19). The Fine Arts Department asked Kongkaeo Veerapajak and Champa Yuangcharoen to read and translate it and they concluded that it is of Old Mon language and dated it to the 7th century (National Library 1986:Vol. 2:38). Preecha Noonsuk reexamined this inscription on site twice, first with Professor Rohana Dheera in 1987, and second with Kamaleswar Bhattacharya of L'École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) in 1990, both with the same conclusion that this inscription is Sanskrit, can be dated to c. the 6th-7th century, and read as "tambralingeshvara" meaning the lord of Tambralinga (P. Noonsuk 1997b:53-55). P. Noonsuk also noted that this inscription is on a granite slab, a material uncommon to inscriptions found in Southern Thailand but quite characteristic of the Hindu temples in Tambralingan culture of around the same time period with the inscription. This inscription was recently reread again by Prapod Assavavirulhakarn and

Peter Skilling (2006-2007:21) who dated it to the 8th-9th century in comparison with other inscriptions including Wat Sema Muang Inscription (Inscription No. 27) of 775 CE. They proposed the reading: “tamayyalangesvarah” and said that “the inscription is not Old Mon and it contains Indic elements: it may be a vernacular that incorporates Indic forms—the name of a ruler ending in isvara—or poorly written Prakrit or Sanskrit.” In sum, Inscription No. 28 is still problematic. It is not certain that it contains the name Tambralinga but it is remarkable that it seems to at least verify that there was the presence of kingship, probably associated with Saivism as the ending “isvara” suggests, ruling a kingdom on coastal Nakhon sometime in the second half of the 1st millennium. To the current author, it is also possible that the local name of Tambralinga may be Tamayyalanga whose ruler is Tamayyalangesvarah or “the Lord of Tamayyalanga” as one of the readings of this inscription implies.

The second is Inscription No. 29 which Coedès (1961:59-60) paleographically dated to the 9th century but Kongkaew Veeraprajak (1986:20) dated it to the 13th century²². Again, it was preserved at the museum of Wat Mahathat. It has two parts: one with Tamil scripts and in Tamil language, and another with Old Khmer scripts in Sanskrit language. Its overall condition is very fragmentary. However, the Tamil part is less fragmentary and mentions the law against the taking of lives proposed by Dharmasenapati, probably the Minister of Law. More to our point here is that, although the rest of the text in the Old Khmer/Sanskrit part is very fragmentary, Veeraprajak (1986:20) is certain that this part contains the name “Tambralinga.” This inscription suggests administrative order and the existence of Tamil-speaking people, perhaps of the Tamil merchant communities under a South Indian commercial guild, in Tambralinga. It demonstrates the power of the state-level polity to establish written laws and its attempt to communicate them

²² It is not certain whether Veeraprajak dates this inscription to the 13th century because Tambralinga is generally believed to have emerged during that period.

to various groups of people with different origins. Tambralinga seems to have always been cosmopolitan and maintained its focus in trade with South India. Although not certain, the provenances of the two above inscriptions are likely somewhere in or near the modern City of Nakhon or the beach ridge on which the city is situated.

The third inscription is No. 24 found at Wat Wiang in Chaiya, Surat Thani Province. It is written with Old Khmer scripts in Sanskrit language and dated to 1230 (Coedès 1961:30-31). It offers praise to Chandrabhanu Sri Dharmaraja of the Padmavamsa, King of Tambralinga and a great patron of Buddhism. It is clear in several documentary sources that Chandrabhanu was a king of the Nakhon Kingdom centered at the City of Nakhon which is a modern city today. This fact simply equates Tambralinga with Nakhon. The inscription reflects the peak period of the Nakhon Kingdom in the 13th century during which it controlled the whole isthmian tract and acted as a major power in the Bay of Bengal and maritime Southeast Asia. For that matter, it controlled Chaiya in the Bay of Bandon where the inscription was found.

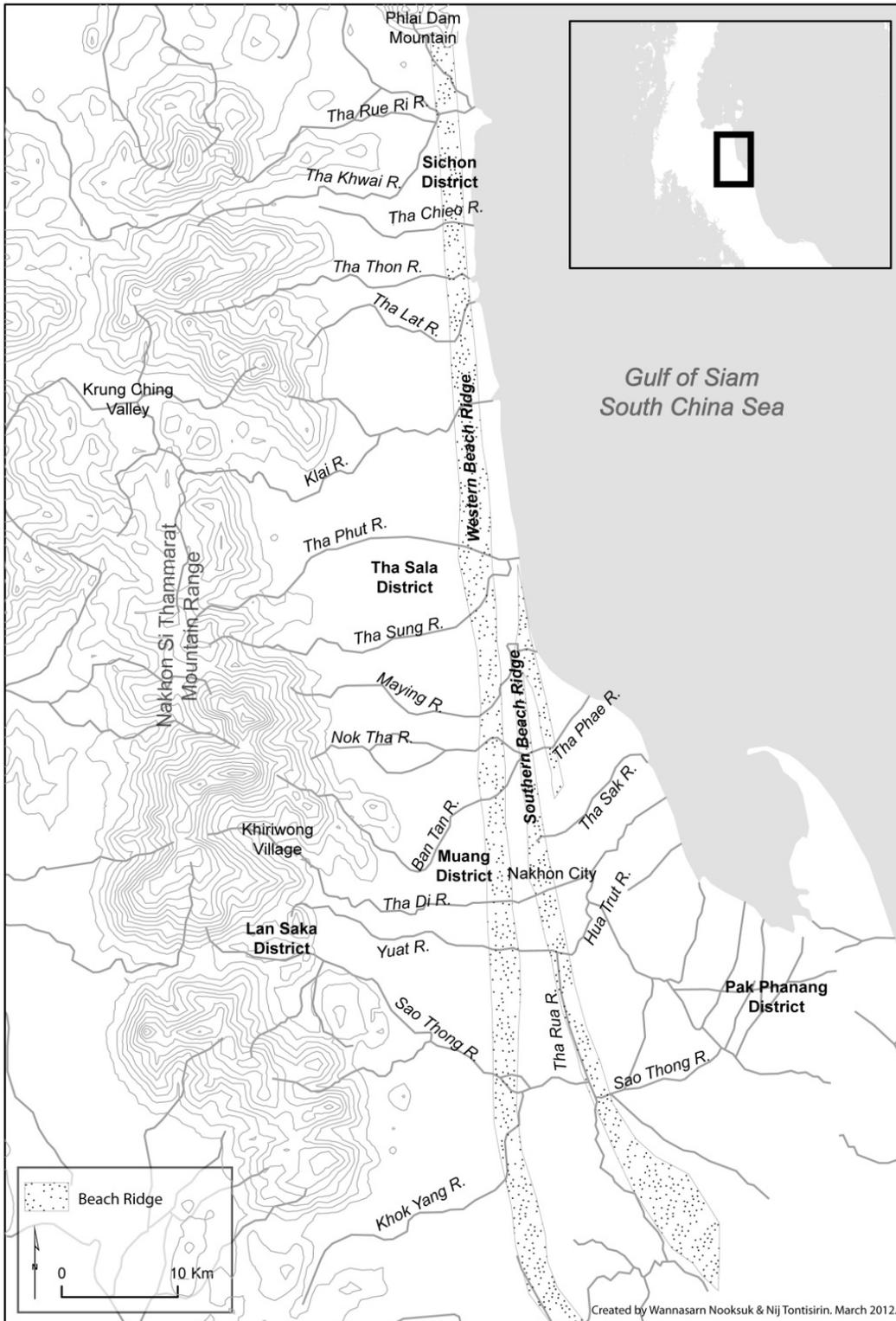
From the location and the content of these inscriptions, it can be proposed that Tambralinga must have been somewhere on the coastal plain of Nakhon (Maps 1.2 and 1.6). It had existed in this area at least since the second half of the 1st millennium CE if not earlier, and the archaeological record found there provides evidence of the life in this kingdom.

Chronology

Coastal Nakhon has been occupied by people since the prehistoric period. There are some Mesolithic sites (12,000-5,000 B.P.) in the mountain areas and perhaps one on the ancient beach ridge (P. Noonsuk 1996:81). The cultural chronology of the coastal lands, however, seems to start clearly from the Neolithic Period onwards and the tentative time periods are as follows:

- 1) Neolithic Period (3,000-700 BCE)
- 2) Iron Age (700 BCE-400 CE). This period starts with the datable Bronze Drums found in Peninsular Siam.
- 3) Early Tambralinga (5th – 11th century CE). Although the name Tambralinga appears in the historical document from the 2nd-3rd century, the current author uses the dates of the early Visnu images found in coastal Nakhon as the beginning of the Early Tambralinga Period. It coincides, more or less, with the Early Historic Period in Southeast Asia (e.g. the Dvaravati Period in the Chao Phraya Basin).
- 4) Late Tambralinga/Nakhon Si Thammarat Period (12th-14th century CE). This period begins with the new era of the Tambralinga Kingdom when the Sri Dharmasokaraja Dynasty rose to power and ends with the annexation of Tambralinga/Nakhon Si Thammarat to the Ayutthaya Kingdom.
- 5) Ayutthaya Period (15th- 18th century CE). This period starts when the Ayutthaya Kingdom annexed Nakhon Si Thammarat and ends when Ayutthaya City was sacked and burned by the Burmese in 1767.

These are only approximate time periods, especially the periods before the Late Tambralinga Period, because there have been only a very few scientific dates (e.g. C-14, AMS, or TL dates) for archaeological sites in this area to establish a more precise chronology. These periods are quite broad and need to be broken down further when more information is gathered in the future, but they provide a basic outline for the chapters ahead.



Map 2.1 Geography of coastal Nakhon, the heartland of Tambralinga

Greater Tambralinga and Its Heartland

Although it is not certain how far the boundaries to which the power of the Tambralinga Kingdom extended in the early period of its development, it is now possible to pinpoint its heartland, which is the coastal land of Nakhon Province (Map 2.1, see also Map 1.2). This area can be perceived as Greater Tambralinga in which one can see the gravitational pull of the kingdom's original center that might have shifted along the ancient beach ridge or the sand dune of the coastal land. Greater Tambralinga must have expanded and contracted from time to time like other ancient kingdoms in Southeast Asia, depending on the power of its center. In the 13th century for example, it controlled the whole isthmian tract and a northern portion of Sri Lanka, as its center at Nakhon City reached its peak.

It is possible that some of its closest neighbors might have been pulled into the orbit of Greater Tambralinga even before the 13th century, such as those polities in the Bay of Bandon to the north, in Wiang Sra to the west, and in the Satingpra Peninsula to the south. Archaeological finds in these areas are remarkably similar to that of the Tambralinga heartland. Alternatively, Greater Tambralinga may have been flanked by Lang-ya-shiu (probably Lankasuka and later Pattani) in the south and by Pan-pan (and its successors) in the Bay of Bandon in the north during the 5th to 12th centuries. In any case, one can see a close relationship between the Tambralinga heartland and the Bay of Bandon. Wales (1976:49) even proposed that the successor of Pan-pan in the Bay of Bandon was Tambralinga itself. Pan-pan had sent several envoys to China, in 424-53, 454-6, 527, 529, 532, 534, and 616 CE according to Wheatley (1966:48). After that, it disappeared completely in the Chinese historical record.

In the archaeological record, the locality of Pan-pan is also veiled in mystery. It is not even certain that it was in fact in the Bay of Bandon area. Besides the Chinese record, no local

inscription or Indian document mentioned this name. Could Pan-pan be a Chinese name for Tambralinga in the 4th- early 7th centuries? Could they be the same polity? One may well wonder. But without more evidence, the true identity of Pan-pan may forever be unclear.

Whatever the case may be, Tambralinga seems to have outlived Pan-pan. Wales (1976:49) proposed that Tambralinga took full advantage of the dissolution of Funan and displaced Pan-pan soon after the latter's last embassy to China²³. However, it is important to note that although Tambralinga was mentioned in an Indian text in the 2nd century CE, it had been absent in the Chinese record until it appeared in the late 12th century as Dan-ma-ling. Wheatley (1966:2, 50) speculated that because Tambralinga was predominately Hindu, it was ignored by the Chinese court which mostly paid attention to Buddhist countries. When the power of Pan-pan faded away after the early 7th century, the Bay of Bandon may have fallen into the orbit of Greater Tambralinga whose gravitational pull extended out from the coastal land of Nakhon Province.

Geographic Overview

The heartland area of the Tambralinga Kingdom is an almost rectangular area of 1,275 km² (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 (Map 2.1). 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.

²³ Wales (1976:49) mentions that the last Pan-pan's embassy to China was in 635 CE.

The coastal lands of Nakhon Province were mostly formed by the accumulation of erosions from the Nakhon Mountain Range (colluvial and alluvial deposits) and by the movement of waves in the Gulf of Siam (coastal wave-dominated deposits) (Figure 4.3). The colluvial and alluvial deposits closest to the Nakhon 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) (Figure 2.1).

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 Province and the Ta Chi Spit in Pattani Province. A map made in 1828 also shows a sandy island, called Tantalem, formed by this wave movement, off the coast of Nakhon before it became the modern-day Pak Phanang and Hua Sai Districts, part of the eastern coastal land (Midas Consultants LTD 1996:3-4). 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 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

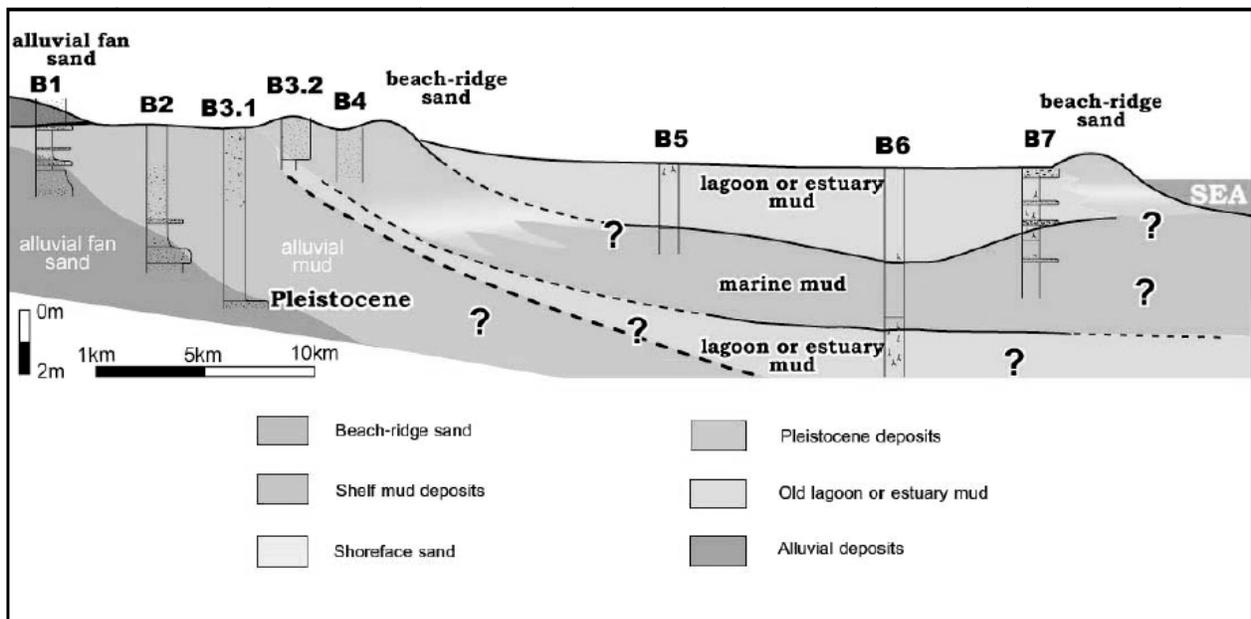


Figure 2.1 Geomorphology of the coastal land of Nakhon (Suphawajruksakul 2005:30)

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 second. 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 City was founded. It was where a Buddha

relic was buried according to the Chronicle of Nakhon City, and where the Great Reliquary or the stupa of Wat Mahathat was constructed.

Between the western and eastern beach ridges, there was an old lagoon, a low-lying area formed during the maximum transgression of sea water 6,000 years ago. After that time, the old river mouth in the southern end of the beach ridges was closed leaving this area a vast wetland. It is an extensive area of around 400 km² and is comprised of fine grained sand, silt interbedded with mud, clay and some organic matters. It is now largely used for paddy fields and rubber plantation (Suphawajruksakul 2005:20); however, some pockets of wetland also survive.

The coastal plains of Nakhon Province are well watered. It rains here nine months a year from May to January. 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. There are three monsoons in effect in this area and two of them bring rains. The first is the southwest monsoon (May-September) which brings a lesser amount of rain because it is blocked by the Bantat Mountain, the southern part of the Nakhon Mountain Range. It rains more on the western coast of Peninsular Siam during this time of year. The second is the northeast monsoon (October-January) which brings rain and cool winds to coastal Nakhon. Summer season in this area was marked by the southeast monsoon (February-April), the least known monsoon in Southeast Asia, which brings hot and humid winds, and some rains, from the Equator to the area (Midas Consultants LTD 1996:111).

The Nakhon 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 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. 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.

On the one hand, the Nakhon Mountain Range can be perceived as a barrier that seals Tambralinga from the rest of the isthmian tract. On the other hand, this mountain range was in fact the source of wealth for the kingdom. It provided minerals and forest products valued very highly by the foreign merchants. It was these products for which Tambralinga was famous in the maritime trade network. The mountain area was entwined with the populous Tambralingan heartland. The coastal plain of Nakhon Province had a short and relatively easy access to the mountain through walking trails and rivers. The rich mountain was literally in the backyard of the heartland of the Tambralinga Kingdom, where it could reap the resources to support its prosperity.

The geological structure of this mountain range prominently includes igneous rocks, especially, Biotite Granite and other kinds of granite. Sandstone and limestone were also found along the range and also at some small hills on the coastal plains. These rocks (granite, sandstone, and limestone) were used in the constructions of Tambralingan sculptures and architecture, especially doorframes and thresholds. Granite may be the most difficult rock to obtain. One may have to go all the way to the main mountain range to get granite whereas

limestone and sandstone may be acquired from small hills scattered on the coastal plain itself (Midas Consultants LTD 1996:7).

Among several minerals, tin was probably the easiest to acquire and the most valued by merchants. It was found in large quantities along the Nakhon Range, including Tha Sala, Sichon, Khanom, and Nopphitam Districts on the east side of the range facing the heartland of Tambralinga. People in these areas in the recent past were extracting tin from the river beds using sieves. Until recently, tin was an important product that made millions of dollars each year for Nakhon Province.

The Nakhon Mountain Range is also home of one of the most fertile forests in Thailand. Being a tropical rain forest, the Nakhon Mountain has an unimaginably diversified variety of species ranging from rare fungus to almost-extinct animals. The forest has been exploited by villagers for a long period of time. The most prominent products now include animal products (horns, hides, meat, etc.), gharuwoods, and honey.

The east side of the heartland of Tambralinga was an elongated coast running roughly 85 km in the north-south direction. A series of river mouths cut through this coast to the sea. The coast generally consists of broad sandy beaches, except in the locations of the river mouths which are formed by silt and clay. In these muddy estuaries, Nipa Palm (*Nypoidae*), the only palm that can grow in the intertidal forest, dominates the landscape along with other estuarine plants such as mangroves. The intertidal forest is very important in the ecological system of the coast as it was the nursery for young marine life.

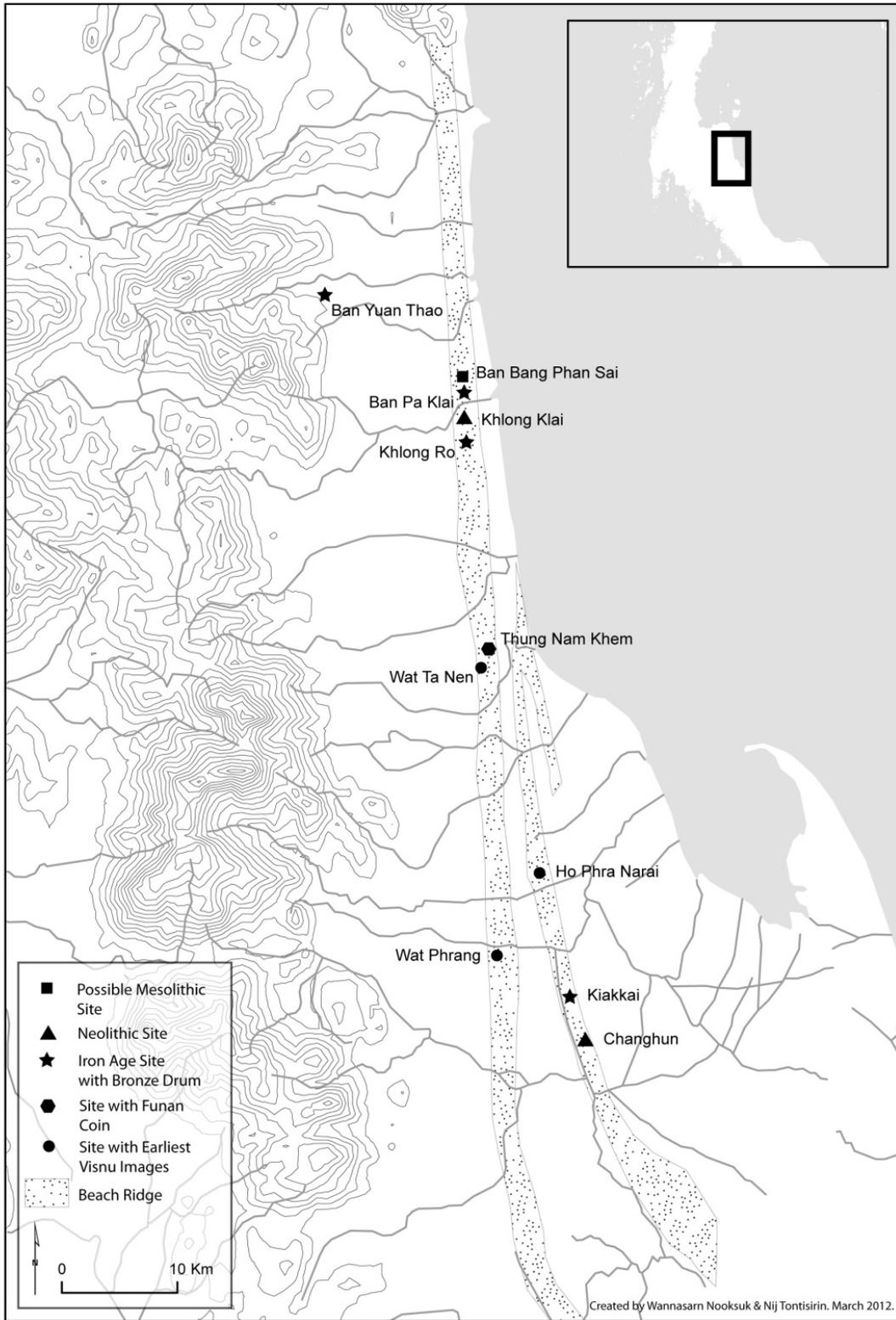
On the broad sandy beaches, coconut plantations and fishing communities are common. Some fishing communities live right by the coast while some live a bit inland and use the river to get to the sea. They also provide vital sources of food for the coastal communities. Behind the

beaches and the sand dunes, there are some pockets of wetlands which absorb water in the rainy season and keep it for the dry season. Sago palm (*Metroxylon sagu* Rottb.) and various kinds of grass, trees, and animals thrive in these wetlands. The coast and the river mouths were important as the gates where merchants entered and left Tambralinga. The areas also provided food, essential resources and trade goods (marine products) for the kingdom.

The Late Prehistoric Sites and Bronze Drums

Prior to the Iron Age, the Prehistoric sites seem to be concentrated in the mountain areas, especially in Lan Saka District and the western districts of Nakhon Province (P. Noonsuk 1996:129-133). There are some Neolithic sites (5,000-4,000 B.P.), however, on the coastal lands such as the Sites of Khlong Klai and Ban Bang Phan Sai that are close to each other and Ban Changhun in the south also on the ancient beach ridge (Map 2.2, see also Map 2.1).

Both Khlong Klai and Ban Bang Phan Sai Sites are on the ancient beach ridge and in the Klai river system, which is the largest river system in the heartland area. They are only few kilometers away from one another. At the Site of Khlong Klai, pottery sherds, polished hand axes, and elongated, flat, polished stone tools were found. Some of these peculiar elongated polished stone tools are some feet long and are called xylophone-bar stone axes (khwan hin luk ranat) and assumed to have served as musical instruments. But it is possible that they may really have been used for digging or cutting timbers. At the Site of Ban Bang Phan Sai, pottery sherds, polished hand axes and unifacial flaked tools were discovered (P. Noonsuk 1996:81-93). These flaked tools are particularly important since they usually signify the so-called “Hoabinhian Culture” of the Mesolithic period (12,000-5,000 B.P.) and are quite rare in Nakhon in general, let alone the coastal lands. This Mesolithic site may have been a fishing community situated right



Map 2.2 Prehistoric and other related sites in coastal Nakhon

on the sandy beach after it was formed 6,000 years BP. The Site of Ban Bang Phan Sai and its surrounding areas should, therefore, be closely investigated in the future.

The site of Ban Changhun was first reported to the Fine Arts Department in 1969²⁴. At that time, a villager dug up earth for the construction of his new house and found a human skeleton and a number of pottery sherds, at one meter below surface. The skeleton was buried on the side facing north and the head directed to the west. Its condition was very fragmentary. The pottery sherds found here were similar to the ones found at the Bronze Drum's findspot at Ban Kiakkai just one km. to the north. The site was situated on top of a large mound on the ancient beach ridge where Nakhon City was situated. There was a branch of the Hua Trut river system running to the west of the mound. According to the report, several prehistoric artifacts were found in this area and it was assumed that it was a habitation site since the Neolithic Period. The current author conducted two trench excavations near the findspot of the burial, which is now in the middle of the highway, but was unsuccessful in uncovering anything, perhaps because this site was completely destroyed by the construction of a new highway running on top of the ancient beach ridge in the north-south direction.

The Neolithic sites on the beach ridge have revealed the earliest evidence of fishing communities in coastal Nakhon. They exploited both marine and estuarine resources. The river systems supplied them with fresh water and access with both the agricultural communities situated inland and with the forest groups in the mountain areas. These fishing communities were important in the development of societies in the heartland. They ventured the sea and interacted with other maritime communities and brought home information, goods, and

²⁴ The Fine Arts Department internal report was completed on 11 September 1969 by Nikhom Suthirak, the head of the Southern Thailand Division (Division 8) at that time.

innovations. They were precursor of the trading communities in the Iron Age when Bronze Drums, beads, and other goods were extensively circulated in Southeast Asia.

Evidence of Iron Age sites on the coastal lands suggest the expansion of human occupation in this area. Five Dong Son Bronze Drums have been found at five sites in Nakhon Province; four of them are on the coastal lands (Map 2.2 and Table 2.1) and one on the western side of the Nakhon Mountain Range where additionally one bronze mirror of Western Han Dynasty was also found nearby. This area, therefore, has the highest density of Bronze Drums in Peninsular Siam, simply confirming the significance of coastal Nakhon in the Iron Age exchange network.

Table 2.1 Iron Age Sites in Nakhon

Site Name	Object	No.	Date	Reference
Ban Yuan Thao	Bronze Drum	1	c. 5 th -1 th cen. BCE	P. Noonsuk 1996: 158
Khlong Ro	Bronze Drum	1	c. 5 th -1 th cen. BCE	FAD 2003: 200-205; P. Noonsuk 1996: 156-158
Ban Pa Klai	Bronze Drum	1	c. 5 th -1 th cen. BCE	FAD 2003: 206-211
Kiakkai	Bronze Drum	1	c. 5 th -1 th cen. BCE	FAD 2003: 192-196; P. Noonsuk 1996: 153-154
Khlong Kut Duan	Bronze Drum	1	c. 5 th -1 th cen. BCE	FAD 2003: 215-219; P. Noonsuk 1996: 155-156
Muang Rae Kao	Han Mirror	1	c. 50 BCE-8 CE	P. Noonsuk 1996: 159-161

It is important to note that the areas where the Bronze Drums were found, including the sites of Ban Yuan Thao, Khlong Ro (Figure 2.2), Ban Pa Klai, Kiakkai (Figure 2.3), and Khlong Kut Duan, were all developed into significant areas in the Early Tambralinga Period. The Site of Ban Yuan Thao was situated between the Tha Thon and Plian Rivers. A group of early historic communities, of which Khao Kha was the most important, later developed on the Tha Thon River. The Plian River also has a branch called the Tha Lat River whose valley supported the growth of another group of early historic communities around the Thung Phan area. Both rivers

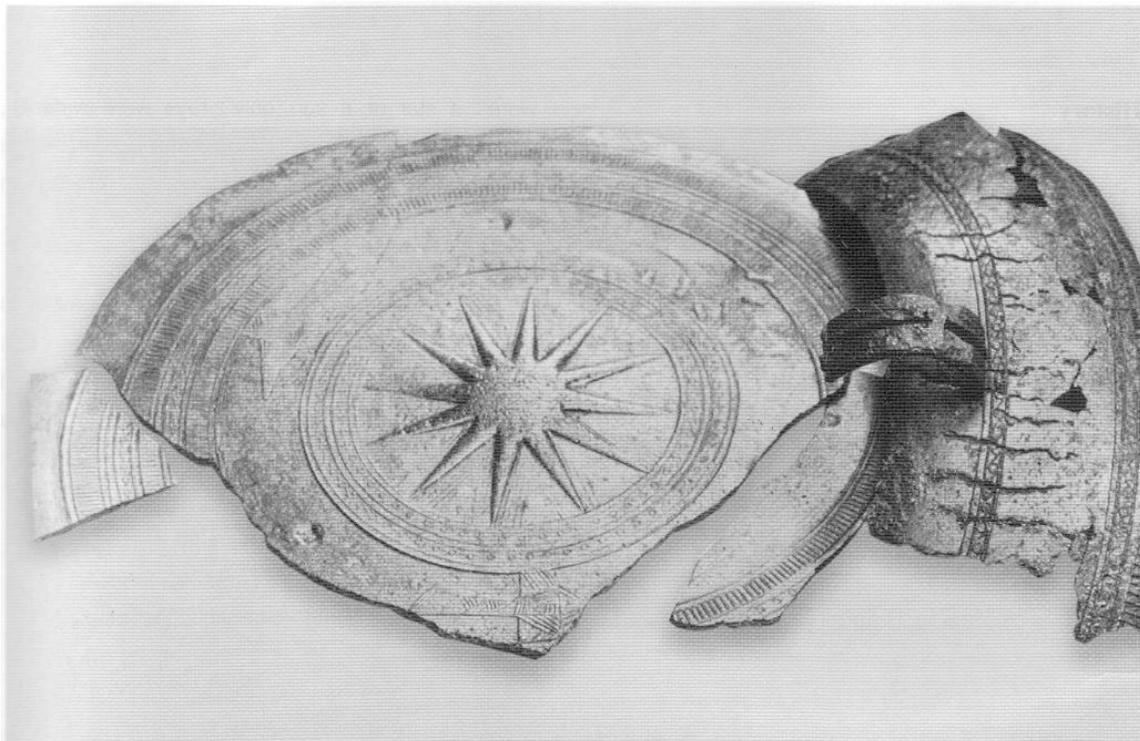


Figure 2.2 Bronze Drum from Khlong Ro or Sra Kaeo (Fine Arts Department 2003:200)



Figure 2.3 Bronze Drum from Kiakkai (Fine Arts Department 2003:192)

rejoin and share the same delta at Ban Pak Duat, the second largest deltaic area in Sichon District.

Ban Yuan Thao is situated in the foothill area between the mountain and the low plain. It is close to the headwaters and the sources of tin, one of the most valuable products in the maritime exchange since the Iron Age. Two important sources of tin near this site, including Ban Wayo and Ban Ao Yang Daeng in the mountain area, which had been exploited until recently. These tin sources must have been crucial to the development of human communities in the adjacent coastal plains where the rivers and walking trails connected them to the tin sources. Due to Ban Yuan Thao's position deep inland, there must have been an Iron Age community on the beach ridge at the deltas of the Plian or Tha Thon Rivers to help facilitate the transportation of this Bronze Drum to the site. Unfortunately, there was no evidence of such site so far.

The sites of Khlong Ro and Ban Pa Klai were in the same area as the Neolithic Sites of Khlong Klai and Ban Bang Phan Sai mentioned previously and an early Hindu site at Ban Klai. This area on the western beach ridge is outstanding in the prehistoric period. There are two Neolithic sites and two Bronze Drums (Figure 4.2). It must have been an important hub of population at that time, probably due to the massive river system of Klai that supplied them with fresh water, food, resources, and routes to the inland communities. The communities in this coastal area were practically the link between the maritime world and the inland communities.

The site of Kiakkai is situated in the southern portion of the eastern beach ridge, around 4 km. south of Nakhon City. In 1968, a FAD excavation by Mr. Nikhom Suthirak dug ten trenches in five days at the site after the discoveries of a Bronze Drum, beads, gold items, iron tools, and pottery sherds were reported²⁵. Mr. Nikhom separated this site into two areas for the purpose of

²⁵ The Fine Arts Department internal report was completed on 16 August 1968 by Nikhom Suthirak, the head of the Southern Thailand Division (Division 8) at that time.

excavation—the first area on the slope of the mound and the second on the mound itself. There were five trenches in each area. Each trench was 4 m².

Both areas demonstrated the same results. From the surface to 20 cm. below surface, objects were mixed from prehistoric sherds to Ayutthaya ceramics. From 20 to 60 cm. below surface, there was a density of Iron Age artifacts including iron tools, beads, and polished stone axes. Both stone and iron tools were found side by side in the same level. In the first area, the level from 60 to 80 cm. below surface in four of the trenches yielded some pottery sherds but in the second area, this level was empty and represented sterile layer. Mr. Nikhom concluded that the Site of Kiakkai was inhabited by people since “the Metal Age”²⁶ onwards and it was situated on a large mound on which modern-day villagers still found metal tools. The level from 40 to 60 cm. below the surface seems to be the living floor of the prehistoric people. He proposed that this site was important in the maritime communication; the sherds found here had similar patterns to those in Kho Kho Khao across the Peninsula in Phang-Nga Province. Discovered also were beads like U-Thong in the Chao Phraya River Basin, Khuan Luk Pat in Krabi Province and some other sites in Surat Thani Province. He mentioned that these objects were discovered in a broad area along the eastern beach ridge (around 4 km. long and 0.3 km. wide) from Tha Rue, Phang Sing, Kiakkai, to Changhun suggesting that this area was a large hub of communities since the Iron Age.

The current author visited the site and excavated it again in 2009 to verify the information in the old report and find new data, preferably materials that could be scientifically dated. Although at the end I was not successful in finding organic materials to date the layers

²⁶ Mr. Nikhom used the term Metal Age because at that time the cultural chronology from the Bronze to Iron Age was still unclear in Thailand. Now we are able to say that this area was inhabited at least since 500 BCE (the date of the bronze drum) in the Iron Age.

using the radiocarbon method, the pottery sherds collected may be used to date the layers using the Thermoluminescence method (TL) in the future.

I excavated two trenches (4 m² each) near the findspot of the Bronze Drum (Figure 2.3) which is now situated at the middle of the new highway. Both seem to be in the first area of excavation in Mr. Nikhom's report. The first trench (KK.09.1) was around 40 m. to the southwest of the Bronze Drum's findspot. It was located near the southwest corner of a big pond that was dug up for sand mining. It is between the pond and a new huge trash pit. It was one of the few undisturbed places where we could dig. The second trench was around 20 m. in the northwest of the Bronze Drum's findspot. It was quite close to the modern highway. The results are summarized in Table 2.2 and 2.3.

Table 2.2 Results of Excavation in Trench KK.09.1

Lot	Depth (cm. from surface)	Basket	Notes
1	0-50	1	The soil is blackish. A celadon sherd of Chinese Southern Sung-Yuan Dynasties is found with earthenware sherds.
2	50-90	2, 3	The soil is brownish. Three glass beads (Figure 2.4), two iron tools and a number of small sherds are found.
3	90-110	4	The soil is reddish brown. Few sherds are found.
4	110-160	5	The soil is yellowish. Few sherds are found in the very top part of the layer but none below. It seems to represent the sterile layer.

Table 2.3 Results of Excavation in Trench KK.09.2

Lot	Depth (cm. from surface)	Basket	Notes
1	0-20	1	The soil is blackish. A number of earthenware sherds are found.
2	20-70	2, 3	The soil is brownish. Two glass beads (Figure 2.4) and a number of earthenware sherds are found.
3	70-120	4	The soil is reddish brown. Few sherds are found.
4	120-130	5	The soil is yellowish. It is the sterile layer.



Figure 2.4 Glass beads from Trenches KK.09.1 and KK.09.2

Both trenches seem to offer a similar stratigraphic sequence. Before any TL date is obtained, it may be preliminarily proposed that three phases can be discerned in this site. Phase I may represent human activities in the Iron Age which include Lot 2 and 3 as suggested by the glass beads and iron tools. However, similar glass beads have been found in some early historic sites in Thailand as well, such as U-Thong and Khao Siwichai. Phase II is the Early Tambralinga Period and may be represented by Lot 2 for the reason suggested above. Phase III is the Late Tambralinga to Ayutthaya Period as suggested by the Celadon sherd of the 13th century. Although crippled by the lack of scientific dates at the moment, the excavations at this site in 2009 seems to confirm the results the FAD excavation in 1968 and Mr. Nikhom's interpretation that this area was inhabited by people since the Iron Age and continued to be an important area in the maritime trade until the 13th century, especially in the ceramic trade in the Southern Song-Yuan Dynasties.

On the other side of the Nakhon Mountain Range, a Bronze Drum was found at the site of Khlong Kutduan. It was probably transported from the coast across a low watershed in Lan Saka District to the site. This is a common route linking the eastern coast to the western plains of Nakhon Province and is still used today, on the course of which a new highway was constructed. It is also possible that it was brought along the river from the Bay of Ban Don, where some Bronze Drums were also found. The Kutduan River flows from the Nakhon Mountain Range through the site to merge with the Tapi River and to the Bay of Ban Don eventually. In any case, the presence of the Bronze Drum indicates the significance of the Kutduan Site as an important link between coastal Nakhon, the Bay of Bandon and the west coast of the isthmian tract. In the nearby area of the site of Khlong Kutduan, there was a bronze mirror of the Western Han Dynasty of China, dated to c. 50 BCE to 8 CE, at the site of Muang Rae Kao (P. Noonsuk

1996:159). The discovery of this mirror suggests that this area was in the exchange network in which valuable Chinese items were also circulated. Perhaps, this area was known by the Chinese by that time since, according to their record, they were attempting to explore maritime Southeast Asia and to take part in the maritime trade in this region. They even used the transpeninsular route, perhaps at the Isthmus of Kra, to get to the Indian Ocean (Wheatley 1966:8-13). The coast of Nakhon was, therefore, by no mean beyond their reach.

It was also reported that on the bank of the Kutduan River in Chang Klang District a number of ceramic sherds of the Tang Dynasty (c. 9th century) were discovered²⁷. These ceramics were likely to arrive in this area in the same way that the Bronze Drum did. All these facts reaffirm the presence of transpeninsular route from coastal Nakhon to the west coast of the peninsula that was used for a long period of time since the Iron Age.

In all the Malay Peninsula, coastal Nakhon demonstrates the highest density of Dong Son Bronze Drums. This fact alone suggests this area's dominant role in Iron Age maritime exchange. The majority of the drums were found on the beach ridges, the geographical feature where all the Neolithic sites discovered so far in the coastal lands of Nakhon were found. It is clear that the orientation of vision of the people in the prehistoric period in this area was directed to a broad seascape that united countless communities together and allowed the materials, resources, and ideas to be circulated across a great distance. People here were open to the outside world. They were able to exchange their local products, such as marine and forest products, with exotic items, like Bronze Drums, bronze mirrors, and beads. One important product that helped make this area significant in the exchange network was perhaps tin, which is crucial in the manufacture of bronze along with copper. The location of a bronze drum at Ban

²⁷ Personal communication with Mr. Chakrit Sittirit, an archaeologist of the 14th Regional Office of the Fine Arts Department.

Yuan Thao near the sources of tin may hint the importance of tin in the Iron Age exchange network. Tin seems to continue to be a significant product in the subsequent period that, in part, made coastal Nakhon a desirable place for merchants.

The Early Visnu Images

The dominant role of communities on the coast of Nakhon in the maritime exchange network in the Iron Age continued into the Early Tambralinga Period. The communities on the beach ridges continued to open up to the sea and also expanded to the coastal plains and the foothill areas. Since both coasts of the isthmus were joined in this narrow tract of land, Nakhon had many of the characteristics of an island world with its cosmopolitan openness to varied cultural influences. Nothing demonstrates the significance of coastal Nakhon in the Early Tambralinga Period in the maritime contacts more persuasively than the massive presence of early Visnu images.

Not only has coastal Nakhon presented the highest density of the Dong Son Bronze Drums in Peninsular Siam, but also the highest density in the whole Southeast Asia of the Visnu images of the earliest style, called “the conch shell on the hip style” which was thoroughly studied by Stanley J. O’Connor (1965:59-97; 1972) (Map 2.2). Before O’Connor’s seminal book was published in 1972, there had been three small Visnu images (a bit more than half a meter) with tall, decorated miters, and each holding conch shell on the hip. They were found at Chaiya and Nakhon. The one at Chaiya was originally found at Wat Sala Thung, in Chaiya (Figure 2.5), and the two images at Nakhon were found at Ho Phra Narai (*Narayana Shrine*) (Figure 2.6) and Wat Phrang (now kept at Wat Mahathat) (Figure 2.7). They are four-armed figures of Visnu in *sthanaka-murti*, wearing *dhoti* while leaving their torsos mostly nude. Each has a broad sash



Figure 2.5 Vishnu image from Chaiya
(Photo Courtesy of Stanley O'Connor)



Figure 2.6 Vishnu image from Ho Phra
Narai, Nakhon



Figure 2.7 Vishnu image from Wat Phrang,
Nakhon

falling in a semicircular arc in front of the thighs. These statues seem to be frontal with very small details on the back and have three supports: first is the mass of cloth, second the club (*gada*), and third the main block of stone in which the legs and the heavy vertical fold of the dhoti between them are carved (O'Connor 1972:21).

While these statues—mistakenly dated to the 8th century—were described by previous scholars as clumsily made, aberrant, and the result of unskillful local craftsman, O'Connor instead successfully established that they are instead the earliest group of Visnu images in Southeast Asia, emerging not long after their Indian prototypes from the early centuries CE. Their style can be traced back to ultimate prototypes from the period of Kusana rule at Mathura (c. the 1st to mid-3rd centuries CE), although the most immediate stylistic influence seems to be from the 4th century art of the Andhradesa on the Coromandel Coast of India. In the iconography of the four-armed Visnu as it developed at Mathura, the earliest images have the anterior right arm raised with the hand in *abhayamudra*, while *padma* (lotus) evolved later as a distinctive symbol to be held in Visnu's hand. This makes the Chaiya statue the earlier than those at Nakhon as it raises its hand in *abhayamudra* and can be dated to no later than 400 CE while those at Nakhon appear to have already held the *padma* and can be dated to the 5th century CE (O'Connor 1972:39). Although there are two more images of this group at Oc-Eo and later at Cibuaya, the corpus of early Visnu images on the east coast of Peninsular Siam is the earliest among them.

The New Discoveries

In 2002, there was a new image of Visnu (Figure 2.8) of the earliest stylistic tradition found in coastal Nakhon. This statue was discovered and published by P. Noonsuk and the



Figure 2.8a Vishnu image from Wat Ta Nen, Nakhon (Front)



Figure 2.8b Vishnu image from Wat Nen, Nakhon (Back)

current author (2003). It was originally accidentally found by a villager who was buying dirt for the construction of his house at Don Tako Sub-District, Tha Sala District, in 2000. He was shocked to see the statue as the dirt was being dumped by a truck in front of his construction site. The statue was headless, so he went to where the dirt had come from with the intention to find its head. However, he did not find it as the site was completely destroyed by dirt mining, not only for the construction of villagers' houses, but also for the new airport of Nakhon Province. This site was originally called Wat Ta Nen in Tha Sala District. It was not a Buddhist temple, but it was called a "wat", meaning temple in Thai, because villagers have seen bricks on the ground similar to what they usually see in a Buddhist temple which is in turn usually built on top of ancient ruins. Sadly, the owner of this site decided to turn this site into dirt mine to earn easy money, leaving behind only an enormous area of deep depression on the ground. The villagers around the site still recalled that they had seen a considerable amount of bricks, red as blood, as the bulldozer was digging up the dirt to fill one truck after the other, but the land owner did not care to stop²⁸. There are still some brick fragments and pottery sherds on the ground around the site.

The Wat Ta Nen Site is situated in Ban Ying, Moo 6, Pho Thong Sub-District, Tha Sala District. It is only 2 km. to the northwest of the Mokhalan Site and 2 km. to the northeast of the Thung Nam Khem Site where a group of Funan coins was found. These sites are all located on the western beach ridge. Wat Ta Nen is sitting on the bank of the Kro River, a tributary of the Chumkhling River, which flows in the south of the site and merges with the Maying River to the east of the site at Ban Si Yaek Wat Not before flowing to the sea. The western side of Wat Ta

²⁸ It is illegal in Thailand to destroy ancient brick structures although they were located in private properties. The Thai legal protections for antiquities override private ownership.

Nen is a vast flood plain with several rivers and rice fields. This part of the beach ridge seems to be an important population center in the early development of Tambralinga.

After being unsuccessful in finding the head of the statue at Wat Ta Nen, the villager went back and placed the body of the statue in his house. However, he was falling ill and his family insisted that it was because he kept in his house the statue which was considered a powerful image possibly dangerous to ordinary people. He then had to bring the statue to Wat Sai Kham, a Buddhist monastery, near his house in Don Tako Sub-District, Tha Sala District, where the current author found it and where it is still.

The statue is 49 cm. in height, from the lowest end of the club to the neck, and 33 cm. in width, from the posterior right arm to the posterior left arm. It is carved on grayish white sandstone, and most parts of its surface are eroded and rough. The torso is nude except for a necklace and *yajnopavitam* or the sacred thread worn by Brahmins. The sacred thread of this statue is the most obvious among other statues in this group. It runs from the left shoulder to the right shin and is evident in both the front and the back sides of the statue. There are armlets and bracelets. The posterior left hand holds a heavy club (*gada*), the anterior left hand holds a conch-shell (*sankha*) on the hip, the posterior and anterior right hands are missing but it seems that the anterior right hand holds a *padma* against the hip, and is not raised in *abhayamudra*. The *dhoti* reveals a heavy vertical fold between legs and with a broad sash falling in a semicircular arc in front of the thighs. All these attributes of the Wat Ta Nen image can be compared to those at Nakhon discussed and dated to the 5th century by O'Connor (1972:39).

The fact that there are now four Visnu images of this earliest style discovered in the middle portion of the eastern coast of the isthmian tract, and another two from Oc-Eo and Taruma in West Java, reaffirms that these statues were not imported from India but were locally

made in Southeast Asia. Although they seem to be produced in different workshops, they all belong to a similar stylistic tradition (O'Connor 1972:25-26). Those three at Nakhon are very similar and may have even been from the same workshop. Coastal Nakhon, which has the highest density of the Visnu images of the earliest style, seems to be the most important hub of this stylistic tradition and, therefore, of its religious tradition as well.

There are two other stone statues that were discovered quite some time ago but have never been published²⁹. The first is a small, free-standing four-armed figure, 48.5 cm. in height, made of limestone which is now very eroded (Figure 2.9). It was placed as an image to worship in the Singkhon Cave in Khirirat Nikhom District, Surat Thani in the western side of the Bay of Bandon. This cave has yielded Neolithic stone tools but was heavily modified in the late Ayutthaya Period. The statue was moved to the National Museum at Nakhon in 1967 by Mr. Nikhom Suthirak.

The statue's head, posterior arms, and base are missing while the anterior hands are still visible. The right hand holds a long club (*gada*) a little away from the hip but a broad stone reserve connects them together while the left seems to hold something against the hip with palm down; it is unclear whether it is a conch-shell, *bhumi*, or something else. It has an impossibly narrow waist with very broad hips and prominent chest, perhaps because of the erosion of the stone, which make this statue look like a female image. The torso is nude while the lower body is wearing *dhoti* with no fold between the legs but there seems to be a sash running across the two legs at the knee level. On the shoulders, there are vertical projections that might be broken earrings or an effort to support the upper arms. In general, this statue is very crude and based on the buttressing structure, the possible side shapes of a sash, the multiple arms, the awkward

²⁹ The pictures and information of these images were generously provided by Mr. Kitti Chinchaoentham, the head curator of the National Museum at Chaiya, Surat Thani.

graceless contours, the flat graphic handling rather than fully realized volumetric forms, all point to an early date, so early that there is little to compare it with in Southeast Asia. Although there are no attributes that would have been held in the multiple arms, it is plausible that it is Hindu and possibly a four-armed Visnu³⁰. The scarf that projecting out under the left side of the hip and that would eventually flow to the base to provide support for the statue seems to resemble that of the Visnu from Tuol Koh in Cambodia, which Dalsheimer and Manguin (1998:92) dated to c. the first half of the 5th century.

The second statue was found in 1962 from Wat Chiangphong in Ranot District, Songkhla (31 cm. in height, Figure 2.10) and since then has been kept at the National Museum at Nakhon according to the museum record. It is a standing Visnu (in *sthanaka-murti*) with bare chest, four arms and a mitre (cylindrical headdress or *kiritamukuta*). The statue is broken from the thighs downwards. All arms are missing except the anterior left arm which holds the head of the club. The costume is a simple dhoti with no sash and scarf, and it is totally three-dimensional although not very dynamic. These characteristics point to Dupont's group C, similar to the small Visnu image found at Wat Chom Thong, Sichon District, Nakhon, which can be dated to the 7th century (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002:123, fig.12). However, it is important to note that its miter is decorated with floral patterns, a trait that is not seen in other Group C statues in Peninsular Siam but in the conch on the hip group mentioned previously. This characteristic may have been passed down locally from the older stylistic tradition to this statue.

³⁰ Stanley J. O'Connor (personal communication).



Figure 2.9 Statue from the Singkhon Cave in Khirirat Nikhom District, Surat Thani



Figure 2.10 Visnu image from Wat Chiangphong in Ranot District, Songkhla

The Excavations at Wat Phrang

One of the earliest Visnu images (Figure 2.7), mentioned earlier, which is now kept at the Museum of Wat Mahathat was usually believed to be from Wat Phra Phreng (e.g. Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002:fig.3), but it actually was from Wat Phrang, in Na San Sub-District, situated only around half a kilometer west of Wat Phra Phreng. After seeing the image, O'Connor (1982) traced its origin back to the site in Na San and mentioned that two bases of Visnu images (c. the 7th or 8th century), a Ganesa image (c. the 9th or 10th century), a stone head of the Buddha (c. late 8th or early 9th century), a four-armed bronze figure of Bodhisatva Avalokitesvara (c. the 8th century), and a small, four-armed bronze image possibly of Harihara (the 9th century) also came from this area along with the Visnu image. For the stone head of the Buddha, Piriya Krairiksh wrote that it was "the single most important Buddhist work of art datable to the Indo-Javanese period yet found at Nakhon Si Thammarat" (1980:146), suggesting that both Hinduism and Buddhism coexisted at Na San. Jacq-Hergoualc'h (2002:122) proposed that the bases of Visnu images belong to Dupont's Group A since the lower section of the hip sash of this group usually reaches the base, as appeared in our bases, and should be dated to the first half of the 6th century. The current author accepts this date.

The richness of complex cultural production mentioned above led O'Connor (1982:61) to believe that Na San was an area of some cultural importance in the period before 1,000 CE. As will become clear later, the archaeological fieldwork conducted by the current author proves that there are in this area ancient brick architectures, and this area was probably one of the most important of Vaisnavite communities that flourished as early as the 5th century before giving way to Saivism and Buddhism in the 8th century.

Wat Phrang, like Wat Ta Nen, has never been a Buddhist Monastery but villagers call it “wat” because they see ancient brick fragments scattering around the site like many of Buddhist monasteries today. It is situated around half a kilometer south of the Yuat River that flows from Lan Saka District in the mountain area to the Tha Rua River and the sea in the east. In the recent past, people still walked from Na San, which was an extensive rice producing area, to Lan Saka to visit their relatives and acquire fruits and forest products. The people in the foothill areas also used this trail to walk down to the coastal lands, sometime with ox carts, in a certain season safe from tigers. They received rice, salt, and shrimp paste in return. In the rainy season when the lowlands were flooded, people in the lowland areas brought their cows to their friends and relatives in the highland areas to take care of them. They walked the cows back in the planting season. This walking trail that passed by Wat Phrang, just a hundred meters to the south, is now turned into a narrow water way. One may imagine that this site was important in the past because it was situated on a natural mound, like a small island in the rainy season, right in the middle of a large rice plain with a wide river and walking trail to connect to both the areas on the coast and in the mountain.

It was on this walking trail that a villager found our 5th century statue of Visnu. The story of its discovery is quite fascinating. The villagers said that the Visnu statue was discovered some decades ago when an old man was building small sand barriers by hand to catch fish inside on the bottom of the walking trail, which was full of water in the rainy season. He found the Visnu image as he dug up the sand for the barriers. Other villagers told him to leave the image at Wat Phra Phreng, the major Buddhist monastery nearby, but he refused because he fell in love with its beauty and kept it in his house instead. That night, after he put the image in his house next to his sleeping mat and went to sleep, he woke up in the middle of the night in a fright as he

saw the image had transformed into an enormous statue with bloody eyes and flames around the body rising up to the sky through the palm-leaf roof of his house. He then ran fearfully to the Phra Phreng monastery to ask the highly respected abbot to come to his house to help him. However, everything looked normal when the abbot arrived. The image was still sitting in the house, but it is said that the old man became insane because of its power. The abbot then contacted the Fine Arts Department and governmental officials to bring this statue to the museum. They came and took the statue with the promise that they would give some money to the old man in return; sadly, the promise was never fulfilled. This is how the statue came to the museum at Wat Mahathat and its provenience was mistakenly attributed to the Phra Phreng monastery.

This story is similar to that of the Wat Ta Nen statue. The Visnu images (and other antiquities) have been considered too powerful for ordinary people to keep. They were eventually given to monasteries and the most important and powerful monastery of all in Nakhon has been Wat Mahathat, whose museum, not surprisingly, now has many antiquities second to only the National Museum at Nakhon.

There are two brick mounds at Wat Phrang. The first (Mound 1 or Wat Phrang 1) is covered with orchards and is around 30x30 m. in size, while the second (Mound 2 or Wat Phrang 2), situated around 100 m. to the north of the first one, is damaged by a rubber plantation and modern moat construction, and there is only a few square meters left of it. With the intention to identify the shrine of the Visnu image, the current author excavated 7 trenches in this site. The preliminary results of the excavations are summarized below:

On top of Mound 1, three trenches were excavated. Trench 3 (WP.09.3) was particularly informative. There were three floors identified in the trench (Figures 2.11 and 2.12). The first

two were brick floors while the uppermost one was a dirt floor. We only have the dates of the brick fragments from the second floor in the middle based on the Thermoluminescence (TL) Technique. They are 1298 ± 141 BP and 1292 ± 135 BP and the Lab at Kasetsart University suggested that we use the dates of 702 and 708 CE respectively for them. In Trench 1 (WP.09.1), there are Northern Song ceramics (c. the late 11th to early 12th centuries CE) under the brickfall layer. This suggests that the brick architectures once stood on the mound where the trench is located, and were used until they fell down after the period noted above. The preliminary results of the excavations at Wat Phrang 1 are summarized in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Preliminary results of the excavations at Wat Phrang 1 (Mound 1)

Phase	Date	Description
1	c. Pre-700 CE	This is the lowest brick floor (Floor 1) right above the sterile layer, around 160 cm. below modern ground surface. Most of the bricks arranged for the floor are fragmented, implying that they may be reused bricks from an older structure; so, there may be an older structure wherefrom these bricks were mined in this area. There is no trace of mortar binding the bricks together. The floor is made by putting one brick next to another. There are only one to two courses of brick for the floor which was supported by hard sand and clay. The date of this floor is not yet known.
2	c. 700 CE	This is the second floor (Floor 2) from the sterile bottom of the trench, around 12 cm. above the surface of the first floor with grayish fine sand between them. The floor is made of one course of bricks with no trace of mortar. The bricks are a little bigger than those of the first floor but some of them are fragmented and seem to be reused materials. Two brick samples are TL dated to 702 and 708 CE.
3	c. Post-700 CE to 12 th century CE	The third and uppermost floor (Floor 3) is made of dirt, also around 12 cm. above the surface of Floor 2. The dirt surface is smooth but underneath it are many fist-sized riverine rocks. These rocks are sitting right on top of Floor 2 along with course sand to support and make Floor 3 strong. The date of this floor is not known but it seems to be the last floor of the shrine. Above it, there were just brickfall layers. It is known from Trench 1 that the brickfall layer is right on top of a dirt layer with the Northern Song ceramic sherds (c. the late 11 th to early 12 th centuries CE); therefore, it is probable that this floor was used until the shrine was falling in the late 11 th to early 12 th centuries CE.



Figure 2.11 Lowest brick floor in Trench WP.09.3



Figure 2.12 Northern scarp of Trench WP.09.3 showing a series of brick floors in the lower part

For Mound 2, we excavated a 4x2 trench (Trench WP.09.4) and found an in-situ brick structural base with six courses of bricks (Figure 2.13). The structure is largely damaged and only its northeast corner is left. The structure seems to be oriented a little off the north-south axis in a rather northwest-southeast axis. A complete brick of this structure measures around 24x16 cm. The structure seems to have been constructed by putting whole bricks on the outside on the façade, while the inside was filled with dirt and brick fragments. It was probably less expensive and faster than building the whole structure with complete bricks, inside out. However, this technique made the structure weaker and more apt to collapse, as this example shows us.

A dirt floor associated with this structure is identified running from around the third course of the bricks to the surrounding area. The dirt floor is well-packed with hard soil and tiny brick fragments to make it strong. However, the size and the date of this structure are still unknown. The author was attempting to acquire the date of the dirt floor associated with the structure using an expensive radiocarbon (AMS) dating technique on a charcoal sample found in the floor, but the result was extremely inaccurate. It gave the date of 1955-2000 CE! In the near future, the TL method will rather be used instead for the brick structures. Although no brick structure can yet be dated to the 5th century (the date of the Visnu image), they are the only Early Tambralinga structures found in Na San, so it is possible that these brick structures housed the Visnu and/or Ganesa images found in this area. More excavations and dating in the future will be needed.



Figure 2.13 Brick structure in Trench WP.09.4

The Continuation of the Vaisnavite Tradition

The artistic tradition of the conch on the hip does not appear only on the east coast of Peninsular Siam, but also in Oc-Eo in the Mekong Delta. The Oc-Eo Visnu is very similar to those at Nakhon both in iconography and in style and can be also dated to the 5th century (O'Connor 1972:29). This style continued later on in coastal Nakhon, the Mekong Basin, and West Java. Several examples may be found in the Mekhong Basin, such as the Tuol Koh Visnu, and in West Java, such as the Cibuaya Visnu (No.1). The Mekong examples can be dated to between the middle of the 5th century to the beginning of the 6th century, while the Cibuaya statue can be dated to between the second half of the 5th century to the beginning of the 6th century (Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998:103). There is also a four-armed, mitered Visnu image

found at Ban Phang Kam 1 in Sichon District in Nakhon, which has a broad sash falling in a semicircular arc in front of the thighs; however, the conch shell is not held on the hip but raised up high by the posterior left hand, and there seems to initially be a supporting arch at the level of the ears to connect the head and the posterior arms together. Jacq-Hergoualc'h (2002:119) dates this statue to the late 5th century. It may be noted that this statue seems to represent the direct continuation from the earliest artistic tradition of Visnu images, and reaffirm the high probability that these images were created and reproduced in the local workshops.

The tradition of the creation of Visnu images was continued in several areas throughout Southeast Asia with the influences of the Indian Gupta and Post-Gupta Arts (see Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998; Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002:116-127; O'Connor 1972). In Peninsular Siam, there were many Visnu images from the 6th to 8th centuries, in coastal Nakhon, in Khao Siwichai in the Bay of Bandon, in Wiang Sra at the middle of the isthmian tract, and in Takua Pa on the west coast of the isthmus. The highest point of the development of Visnu imagery in the isthmian workshops was probably reached between 650 and 800 in the massive statue (202 cm. in height) from Khao Phra Noe, Takua Pa District, Phang-Nga Province, with its arms reaching out to occupy enormous space without the supporting arch seen in the Cambodian pieces (O'Connor 1972:48).

In the Mekong Basin, a considerable number of Visnu statues have been found in the Preangkorian period (pre-9th century), and it reached a high point in the large free-standing statues of the style of Phanom Da, which is now dated to the 7th century (Lavy 2003:29). In the area of the Sunda Strait, many 6th-8th-century Visnu images have been discovered from Kota Kapur, on the island of Bangka lying east of Southern Sumatra, and from the area around the Bay of Jakarta, including Cibuyaya (Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998).

In the area around the Gulf of Siam, a significant number of Visnu images have been found at Sri Mahosot in Prachinburi, at Phetburi, at Phong Tuk in Kanchanaburi, and at Suphanburi. The Visnu images at Suphanburi are particularly interesting but have received little attention from scholars. There are four of them, all in high relief, not free-standing, and believed to be from U-Thong, an early city with its initial beginnings in the early centuries in Central Thailand before it developed into a major city in the Dvaravati Culture in around the mid-first millennium CE. They are all made of poor-quality limestone and covered with gold leaves put on over the years by worshippers since these images still maintain their religious function and are highly respected by people. The first statue (No.1, Figure 2.14, 110 cm. in height) is called Chao Pho Phraya Chak, meaning the god who carries the wheel (*cakra*), now situated in U-Thong District. The second statue (No.2, Figure 2.15, 170 cm. in height) is called Chao Pho Phra Narai, meaning the God Narayana, now located at Khao Phra in U-Thong District. The third and fourth are carved out of a single block of stone and still joined together. It is possible to describe them as the statue on the right or in the north (No.3, Figure 2.16, 115 cm. in height) and the one on the left or in the south (No.4, Figure 2.16, 123 cm. in height). They are now kept and worshiped as the gods of the city pillar of Suphanburi (Chao Pho Lak Muang).

All of them share similarities. Each of them has a nude torso, four arms, a dhoti with a sash falling in front of the thighs in a semicircular arc and rather flat crowns or miters (but the decorations are not visible) with halos behind their heads, and all are standing in *sthanaka-murti*. These characteristics make them similar to the Conch Shell on the Hip Group of Visnu from Peninsular Siam except the U-Thong statues are in high relief and rather bigger. The halo in the U-Thong images is seen in the Ho Phra Narai Visnu at Nakhon as well, although not seen in



Figure 2.14 Visnu at U-Thong (No. 1)



Figure 2.15 Visnu at U-Thong (No. 2)



Figure 2.16 Visnu images at U-Thong (No. 3 on the right and No. 4 on the left)

other images in the same group. It is possible that No.1 and 3 are even holding conch shells on the hip, but it is unclear due to the thick layers of gold leaves.

There are also differences between the earliest isthmian group and the U-Thong group. No.1, 2, and 3 are holding the wheels (*cakra*) with their posterior right hands in a manner so that the frontal view of the wheels are facing the viewers. This trait is unknown in the isthmian group, in part because the posterior right arms are usually broken but is seen in the Indian prototypes, especially in the high-relief statues (O'Connor 1972:Fig.8-13) and in the bas relief of Visnu on the wall of the Phra Phothisat Cave in Sraburi, Central Thailand, dated to around the 8th century (Laorsuwan 1998:39). In a similar vein, No. 1 is holding up a club with its posterior left

hand, unlike those in the isthmus, but similar to that of the bas-relief of the Lion-Visnu from Andhradesa (O'Connor 1972:Fig.13) in which the dynamic actions are better depicted in the bas relief than in the free-standing figures as the projecting body parts and attributes might be broken in the latter case. No. 2 and 4 have naga, perhaps Adhisethu who is servant of Visnu, in the background on both sides of the body. This is not seen in the free-standing figures from Peninsular Siam.

Laorsuwan (1998:39) states that these statues from U-Thong may represent the U-Thong school of Visnu sculptures, which share similarities among them, and demonstrate close stylistic connections with the Conch Shell on the Hip Group from the isthmian tract. However, he mentions that these statues also incorporate characteristics of the 7th and 8th century Visnu images such as the round mitre of No.3 and the club held pointing down with the anterior left arm of No. 4. Therefore, he dates these statues to the 7th to 9th century, while the current author believes that they should be dated to the early 7th century at the latest because the round mitre and the club held by the anterior left arm mentioned by Laorsuwan can be seen in the Dupont's Group A and B and dated to the 6th to early 7th century, such as the Visnu images from Wiang Sra and Khao Siwichai in Surat Thani (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002:120-123). Therefore, there is no reason to extend the U-Thong images to the 9th century.

The fact that U-Thong images share so many similarities with the earliest isthmian group of Visnu statues suggests a close relationship between the central east coast of the peninsula and the areas around the head of the Gulf of Siam. This stylistic relationship reflects the trade network in the Gulf of Siam, from Nakhon and the Bay of Bandon to the Mekong Delta and the arching areas around the Gulf of Siam, from Dong Si Mahapot to U-Thong and down to Petchaburi, the areas that were on the shores of the sea in the early historic period. O'Connor

(1986a:8-9) called this trade pattern “a great arc of exchange” in which ships plowing the sea lanes from eastern peninsular harbors found it efficient to follow the winds toward the Mekong Delta and then turn northeast to enter the major centers on the fringes of the Chao Phraya Delta. He asks, how else would one explain the almost parallel development of the monumental Visnu images wearing the long robe in three such widely separated locations as (1) Dong Si Mahaphot in Prachinburi at the head of the gulf in eastern Thailand where the Visnus and other Hindu sculptures are quite outside the mainstream development of contemporary Buddhist art in central Thailand, (2) the Mekong delta sites where the Visnus of preangkorian art represent both a technical and an iconographic tradition that is intrusive and was formulated outside of Cambodia, and (3) the peninsula? The current author would like to add that ships could probably sail, by manipulating the Southwest or Southeast monsoons, from the isthmian east coast directly to the western head of the gulf where U-Thong is situated. This argument is based on the similarities between the Visnu images of the U-Thong school and those of the earliest isthmian group as discussed previously. If there was only a one-way route from east to west around the Gulf of Siam, then we should have seen these similarities between the U-Thong and earliest isthmian Visnu images in Prachinburi as well, but we see none in fact. Whatever the case may be, it can be discerned that the close relationship between polities around the Gulf of Siam had created something like a “neighborhood” in this area united by the sea (O’Connor 1986a:8).

The Hindu tradition in U-Thong does not entail only the Visnu images but also a considerable number of lingas, ekamukhalingas, yonis, and shrines as well. There was an important area called Khok Chang Din on the foothill of the Khok Mountain, around 10 km. in the southwest of the U-Thong moated site, where there are several shrines related to Saivism made of laterite blocks, stone, and bricks and large circular earthworks. These earthworks seem

to be either water tanks or are related to water management in the foothill area that receives water from the mountain. The shrines scatter along the river uphill and on the bunds of the earthworks suggesting that the shrines are associated with water and fertility. At least one ekamukhalinga and one realistic linga dated by Laorsuwan (1998:41-42) to c. the 6th-7th century and c. the 7th-8th century respectively were found at the site. Recently, a number of coins and small silver blocks were found from the excavation at the Monument No.7 at Khok Chang Din; three of the coins bear inscriptions with Pallava scripts in Sankrit of the King of Dvaravati dated to the 7th century by paleography (Laorsuwan 1998:31), indicating that the Dvaravati ruling class was supporting both Hinduism and Buddhism like that of other ancient kingdoms in Southeast Asia.

Trade and the Hindu tradition tied U-Thong and the east coast of the isthmian tract together. The densities of both Saivite and Vaisnavite sculptures in U-Thong made it distinctive from other Dvaravati cities on the Tha Chin River Basin. The lingas, ekamukhalingas, yonis and shrines that scattered along the watercourse at the U-Thong area resemble those in the Bay of Bandon and the heartland of Tambralinga in coastal Nakhon. This evidence further supports the similarities between the styles of Visnu images from both areas. Although at least a century apart, the later U-Thong school of Visnu images reflects that the earliest style of Visnu images occurred in the isthmian tract was felt and remembered in Central Thailand as well. Since the U-Thong statues are rather similar to the earliest isthmian Visnu images, it may be assumed that there was originally at least a Visnu statue of the conch shell on the hip style existing in U-Thong, whether it was created there or transported from the peninsula. This now vanished statue was the inspiration of the later style that persisted to closely continue the older tradition. The

spread of the conch shell on the hip style was not accidental. It occurred in the maritime trade network in which the isthmian polities were playing an important role.

The Vaisnavite Network

The fact that the immediate prototypes of the conch shell on the hip style of Visnu in Southeast Asia are those at Andhradesa reaffirms the long-standing socio-commercial relationships between the communities on the Coromandel Coast of India and those in Southeast Asia. As mentioned previously in Chapter One, there is much of evidence of overseas trading activities in Andhradesa in terms of ports and material culture that can be dated to the late centuries BCE to the early centuries CE in the time of the Indo-Roman trade (Tripathi 2006). The trade objects found in Andhradesa are similar to those found in Peninsular Siam in ports like Phukhao Thong, Khao Sam Kaeo, Khlong Thom, and Tha Chana, and in Oc Eo in the Mekong Delta, and in West Java. This fact indicates that the ports of Andhradesa and those in maritime Southeast Asia were participating in the same interaction sphere allowing the resources, trade items, and ideas to circulate among them since the late centuries BCE. The spread of the conch shell on the hip style of Visnu in the 4th and 5th centuries can be, therefore, be discerned as one aspect of social interaction across the Bay of Bengal.

In the maritime interaction between India and Southeast Asia, the isthmian tract of Peninsular Siam was vital as it occupied a strategic location for crossing through trans-isthmian routes from the Bay of Bengal to the South China Sea. These routes would have saved thousands of kilometers of journey in open seas full of ruthless pirates and disastrous storms if ships were to navigate through the Melaka or Sunda Straits in these early times. The importance of the isthmian tract is empirically elaborated by the fact that several of the most ancient ports (if

not the earliest) of overseas trade in Southeast Asia were found in the head of the peninsula like Phukhao Thong and Khao Sam Kaeo dated to the late centuries BCE (e.g. Bellina-Pryce and Silapanth 2006). This trend continued to the first half of the first millennium CE since the east coast of the isthmian tract also has the earliest Visnu image (Visnu at Chaiya) and the highest density of the earliest Visnu images in Southeast Asia. It seems, therefore, likely that one of the earliest centers of the worship of Visnu and the production of Visnu images was in this area and that this area was a center of cultural innovation and a factor in the spread of the Vaisnavite tradition to other places in maritime Southeast Asia.

As mentioned previously, there are now five Visnu images, not including the possible early Visnu image found at the Singkhon Cave, of the conch shell on the hip style, the earliest style of Visnu in Southeast Asia. The earliest one is from Chaiya and can be dated to no later than 400 CE. Three are from coastal Nakhon and one from Oc Eo (Figure 2.17), and all can be dated to the 5th century. The Vaisnavite belief and artistic style from the east coast of Peninsular Siam seem to have reached Oc Eo through the established trade network. Oc Eo was the largest trade complex in the Mekong Delta and had an extensive canal and riverine systems linking it to other urban settlements in the area; the most important one was Angkor Borei (Sanderson et al. 2007:323). One of the longest canals was dug from Oc Eo to the sea, near the rich archaeological site of Nen Chua, which may have served as a major waterway for the ships from Peninsular Siam to Oc Eo as the outlet of this canal was on the western side of the Ca Mau Peninsula and faced directly to the isthmus (Manguin 2009:111).



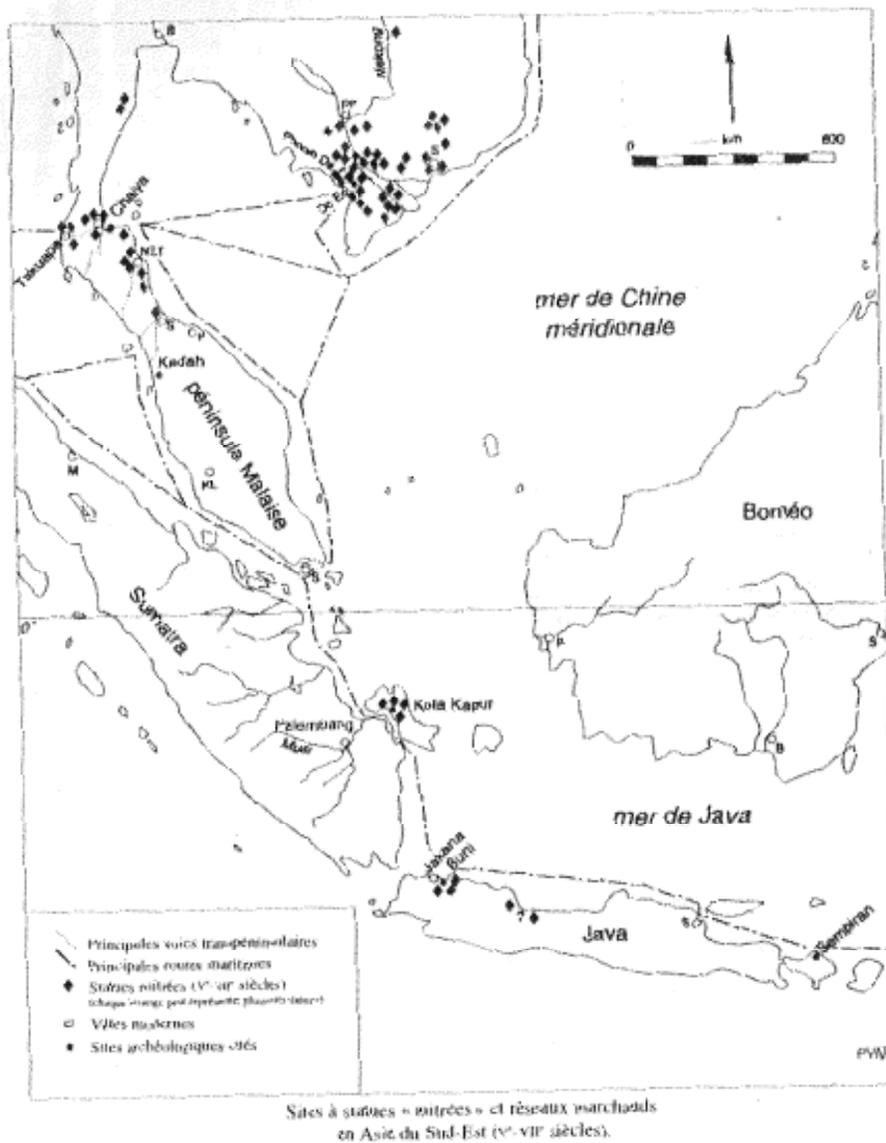
Figure 2.17 Visnu image from Oc Eo, Mekong Delta in Vietnam (Photo Courtesy of Stanley O'Connor)

The socio-political implication of the presence of a conch shell on the hip Visnu at Oc Eo is notable as first observed by Stanley O'Connor. He notes:

The conclusion that the Jaiya (Chaiya) image is older than the closely similar Visnu from the Funanese port city of Oc-Eo is of considerable interest. In the first half of the 5th century, Fu-nan appears to have undergone a cultural revolution which is described as a "second period of Indianization". According to the Chinese accounts this shift in the intellectual landscape came about because the people of Fu-nan accepted as king a Brahman from India named Kaundinya who changed all the laws to conform to the system of India. He is said to have come from P'an-p'an, a kingdom that scholars placed on the isthmus, on the Bay of Bandon. This is, of course, where Jaiya is located and where the image of Visnu in fig. 1 was found. Altogether, this constellation of evidence, text and image indicates that intensive exploration of the area around the Bay of Bandon might lead to the recovery of one of the most ancient kingdoms in Southeast Asia. (O'Connor 1972:39-40)

Interestingly, O'Connor also suggests that the Oc Eo Visnu displays more similarities to the Nakhon images than the Chaiya one in both iconography and style and that it seems to be "a copy, later in time and removed in distance, of a Peninsular model" (1972:29). This suggests that the Mekong Delta and coastal Nakhon had a close socio-political relationship with one another, a relationship that predated the 5th century and remained intensive perhaps until the dawn of the Ayutthaya power in Peninsular Siam in c. the 15th century. This long-term relationship led to the cultural similarities between Tambralinga and the Khmer Kingdom, an intimacy of relationship that made plausible Jayaviravarman's (a prince from Tambralinga) confidence in the beginning of the 11th century that "he shared enough of a common elite culture to be a successful contender for the throne at Angkor" (O'Connor 1986e:147; see also Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002:349; Wolters 1958:591).

O'Connor's ideas about the neighborhood of coastal polities with shared cultures in the Gulf of Siam are further developed by Dalsheimer and Manguin in their seminal article in 1998 in which they propose that the distribution of mitred Visnu images iconographically similar with four arms, bare chests, and long robes from the 5th to 7th centuries represents "an art of pan-regional network" in a broad sense, in maritime Southeast Asia before the creation of what they called "national arts" that were to be later developed in each area in the region (Map 2.3). This indicates the learning period of the major artistic trends and, in turn, the political learning period of the so-called indianized polities in this region as well. This pan-regional art occurred and continued in three main areas including Peninsular Siam, the Mekong Delta, and the Sunda Strait (between West Java and South Sumatra) and cannot be seen as the result of political expansions of an empire. This art as it spread out in a very vast space instead suggests "the merchant network" of Visnu worshipers which developed as early as the 5th century at the latest



Map 2.3 Sites of mitered Visnu images and merchant network in Southeast Asia in the 5th to 7th centuries (from Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998:90)

(Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998:105). This network of Vaisnavite merchants, like that of the Buddhists developed previously, played an important role in bringing trade and Indic culture to Southeast Asia. According to Dalsheimer and Manguin (1998:109), the Visnu worshipers may have been prominent traders because they do not attach themselves to the caste system and have

universalistic approach of bhakti which allows all to attain salvation through devotion. Salvation is, therefore, accessible, even to a non-Hindu, and in this sense, it is close to Buddhism while Saivism is still dominated by the Brahmins and the exclusive ritual systems. This is probably the reason why Buddhists and Visnu worshipers were very successful in overseas trade in the early period in which they had to venture across oceans to interact with a countless variety of groups of people in relatively unknown worlds.

The art of the pan-regional network described by Dalsheimer and Manguin may have developed first on the east coast of Peninsular Siam wherein coastal Nakhon has the highest density of the earliest Visnu images. Therefore, the Vaisnavite communities in coastal Nakhon seem to play a prominent role in the first waves of the spread of the worship of Visnu along with trading activities in the maritime world of Southeast Asia in the 5th century. It may be assumed that the isthmian Vaisnavite communities were first founded with the introduction of the worship of Visnu by Vaisnavite merchants from Andhradesa, who also brought along Vaisnavite Brahmins and craftsmen in their ships across the Bay of Bengal. This may be how the earliest art of Visnu images was created in the isthmian tract. Besides the three main areas of Vaisnavite communities in Peninsular Siam, the Mekong Delta, and the Sunda Strait, there are also those around the head of the Gulf of Siam, although in a smaller scale, such as those in Dong Si Mahapot and U-Thong. The Vaisnavite network seems to have spread in all directions through maritime trade.

In coastal Nakhon, two main areas of Vaisnavite communities can be clearly observed, including Na San and the area between Wat Ta Nen and Wat Ko Phra Narai. As mentioned previously, three early Visnu images were found in Na San. One which belongs to the conch on the hip group has been dated to the 5th century and the other two are the bases of Visnu images

that can be dated to c. the first half of the 6th century. In the second area, one Visnu of the conch on the hip style is found at Wat Ta Nen dated to the 5th century and other two Visnu statues are discovered at Wat Ko Phra Narai, in the north of Wat Ta Nen, dated to c. the 7th century. These areas demonstrate the production of the earliest Visnu images and the ongoing reproduction of them.

It is important to note that these areas are on the beach ridge that runs in the north-south direction along the heartland of Tambralinga. The distribution of these early Visnu images, therefore, reflects a common vision of the worship of Visnu that spread along the strip of the beach ridge in the 5th to 7th centuries and suggests the importance of the beach ridge in the settlement pattern of early communities in the heartland.

Although the worship of Visnu was significant in the heartland in the 5th to 7th centuries, there were also other belief systems including the worship of Siva and Buddhism in that area in the same time period. This is also true in the Mekong Delta and the areas around the Gulf of Siam such as U-Thong where objects and structures related to Buddhism and Saivism are also numerous. Although the network of Vaisnavite communities may be the most powerful network in maritime trade from the 5th to 7th century, it should be noted that other networks of trade dominated by Buddhists and Saivites coexisted with them as well. It is still unclear how these trade networks incorporated or competed with one another in such an early period. It is clear, however, that these networks were participating in the same interaction sphere across the Bay of Bengal and in the South China Sea, the sphere in which the first maritime kingdoms of Southeast Asia started to take shape and flourish.

The Decline of Vaisnavism in Tambralinga

The fall of the Vaisnavism 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 Vaisnavite communities in the South Seas 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 privileged Buddhism, became more powerful and attacked the old Vaisnavite polities in Kota Kapur and West Java, and it seemed to successfully break up the Vaisnavite trade network in the 8th century.

In Cambodia, according to Lavy (2003), both the worships 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 so-called the 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 at 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 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 epigraphical 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 Vaisnavism seemed to be related to the decline of the polities, in which Vaisnavism used to prevailed, in maritime Southeast Asia³¹. As these polities in West Java and the Mekong Valley were tremendously weakened, the network of Vaisnavite communities was broken, and this socio-political phenomenon directly affected the vibrancy of

³¹ 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 other 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 in that area was even Rudravarman (c. 514-39) (Lavy 2003:28) for Rudra was a name of Siva.

Vaisnavite 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.

The Socio-Political Implication of Visnu Images

Like Buddhism, the worship of Visnu created a sense of unity among the trading groups across the Bay of Bengal and in maritime Southeast Asia. In the late centuries BCE to early centuries CE, Buddhism played an important role in stimulating the trade across the Bay of Bengal and uniting many different groups of people involving in the maritime trade (Ray 1996). By associating themselves with Buddhism, people in Bengal, along the Coromandel Coast, in Sri Lanka, and in Peninsular Siam could participate in the trade network dominated by Buddhists, a greater world that transcended the social boundaries of villages and towns and allowed people, information, knowledge, and massive amount of trade goods to circulate across the Bay of Bengal (Coningham 1999-2006). This role of uniting the trade world pioneered by Buddhists was then reproduced by the Visnu worshipers from c. the 4th to 7th centuries as reflected in the distribution of Visnu images in the maritime polities involved intensively in trade along the coasts of India and Southeast Asia (Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998).

The early Vaisnavite practices and arts also created a sense of unity at the local level as well. Visnu images were the universal vocabulary shared in the Vaisnavite world across South and Southeast Asia. They allowed local communities to be part of a greater world and transcended boundaries of their particular villages and valleys. Visnu images had a greater reach than the particular ancient trees or natural boulders that previously were the focus of the piety

and worship of each village. This transformation of the belief system from the particular to the universal had a great social impact enhancing the imagination of local people about the world beyond and transformed the local religious practices to conform to those of others in the maritime world they lived in.

The worship of Visnu was also related to the development of kingship in Southeast Asia. Dalsheimer and Manguin (1998:108) propose that the oldest cult of religious devotion, usually related to kingship, first appeared in Southeast Asia at Funan in the second half of the 5th century at the latest as evident in the inscription of Gunavarman (K5) at Thap Muoi in the Mekong Delta, which makes reference to bhakti and bhagavata; and more evidently, the footprints of Visnu was compared with those of the king of Tarumanagara in the Bay of Jakarta in West Java as appeared in the inscription paleographically dated to the mid-5th century. Dalsheimer and Manguin (1998:110) then reasonably conclude that one of the reason for the expansion of Vaisnavism in the first period of Indianization of Southeast Asia was that God Visnu was associated since very early on to royalty and political power, even in India; therefore, the rulers of the fledgling kingdoms in Southeast Asia worshipped him to help ensure their domination among their peers who had not yet converted. It may be assumed as well that the association between Visnu and rulers also happened in Tambralinga although no inscription regarding this matter has been discovered. The first Visnu images of the 5th century may have allowed the local chiefs in coastal Nakhon to identify themselves with Visnu (perhaps, among other gods as well) and project their power beyond their territories as universal rulers.

To possess a Visnu sculpture is a complex cultural operation. A Visnu image like other sculptures in the Hindu tradition required a temple and religious practices around it. In the case of lingas at Nakhon, O'Connor vividly describes:

Radiating from a linga, when set in the field of its dynamic relationships, were the religious specialists who presided over the daily and seasonal calendar of religious practices, and the villagers whose duty it was to maintain and support the temple. We should see too the intricate web of well-worn foot paths leading to the temple hub from remote hamlets, neighboring villages, and adjacent towns for the daily honoring of the linga. Each of the ancient carved stones was daily wreathed with incense and flowers. They were fitfully and mysteriously lit by light from oil lamps waved by priestly attendants. They were worn smooth by lavings of water and milk and the innumerable touches of loving hands. Add to this the flux, commotion and social contagion of crowded festival days with music, bells, entertainments and gorgeous costumes and we have some echo, however faint, of the vibrant religious enthusiasm which a linga once focused. (1986f:160)

Both lingas and Visnu images were similar in that they both affected the social relations around them. The society had to create an explanation of the presence of the images and organize rituals to care for them properly. In Alfred Gell's view (1998), the sculptures were the representations of gods and were artworks of indescribable beauty made with such mastery that it was as if they were from the heavenly realm. These statues had agency to captivate viewers and make happenings in the sense of both the miraculous blessings they could bestow to their followers and the social relations that came into being through the rituals around them that brought together various groups of people in an organized way. These rituals created the sense of oneness under the same gods in the society, the kind of unity that required in the construction of a kingdom.

The Chong Khoi Valley Inscriptions dated to c. the 8th century suggest the ritual journey or the practice of pilgrimage in Tambralinga. This practice is an integral part of the Hindu tradition in which people visited sacred places, called *tirtha* meaning a ford or a place where the crossing from one realm to the next can be safely made³². A Hindu temple is a common example

³² There are other meanings as well. See Eck (1981:325). For the Hindu sacred landscape, see Eck (1998).

of a *tirtha*. The concept of *tirtha* has its root in the ancient locative cult and is closely related to rivers or Ganga, the word that is also present in Inscription No. 29 (c. the 9th century) in Tambralinga, as the place for crossing. It may be discerned that the practice of pilgrimage had created strong connections not only between people and gods or people and places but also between various communities, both of Saivite and Vaisnavite orientations, in Tambralinga. The unity of the kingdom seems to be built on and reinforced by the footpaths of pilgrims. It was the foundation, the shared spirituality, of the kingdom.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EARLY TAMBRALINGA SITE DISTRIBUTION

Introduction

As we have seen, the heartland of Tambralinga on the coast of Nakhon Province is a fertile area with diversified ecological niches and easy access to the rich resources of the mountain range. The distribution of the archaeological sites in this area suggests that people in this area have taken advantage of this ecological diversity since the prehistoric periods. This trend continued into the Early Tambralinga Period. The sites in this period increased tremendously and spread out from the foothills to the beach and along the strip of the coastal plain. In this chapter, five clusters of Hindu shrines will be discussed and, toward the end, I will propose that these clusters can be grouped into the two large groups with slightly different cultural traits from one another.

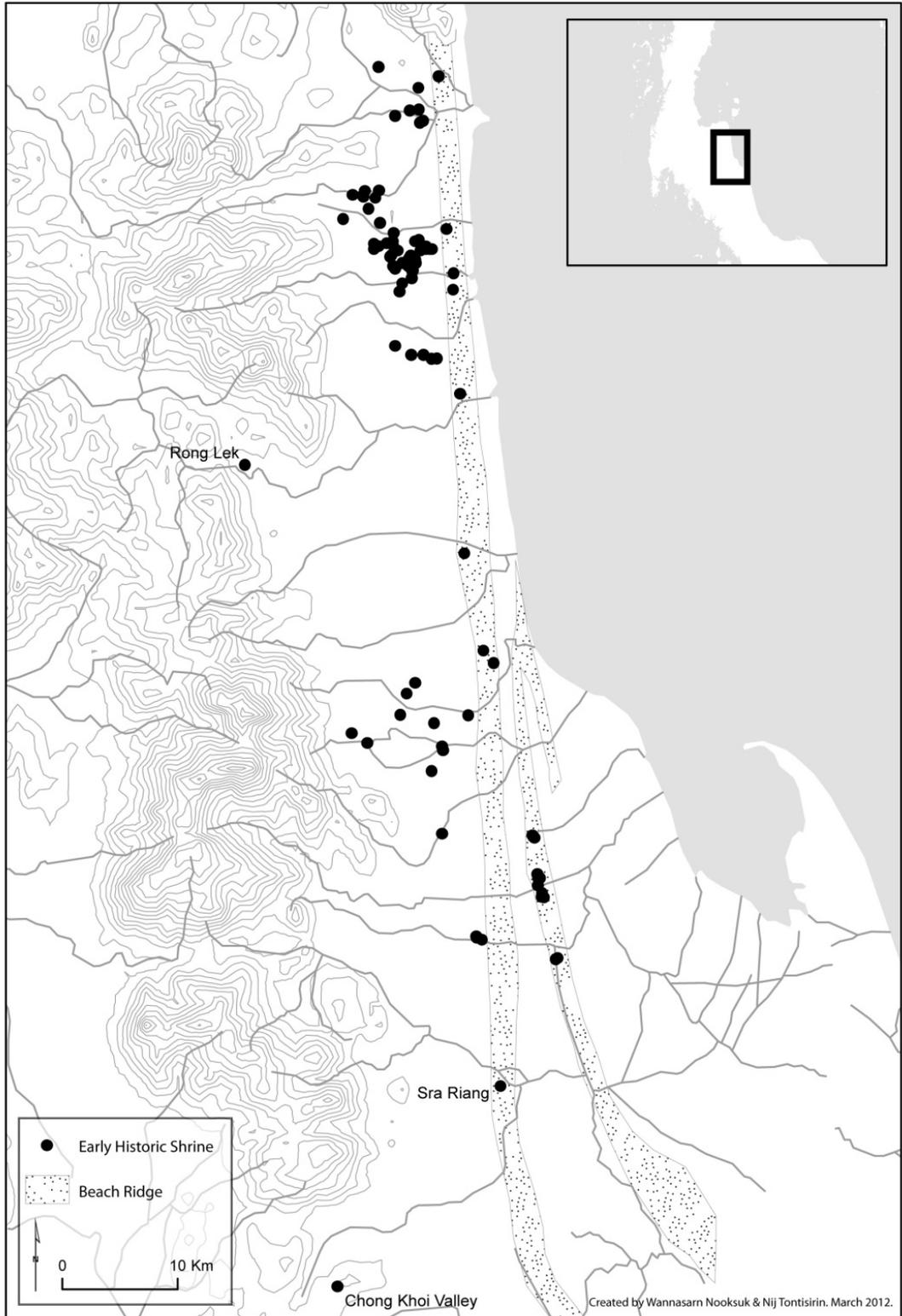
Methods

The number of the archaeological sites increased tremendously in the Early Tambralinga Period. Some sites in the Nakhon coastal lands were studied by archaeologists of the Fine Arts Department (FAD) and Silpakorn University. However, these sites were not well-known internationally until Dr. Stanley J. O'Connor published his article on Sichon in which he discussed the Sites of Wat Chom Thong, Na Khom, and Sra Si Mum Muang, and their artifacts³³. Inspired by O'Connor's work, Dr. Preecha Noonsuk (P. Noonsuk) dedicated his whole life to studying the ancient communities in this area and in Southern Thailand in general. He

³³ The article was first published in 1968 and reprinted in 1986. It is listed as 1986d in this work.

completed his Masters of Arts thesis entitled “Traces of Ancient Brahmana Communities in Nakhon Si Thammarat” in 1984 and his doctoral dissertation entitled “The History of Nakhon Si Thammarat: The Development of States on the Thai Peninsula from the Sixth to the Fourteenth Centuries AD” in 2001. P. Noonsuk truly started a new era in the archaeological study of Nakhon, and his MA thesis paved the way for the creation of the Committee for Monumental Development in Nakhon Si Thammarat (CMDNST) in the 1980’s with the Fine Arts Department to study these sites systematically with the intention of establishing historic parks in Nakhon. Although not successful in establishing any historic parks, CMDNST has raised awareness of the importance of this area and to the excavations and restorations of some important sites, such as Khao Ka and Mokkalan, by the Fine Arts Department.

The work of P. Noonsuk and the Fine Arts Department has enabled a general understanding of groups of sites; however, the precise locations of such sites are problematic in the old research due to the fact that modern Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment had not been developed at the time, and that the previous generation of researchers were not familiar with this modern equipment. The current author, therefore, has revisited the sites mentioned in P. Noonsuk’s books (2001b; 2004) to examine their present conditions, conduct excavations in some of them, and acquire their coordinates using a Garmin GPS unit (Map 3.1). Some of the coordinates, however, were kindly provided by Mr. Pongdhan Sampaongern, head of the archaeological unit of the 14th Regional Office of the Fine Arts Department centered at Nakhon, who also conducted a survey in Sichon District. There are 89 sites recorded in this research, which are divided into two groups of coordinates, one with the Indian-Thai Datum (zone 47) that was collected in 2004 and another with the WGS 84 Datum (zone 47), which was gathered in



Map 3.1 Distribution of Hindu shrines in the Early Tambralinga Period
(c. the 5th to 11th centuries)

2009 and 2011 (Tables 3.1 and 3.2). Both of them use the Universal Transverse Mercator/Universal Polar Stereographic (*UTM/UPS*) coordinate system. The current author presents both of them without converting one datum into another to avoid errors that might occur in the numbers of these coordinates. Actually, small errors cannot be avoided when coordinates of one datum are projected onto a base map that has different datum. In our case, the coordinates of the Indian-Thai Datum presented some locational errors when projected onto the base maps that have the WGS 84 Datum. However, these errors are quite small to be significant in the large-scale investigation of site distribution that we have been conducting.

Table 3.1 The Coordinates of the Indian-Thai Datum (Zone 47) of Early Tambralinga Sites

Site Name	Coordinate (E)	Coordinate (N)
Ban Khlong Kai Fak 1	596823	984095
Ban Phang Kam 3	594041	982397
Wat Sra Yai	594217	982200
Ban Thung Phan 1	597802	974450
Wat Ko Phra Narai	600218	957653
Wat Ta Nen	601836	949268
Mokhalan	602755	948248
Wat Sai Kham	596000	946496
Wat Nok Thung	595283	945562
Sra Hoi	594738	943743
Wat Sak Lek	600555	943708
Wat Inkhiri	597636	943057
Wat Hua Thung	590577	942128
Wat Khao Pun	591883	941311
Nong Kong	598300	941005
Wat Pa Yang Pradu Hom	598407	940701
Wat Yothatham	597428	938897
Ban Tha Tin	606095	933388
Ban Tha Wang	606169	933244
Wat Chantharam	606233	933189
Than Phra Syom	606533	930033

Site Name	Coordinate (E)	Coordinate (N)
Wat Phra Nakhon	606589	929705
Wat Phra Doem	606710	929698
Wat Suan Luang	606935	928414
Wat Phetcharik 1	606990	928116
Wat Phetcharik 2	606914	928065
Wat Phetcharik 3	607107	928039
Ban Ko Chan	608311	922829
Surao Ko Chan	608142	922734
Wat Sra Rieng	603411	911783
Hup Khao Chong Khoi	589425	894471

Table 3.2 The Coordinates of the WGS 84 Datum (Zone 47) of Early Tambralinga Sites

Site Name	Coordinate (E)	Coordinate (N)
Wat Sra Si Mum	592736.951528515	999699.657751459
Wat Don Sala	597911.462611910	998892.455586156
Wat Chom Thong	596163	997895
Thung Don Nam	596234	996050
Wat Khao Phanom Tai	595418	995924
Ban Na Khom	594185	995484
Wat Na Khom	596308	994896
Ban Don Nam	596560	995051
Ban Tha Khwai 1	591471.459286181	988495.012728455
Ban Tha Khwai 2	591453.087083744	988597.615774312
Ban Tha Khwai 3	591602.838542843	988982.548659240
Ban Tha Khwai Lang	592833.371815745	989019.811047670
Ban Tin	590552.140508025	988663.960413860
Ban Saisap	592530.835428284	988383.347660732
Ban Na Han	591940.109320307	987477.551391120
Ban Nai Don	589777.031081410	986601.245722599
Wat Boek	592907.890950580	986245.439114514
Ban Ton Rieng	598592.837422150	985734.553023124
Ban Hua Thon	594079.412189252	985372.428255473
Ban Thung Khrang	595943.133544981	984663.057283695
Ban Khlong Kai Fak 2	596259.167057555	984777.137699632
Wat Phra On	594013.230365804	984670.714408022
Ban Phang Lao 1	592777.831975873	984216.573688894
Ban Phang Lao 2	593474.128135568	984493.851911046

Site Name	Coordinate (E)	Coordinate (N)
Ban Suan Hua Wan 1	592391.741132789	983958.992028977
Ban Suan Hua Wan 2	592392.291154718	984443.283751750
Ban Sainun 2	596665.961281889	984021.621004875
Ban Sainun 3	596856.416016467	984006.171120009
Ban Sainun 4	596377.731828124	983849.738971520
Ban Thanon Nai 1	597385.737520790	983976.159957140
Ban Thanon Nai 2	597198.452149877	983972.763864882
Ban Phang Kam 1	593922.108183877	983498.104032654
Ban Phang Kam 2	593782.939472985	983370.444827718
Ban Phang Kam 4	594404.504465358	983872.021365154
Ban Phang Kam 5	593989.771860542	984354.064199949
Ban Sra Kut 1	594852	982827
Ban Sra Kut 2	595687	982893
Ban Sra Kut 3	595404	983210
Ban Sra Kut 4	595961	983042
Ban Sra Kut 5	595535	983452
Ban Sra Kut 6	595748	983121
Ban Sra Kut 7	596026	982806
Ban Sra Kut 8	595713	982180
Ban Sra Huan 1	595665.951917792	982128.522000856
Ban Sra Huan 2	595352.639118645	982565.642734842
Ban Khun Chan	599225.522921649	981937.077658005
Khao Kha	595630.577826034	981504.275209556
Ban Theppharat	594836.823106720	981032.688885641
Wat Theppharat	594607	980336
Ban Na Lae	599186.125846372	980501.042699112
Ban Sisa	594239	975661
Ban Nut	595593	974890
Ban Thung Phan 2	596657	974913
Ban Thung Phan 3	597350	974577
Ban Klai	599810	971550
Wat Rong Lek	581376	965409
Wat Phra Mongkut	598363	933652
Wat Thao Khot	606568	929216
Wat Phra Phreng	601791	924506
Wat Phrang 1	601326	924697
Wat Phrang 2	601314	924797

The Hindu Shrines

It is crucial to note that the sites presented in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 are all Hindu shrines and this research is using only their coordinates to discuss the site distribution in the Early Tambralinga Period. The reasons for this are as follows:

First, Hindu shrines are easier to identify than residential sites since they have bricks, stone architectural parts, and statues. The archaeological work that has been conducted so far in coastal Nakhon has almost completely failed to identify other kinds of sites besides the brick mounds and ponds associated with religious sites. Unlike brick mounds, other kinds of sites, such as residential and trading, areas are difficult to identify on the ground. The other kind of sites need excavation, but the Fine Arts Department had concentrated its efforts on restorations, so its excavations are usually related to brick architectures. This situation prevents us from having information about residential, trading, and production areas in the Early Tambralinga Period. Therefore, the author is planning to conduct fine-grained surveys in the future to gather more information about the late prehistoric sites and other kinds of sites besides the Hindu shrines in the area.

Second, Hindu shrines completely outnumber Buddhist temples. Although there are a number of Buddhist items in coastal Nakhon, there are only a couple of pure Buddhist sites, such as Wat Wayan in Muang District and Wat Maheyong in Tha Sala District where Buddha statues and Dhamma Chakra were found, that have no Hindu items where one can be certain that they were not Hindu shrines. Most of Buddhist items have been found in contexts associated with Hindu shrines because Buddhism seems to have been incorporated into Hindu ritual spaces in the Early Tambralinga Period. This hybridism of Hindu and Buddhist rituals was mentioned in Inscription No. 27, written in Sanskrit with Pallava scripts (c. the 7th century), found at Wat

Maheyong in Nakhon City. Therefore, Hinduism and Buddhism were not totally separate religions in daily life as they were rather alternative ritual systems that allowed people in Tambralinga to select the ritual that fitted their needs in a particular time (see Skilling 2007). Hindu rituals may have been more prominent in the official court ceremonies but Buddhist rituals were also practiced by elites and ordinary people in their everyday lives.

Hindu sites usually have brick architectures and associated man-made ponds, except for the Site of the Chong Khoi Valley Inscriptions, which apparently was a pilgrimage site where no brick architecture has been found. The sizes of these shrines vary from several meters to more than 20 meters wide. Some of them seem to be big enough for full-scale temples, where Brahmins were in residence to conduct the rituals daily, while some seem to be small and isolated and may have been shrines in the rice field or on transportation routes, where there was no Brahmin in residence. In some shrines, gold foil figures were found in the ritual deposit pit at the middle of the shrines by looters. However, no deposit box has been found in the heartland, so these figures may have been wrapped with precious cloths that deteriorated over time. Unfortunately, only a couple of these brick mounds have been excavated archaeologically and most of them have been almost completely destroyed by human activities (e.g. looting, land clearing, house building, sand mining); therefore, it is very difficult at this point to obtain the sizes of the mounds, ponds, and the boundaries of the shrines. However, it might be worth trying to map whatever we have left in all the sites in the future, depending on the availability of the man power and funding for such a long-term project.

These brick architectures do not seem to be constructed with brick alone. However, it is not easy to imagine the complete forms and plans of these shrines since they do not seem to be identical and what is left of them is only their fragmented foundations. Generally, these

structures look simple and primitive. They seem to fall into what B. Dagens calls the “minimum program of temple” (cited in Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002:137-139) in which a shrine architecture is just a minimum, elementary religious structure focusing on the presence of a *cella*, the usually small room, even in a large temple, where the representation of the god of the temple is installed and in front of where the rituals and worships are performed. From my observations, there may be three types of shrine structures based on materials used. The first type does not use stone architectural parts at all. They may have a low square or rectangular brick foundation with a *cella* enclosed by brick walls at the center and wooden thatch-roof structure supported by wooden pillars. A good example is the shrine at Wat Phrang as mentioned previously.

The second type uses carved stone slabs and blocks as doorframes, thresholds, lintels, pillar bases, and parts of foundation (Figure 3.1). They also seem to have a thatch roof supported by wooden pillars. This type is much more common. These stone architectural parts are usually made of limestone perhaps because it is softer and easy to find in the small hills in the coastal plain but some are made with sandstone and granite. Thresholds, lintels, and doorframes are usually made of limestone. Thresholds and lintels usually have two levels, the upper level with two bigger square or rectangular mortises and the lower one with two smaller circular mortises (Figure 3.2). The bigger mortises are for tenons of the stone doorframes and the smaller ones for tenons of wooden double door leaves that would fold and meet at the middle. It is almost impossible to distinguish between the thresholds and lintels since the lintels are also undecorated, unlike those in the Khmer architectures.

The granite doorframes and pillars are rare and very interesting (e.g. Figure 3.3). They are usually beautifully decorated with floral patterns and have been found only at five sites,



Figure 3.1 Various architectural parts from Ban Hua Thon



Figure 3.2 Threshold from Phang Kam 1



Figure 3.3 Fragment of doorframe from Wat Phra Mongkut

including, from north to south, Mokhalan (Figure 3.15), Wat Sak Lek, Wat Phra Mongkut (Figure 3.3), Wat Phra Doem, and Wat Phetcharik 1. This suggests a relationship between these sites in the southern half of the heartland. Three of them are on the ancient beach ridge, while Wat Sak Lek and Wat Phra Mongkut are a bit inland but on a river that connects the beach ridge with the mountain area. This pattern of distribution implies a pattern of interaction among Tambralingan communities which will be discussed later.

These simple, primitive-looking shrines seem to be the earliest type of brick architectures in Tambralinga and perhaps in maritime Southeast Asia (an example of a little later shrine, perhaps of the 7th to 8th centuries, could be seen at Khao Kha, Figure 3.4). Based on the Hindu sculptures found in association with these structures, it may be noted that the styles of construction and the stone elements described above are characteristic of Hindu shrines. Although different in details, these shrines demonstrate a great deal of uniformity in the types of stone architectural parts and the styles that also suggest wooden superstructures. The use of the stone elements does not seem to be transferred to the construction of Buddhist monuments in the contemporary period or in the later periods. These stone elements remain unique to the Hindu shrines.

These shrines appear to have been built in two halves: the foundation are made of bricks and stones while the superstructures are made of wood and leaves. Jacq-Hergoualc'h (2002:136) believes that this characteristic is linked to an architectural syncretism between the Indian and Malay traditions as it also appears in Kedah. However, the current author thinks that it is too soon to assign the ethnographic term "Malay" to this element since it is quite common throughout the isthmian tract where ethnographies are difficult to determine in the ancient past. Rather, this architectural syncretism is a good example of what Wolters calls "localization"



Figure 3.4 Monument No. 2 at Khao Kha

(1999:55-57), or the process of selective adoption of Indic elements. The Indian concepts of architectural construction were reimagined in the local culture to fit into the local landscapes where people built their houses on piles with thatch roof. This wooden superstructure is also cheaper and faster to build than the brick vault to cover the *cella* like those in India.

The precise dates of these shrines are unclear since little scientific dating are available for them as shown in Table 3.3. However, the sculptures associated with these shrines have been carefully studied by many art historians (e.g. Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002; P. Noonsuk 2004; O'Connor 1972, 1986d, 1986f; Wales 1976) who generally proposed the 6th to 11th century dates for them. These are presumably the dates of the shrines and their undecorated stone architectural parts.

In an attempt to acquire more accurate dates on these shrines, the current author sent eleven brick samples to the Thermoluminescence Dating Laboratory, Department of Earth Science, Kasetsart University in Bangkok to be dated. Among them, only five samples were suitable for dating. The dates are summarized in Table 3.3. Dr. Krit Won-in, the Director of the Lab also suggested that in order to simplify the results, we could use the dates before calculating the possible statistical error as seen in the last column in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: The Dates of Samples based on the Thermoluminescence Techniques

Samples	Provenance	Dates (B.P.)	Approximate Date Ranges (CE)	Dates suggested by the Lab (CE)
WP.09.3 bricks from the second floor from the bottom (1)	From excavation at Wat Phrang, Phra Phrom District, Nakhon Province	1298 \pm 141	565-843	702
WP.09.3 bricks from the second floor from the bottom (2)	From excavation at Wat Phrang, Phra Phrom District, Nakhon Province	1292 \pm 135	573-843	708
TK.09.1 Basket 12	From excavation at Wat Thao Khot in Nakhon City. It is a brick fragment of the lowest habitation layer at the site.	1200 \pm 90	710-890	800
Wat Khao Phanom Trai	From survey at Wat Khao Phanom Trai, Sichon District, Nakhon Province	840 \pm 70	1090-1230	1160
PT.09.3 Basket 6	From excavation at Wat Mahathat in Nakhon City. It is a brick	670 \pm 50	1280-1380	1330

Samples	Provenance	Dates (B.P.)	Approximate Date Ranges (CE)	Dates suggested by the Lab (CE)
	fragment of the lowest habitation layer at the site.			

Although not many, these dates suggest that these shrines were constructed during the 8th to 12th centuries (excluding the sample from Wat Mahathat [PT.09.3 Basket 6] which seems to be a site in the Late Tambralinga Period). This coincides with the dates of sculptures found in these sites in coastal Nakhon. It may be tentatively postulated that the Hindu shrines in question and their stone architectural parts were created during the Early Tambralinga Period (c. the 5th-11th century) until more scientific dates are acquired in the future.

An important assumption in this research is that the distribution of Hindu shrines reflects the distribution of human settlements and the movement of human communication (Map 3.1). A shrine cannot exist without human construction and support. Communities must have taken part in constructing and maintaining them as they are the sites of their faith. A shrine, therefore, must have been within reach of communities, so people could come to worship and maintain it.

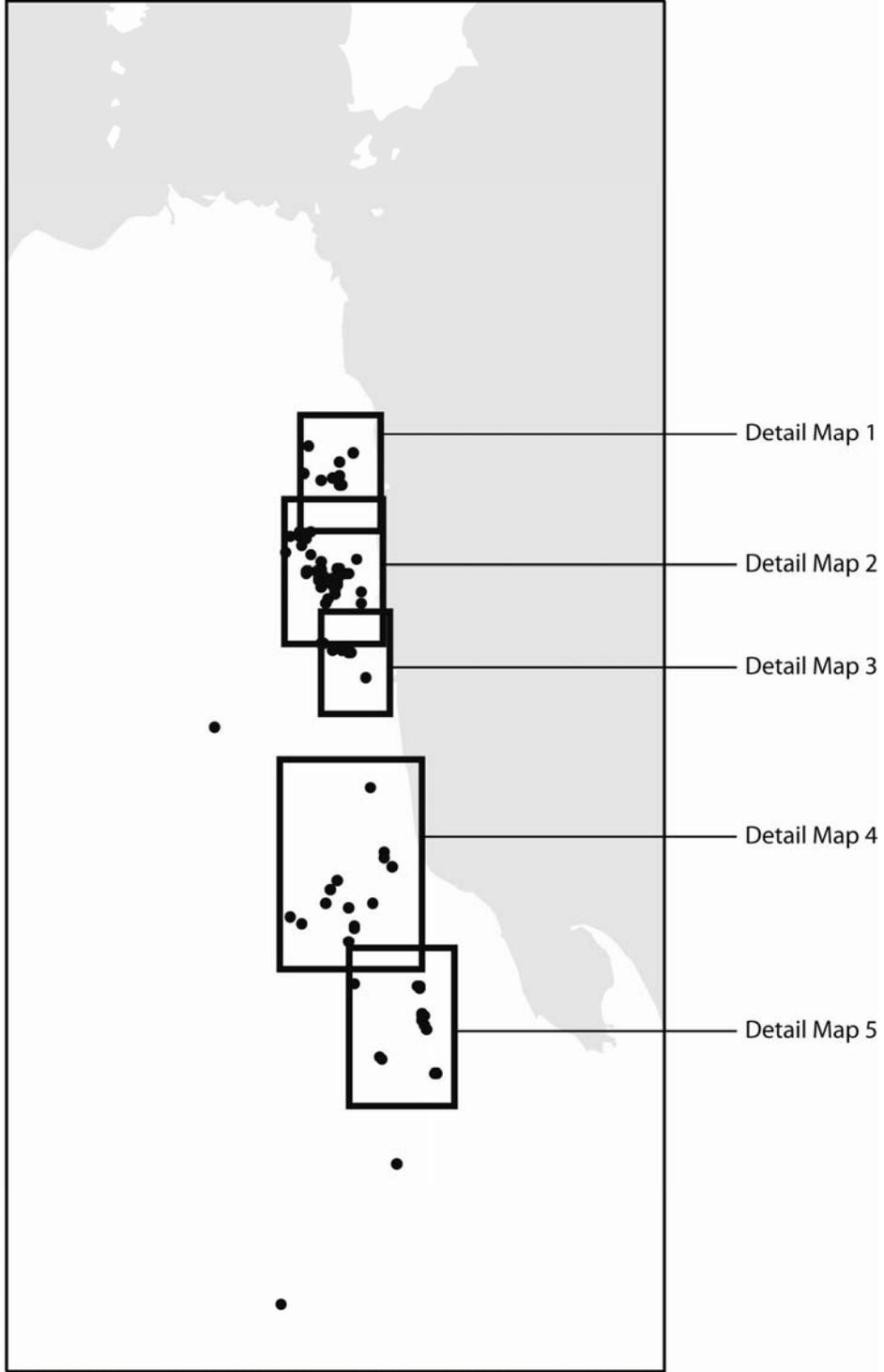
In terms of location, there were probably three kinds of shrines. The first are shrines that were located in the village where people could come to worship easily. Located at the center of the village life, these shrines would likely be larger and would have functioned as full-scale temples with Brahmins in residence. A village may have had several temples close to one another for they would have been built for different priests, by different families or kings, or to commemorate different occasions. This practice of multiple constructions is common in Southeast Asia and can be seen in several cities such as Pagan, Angkor, Ayutthaya, and even Nakhon City itself. The more one built, the more merit one acquired and the better for the community as a whole.

The second type is located outside the village but within reach of the people in the rice fields or on the routes to other villages or places. Archaeologists who work in Southeast Asia usually have a difficult time making sense of these kinds of shrines (e.g. Wales 1976:57) because they do not find pottery sherds signifying the presence of a human settlement near these shrines and do not know how such shrines existed. It is important to point out that human settlements are hard to identify in Southeast Asia, especially in the maritime world, because people lived in pile houses which left almost no features on the ground for archaeologists to identify, while brick temples and shrines were usually constructed on high grounds like islands in the rice fields, so that they would not have been flooded and consequently there are no habitation sites immediately next to them. Walled cities are also rare in this maritime region. People tended to spread out and a small community of few houses may have left only a small amount of pottery sherds. The communities may not be in the immediate areas of shrines but close enough for people to visit and maintain them.

The third type comprises the shrines that had no brick architecture and were situated far away from a village. They were pilgrimage sites for people to visit and fulfill their spiritual quest. These shrines can be found at sacred places, such as ancient trees, natural boulders, waterfall, and riverine intersections, and may have been marked by inscriptions and simple structures made of perishable materials, such as wood and bamboo. The Site of the Chong Koi Valley Inscriptions is a good example of this type.

The Clusters

In Map 3.1, which illustrates the distribution of Hindu shrines in coastal Nakhon, there appear to be at least five large-scale clusters based heavily on river systems (Map 3.2). Each



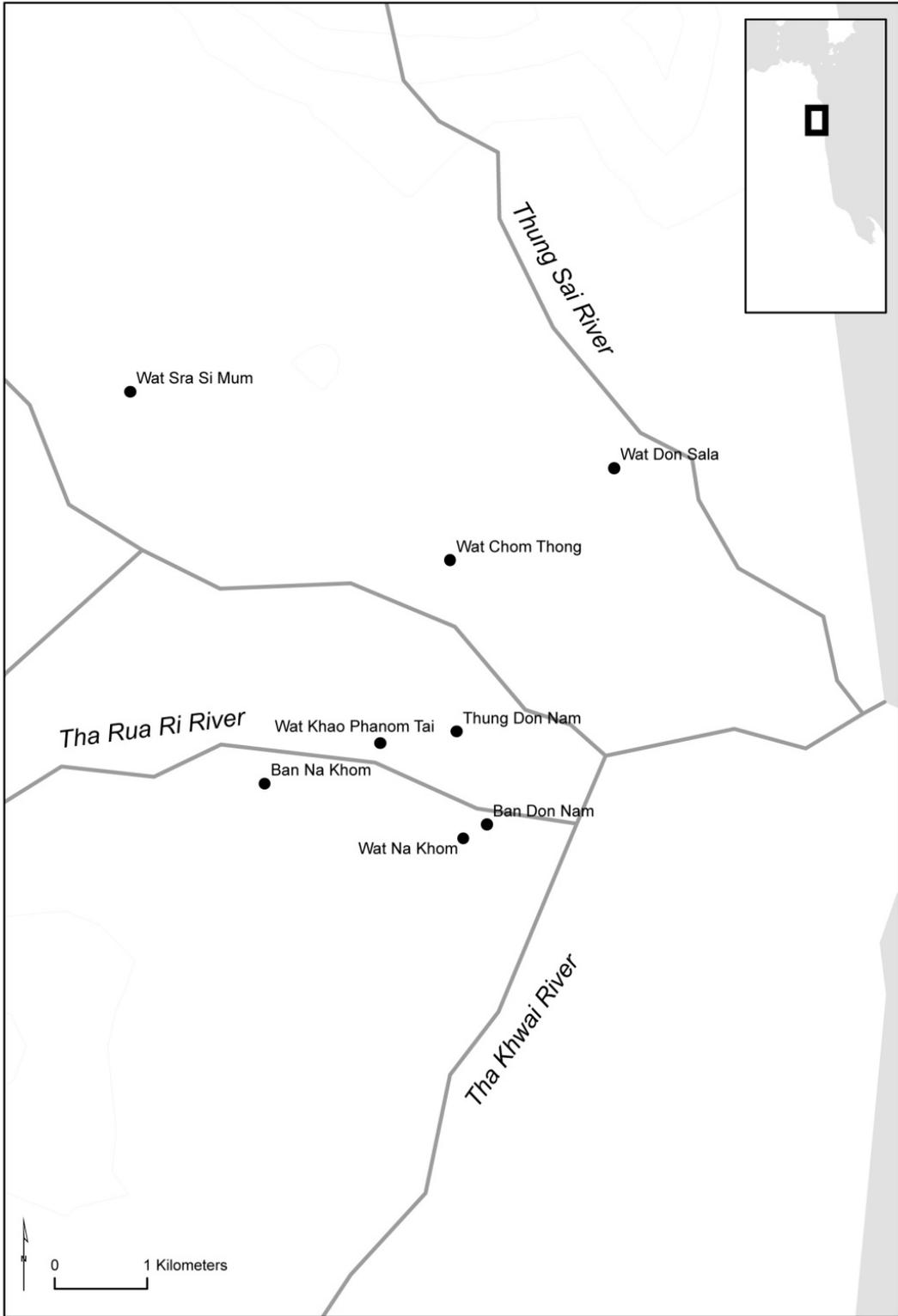
Map 3.2 Clusters of Sites in Coastal Nakhon

cluster is represented in the detailed maps (Map 3.3-3.7). These clusters represent only one of the ways the current author has attempted to understand the distribution of sites in a large-scale analysis. They may or may not represent the past reality. There must have been smaller groups of communities existing within these clusters that we are not able to detect at this time. It is never accurate to draw a simple boundary between sites and rivers that spread organically throughout the landscape. A site could have relationships in all directions. Our clusters and related detailed maps are, therefore, just tools to simplify the discussion and presentation in this research.

Some clusters are easy to identify, others are not. On the one hand, there are some areas like the plain between the Tha Chieo and Tha Thon Rivers (Map 3.4) where many sites are concentrated in a relatively small area. This area, no doubt, represents a cluster of sites, which may in turn suggest its socio-political dominance compared to other areas. On the other hand, there are some isolated sites like Sra Rieng and Wat Rong Lek that are quite far away from other sites. They do not seem to belong to any cluster and may suggest that more isolated communities supported them. It is important to note that the sites discussed in this work are only the ones for which we have exact locations. It can be expected that the number of the sites in the Early Tambralinga Period will increase in the light of future research. The details of each cluster, from north to south, are as follows:

The Cluster of the Tha Rua Ri River

This is the northernmost cluster in the heartland of Tambralinga (Map 3.3). There are eight sites scattered in the basin of the Tha Rue Ri River, which is joined by the Tha Khwai River in the south and the Thung Sai River in the north as it flows to the sea in the east.



Map 3.3 The Cluster of the Tha Rua Ri River

Immediately to the north of this cluster is the Phlai Dam Mountain, which marks the northern end of the heartland. In the northwest of this cluster, there is a large opening in the Nakhon Mountain Range, making the Bay of Bandon accessible to this cluster.

Descriptions of each site are summarized in Table 3.4. The most important sites in this cluster are perhaps Wat Nakhom and Wat Chom Thong. The Wat Nakhom Site has yielded five conventional lingas (P.Noonsuk 2004:84; O'Connor 1986d) and one yoni. It has several mounds and at least three man-made ponds, which have been almost completely destroyed by modern constructions. The Wat Chom Thong offers a Visnu image (58 cm. in height) dated to c. the second half of the 7th to the 8th centuries by O'Connor (1986d:128) and to c. the 7th century by Jacq-Hergoualc'h (2002:123, fig. 12). There are also one head and two bronze images of the Buddha found in this site. The head belongs to the earliest group of Buddha images in Southeast Asia and is dated to the 5th century (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002:fig. 34). As for the two bronze statues, the first is a standing Buddha (20.3 cm. in height) dated to the 7th century by Jacq-Hergoualc'h (2002:fig.37) while the second one (around 10 cm. in height) is a seated Buddha in meditation, discovered recently in 2011 and still unpublished. The current author could not take a photograph of it because the abbot of Wat Chom Thong was afraid of losing it if the public found out about it. Therefore, detailed study of the image could not be carried out. However, it seems to be of an early date since the *ushnisha* is still low. A number of stone architectural parts and remnants of brick foundations can still be seen in Wat Chom Thong.

Table 3.4 Sites in the Cluster of the Tha Rua Ri River

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	Other Images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
Wat Sra Si Mum	วัดสระสี่มุม	O'Connor 1986b	1 crystal linga (the Early Tambralinga period)						
Wat Don Sala	วัดดอนศาลา								Wat Don Sala Site was reported by Mr. Phongdhan Sampaongern.
Wat Chom Thong	วัดจอมทอง	P. Noonsuk 2004: 84-85; O'Connor 1986b; Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: fig.12 and 34			1 Vishnu image (c. 7 th cen.) and 1 Buddha image (c. 5 th cen.)	Yes			There are several mounds but they were much destroyed by the constructions of buildings of the present monastery. However, traces of brick architectures can still be seen on the ground. There are both Hindu and Buddhist images. Artifacts are still being discovered regularly in this area. A good number of stone architectural parts are found.
Thung Don Nam	ทุ่งดอนนาม								There was a brick mound at the middle of the rice field but now it is tilled to make an oil palm plantation.
Wat Khao Phanom Tai	วัดเขาพนมไต่ย					Yes			The ancient mound was probably covered by a new building of the Buddhist monastery.

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	Other Images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
Ban Na Khom	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านนาขอมตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายสมชาย ใจห้าว							1	Ban Na Khom was discovered by the current author in 2011. It was almost completely destroyed by the constructions of the road, house, and oil palm plantation. Brick fragments and a re-dug pond can still be seen.
Wat Na Khom	แหล่งโบราณคดีวัดนาขอมตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณอบต.สีชล .	P. Noonsuk 2004: 83; O'Connor 1986b	5 (c. 7 th -9 th cen.)	1 (c. 7 th -9 th cen.)				3	Wat Na Khom was a large site with several mounds but it was almost completely erased by the road construction camp in 1968. Six lingas were discovered. Now, it is located in the compound of the Sub-District Administrative Organization, in which they have built a new shrine on top of an ancient mound.
Ban Don Nam	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านดอนนามตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายนิวัฒน์ วิบูลย์ศิริปี	P. Noonsuk 2004: 83-84	1 (c. 7 th -9 th cen.)			Yes		1	Ban Don Nam Site was completely erased to make the front yard of a house. Now, there is a spirit house as the marker of the previous mound. There was a pond 30 meters away from the mound to the east but now it is also filled to make an oil palm plantation. The stone slabs were moved to the Office of the Sub-district Administrative Organization of Sichon.

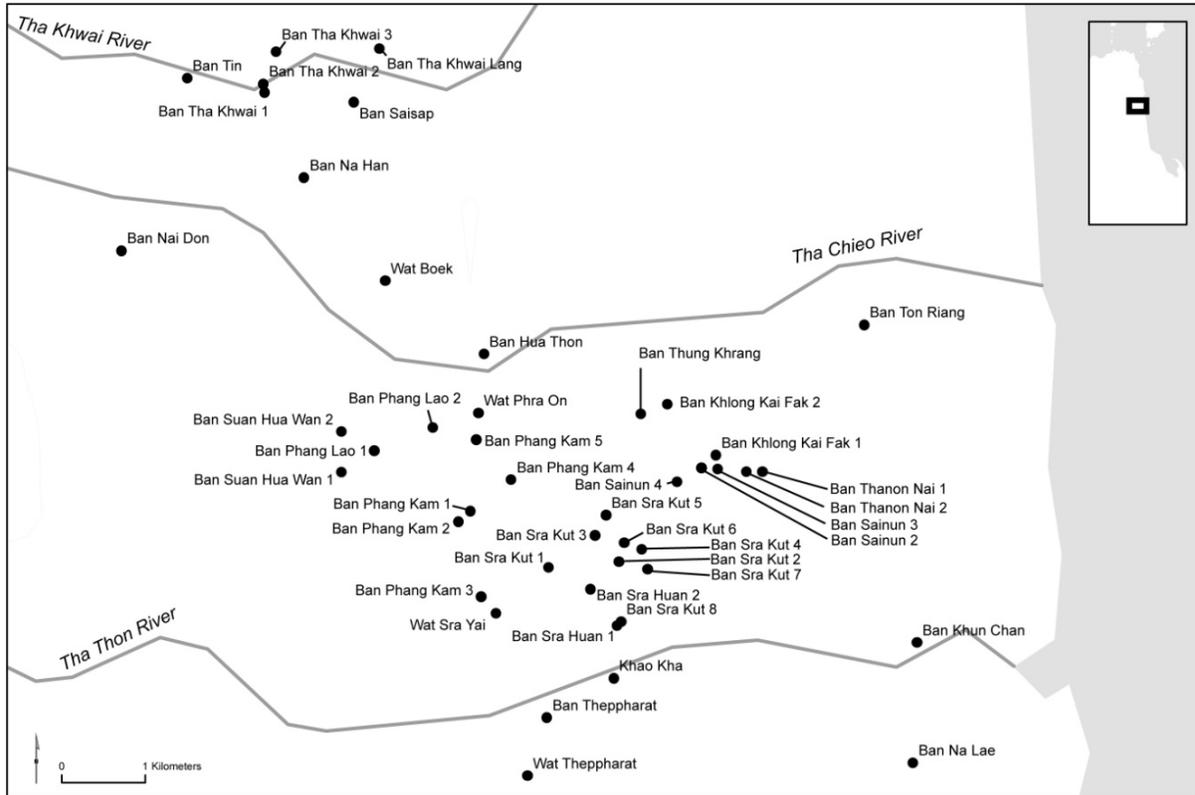
The Cluster of the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon Rivers

The highest number and density of sites are located at this cluster. There are 45 sites scattered between the Tha Khwai and Tha Thon Rivers with the Tha Chieo River in the middle. Most sites are on the flood plain while only three sites are on the beach ridge (Map 3.4). Among these sites, 29 of them are condensed in a small area of 12.5 km² at the middle of the cluster, suggesting that this area may be the most densely populated center in Early Tambralinga. In fact, this cluster is the most probable candidate for the capital of Early Tambralinga (c. the 5th-11th century) before it moved to the Crystal Sand Beach area in c. the 12th century.

The Tha Thon River also connects this cluster to the Iron Age site of Ban Yuan Thao, which has a Bronze Drum, and to the sources of tin and forest products of the Nakhon Mountain Range. All the sites seem to be tied together with the river systems, although some of the river courses are now defunct. The details of each site in this cluster are summarized in Table 3.4.

The most important site of this cluster is undoubtedly Khao Kha, an oval-shaped hill lying almost in the north-south direction with a series of shrines on the hilltops (Figure 3.5). It is around 850 m. long and 300 m. wide with the height of 72 m. from the sea level (Srichai 2001c:173). The Tha Thon River is only around 50 m. in the northwest of this hill. There was an old 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 activities and occupations in this area perhaps prior to the foundations of Hindu shrines here.

As identified by the Fine Arts Department, Khao Kha has two hilltop areas, the northern and southern ones. The northern hilltop area has at least two structures made exclusively of stone blocks (without bricks). The first one is in the northernmost part of the area, surrounded



Map 3.4 The Cluster of the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon Rivers



Figure 3.5 Aerial Photograph of Khao Kha (Srichai 2001c: 174)

by stone walls of an almost square plan with 34.50 m. on each side. Within the walls, there is a massive rock (over 3 m. high), the natural peak of the hill, situated on the raised platform (70 cm. in height) with stone retaining walls of 14.20x16 m. This massive rock was carved as an enormous Siva Linga (Fig. 3.6). It is certainly the largest early linga discovered in Southeast Asia so far. It is a good example of *svayambhu* in the Hindu tradition in which the self-manifestations of gods are present in sacred places where the gods choose to be. In our case, as Siva chooses to present himself as enormous linga of natural rock on Khao Kha's hilltop, one is reminded of the popular myth of *dyotirling*, in which the Siva linga of fire erupted from the earth and pierced through the sky without any help from humans (Eck 1998:182-183). It may have also served as the nail of the world or *axis mundi* for the kingdom (Miksic 2009a). The area around this linga had been excavated recently. Although the excavation report is still to be published, the excavation exposed a number of possible rooms or cells carved out of natural rock, perhaps for worship and offerings around the massive linga. It should also be noted that there is a channel for sacred water from the linga to flow to the northern edge of the hill and eventually to the Tha Thon River (Srichai 2001c:175). The fall of sacred water from the hill to the lowland would have been compared with the descent of Goddess Ganga to earth. The Tha Thon River System and the whole flood plain would be made fertile in the Hindu imagination.

Moreover, this *svayambhuva linga* is not alone. At the southern end of the northern hilltop area, there is another massive outcropping shaped in the form of linga of an equal size and prominence in its surroundings as the one mentioned above (Figure 3.7). This southern linga has not yet been excavated so that the retaining walls and offering rooms if there are any around it are not yet exposed. It should be noted that the duplication and repetition of sacred objects and places are common in the Hindu tradition (Eck 1998:165-166) as gods and their footsteps are

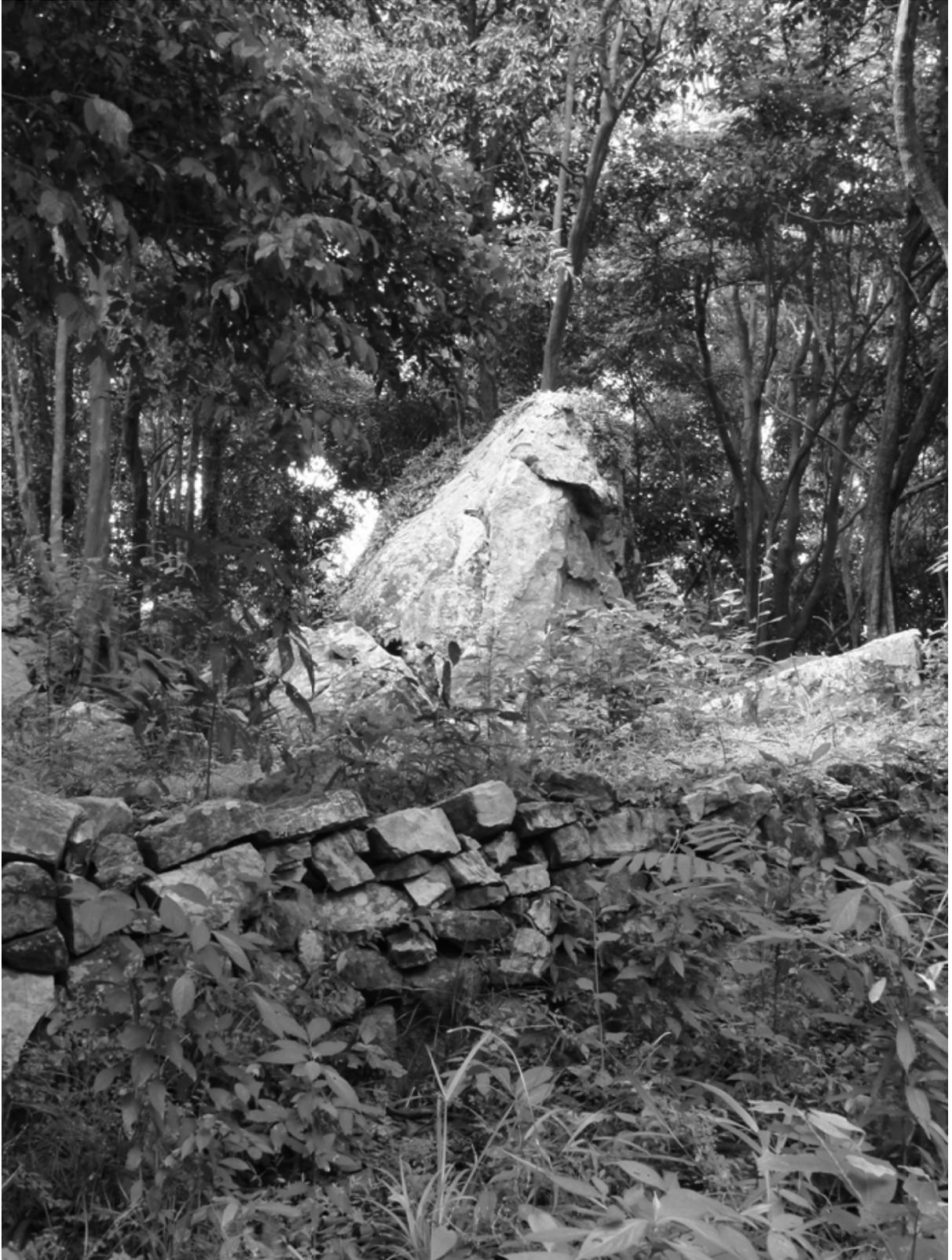


Figure 3.6 The Northern Svayambhuva-linga at Khao Kha



Figure 3.7 The Southern Svayambhuva-linga at Khao Kha

everywhere; therefore, to have two massive outcropping lingas mirroring each other on the same hilltop is not a redundancy, but rather a powerful echo of the the symbolic omnipresence of Siva.

In the southern hilltop area, there are 4 brick monuments situated on the ridge of the hill from north to south. The first (Monument 1) is immediately south of the walkway to the hilltop. It is a rectangular monument enclosed by brick walls (24x60 m.). The area inside the walls is paved with bricks. At the middle of this enclosed area, there is a brick foundation of 9x14 m and several stone architectural parts. This structure may have had a wooden superstructure and thatch roof.

Monument 2 is around 57 m. from Monument 1, and separated from it by a man-made pond. In this monument, a shrine (17x17 m.) is erected on top of a brick platform (26x36 m.) surrounded by brick walls at the highest point of the hill (Figure 3.4). It is believed to be the

main shrine of Khao Kha (Figure 3.4). The shrine now houses a yoni (c. the 7th century), which was situated near the structure before the restoration (Figure 3.8). This shrine has been compared with the Ladh Khan Temple at Aihole, India, which is dated to around the 7th to 8th centuries (Srichai 2001c:179-180). A gold foil figure of an elephant was found by a villager while looting the monument. Some gold foil figures were also found at the Ban Tha Khwai 2 Site, around 7 km. northwest of Khao Kha, but in the forms of flowers and a turtle (Figure 3.9). These gold foil figures may be part of a ritual deposit related to Hinduism, to the story of the churning of the sea to make the elixir of immortality, from which various auspicious objects and beings are sprung. These figures were probably wrapped with a valuable piece of cloth and placed at the heart of the temple underground below the position of the Siva Linga in the consecration ceremony of the temple.

Monument 3 is believed to be a small shrine or a paved brick walkway to Monument 2. A linga made of a block of low-quality limestone was found at the doorway of this monument. Monument 4 is the southernmost shrine (Figure 3.10) and, after the restoration conducted by the Fine Arts Department, now houses a limestone yoni, which is said to be the most naturalistic yoni in Peninsular Siam (Srichai 2001c:183). Its basin is round with a long channel for sacred water (Figure 3.11). This monument also yields a Visnu image (31 cm. in height) holding *bhumi* in his right hand and a club pointing down in his left hand (Srichai 2001c:184) (Figure 3.12). There is a narrow sash curving across the thighs. This statue is similar to the Visnu images at Wiang Sra District, Surat Thani Province, which can be dated to the first half of the 6th century (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002:fig.7-8). There are also three man-made ponds in the hilltop areas. Their sizes vary: No.1 is 12x24 m., No.2 is 8x13 m., and No.3 is 4x10 m. They are all in the



Figure 3.8 Yoni from Monument No. 2 at Khao Kha

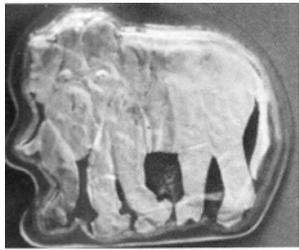


Figure 3.9 Gold foil figures from Ban Tha Khwai No. 2 (except the topmost one from Monument 2 at Khao Ka) (Srichai 2001c: 182)



Figure 3.10 Monument No. 4 at Khao Kha



Figure 3.11 Yoni at Monument 4 at Khao Kha



Figure 3.12 Visnu found at Monument 4 at Khao Kha

depressions between peaks of the hill, the geographic locations that naturally receive water. These natural depressions were enlarged to expand their capacity to contain water. Stone walls were built and the floors of the ponds were paved with stones to prevent water from getting out. The water kept in these ponds was important for rituals, but they may also have served the needs and ritual lives of Brahmins who lived on the hilltop. The whole hill of Khao Kha, therefore, was transformed into a large religious complex. Taking into account the massiveness of Khao Kha and its monuments, this site was certainly one of the most, if not the most, important religious centers of the Kingdom of Tambralinga. Descriptions of each site are summarized in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: The Sites in the Cluster of the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon Rivers

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	other images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
Ban Tha Khwai 1	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านท่าควาย 1 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายศิริ ณ นคร	CMDNST ³⁴ 1985: 41; P. Noonsuk 1984: 146; 2004: 78		1 (8 th -9 th cen.)		Yes			There was an ancient river running just 30 meters to the northeast of this site. The yoni found here is made from a limestone block. It is square, tall, and with decorated architectural elements. It is very unique and is indeed one of the only two found in Peninsular Siam along with the one found at Khao Kha.
Ban Tha Khwai 2	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านท่าควาย 2 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณสวนของนางละม่อม ณ นคร ขณะนี้ เป็นของนางบุหลิน ณ นคร	P. Noonsuk 2004: 79; Srichai 2001c: 182; Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: fig.31			gold foil figures of auspicious symbols (c. 7 th -8 th cen.) (Fig.)				The brick mounds along the Tha Khwai River are heavily damaged.
Ban Tha Khwai 3	แหล่ง	CMDNST 1985: 49;		1 (c. 6 th -8 th cen.)		Yes			The former course of the Tha Khwai River ran by this site in

³⁴ CMDNST stands for the Committee for Monumental Development in Nakhon Si Thammarat in this work.

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	other images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
	โบราณคดีบ้านท่าควาย 3 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณสวนของนายขันใจหัว	P. Noonsuk 1984: 148; 2004: 80							the northeast, 78 meters from the mound.
Ban Tha Khwai Lang	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านท่าควายล่าง ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านของนายสมหมายสุวรรณ	CMDNST 1985: 39; P. Noonsuk 1984: 150; 2004: 81				Yes			The former course of the Tha Khwai River ran by this site in the west but the present course is 50 meters from the mound to the north.
Ban Tin	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านดินตั้งอยู่ในสวนของนายวิชัยนางยุพาชูเข้ม	P. Noonsuk 1984: 146; 2004: 81		1 (c. 6 th -8 th cen.)		Yes			
Ban Saisap	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านไสสับตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านของนายเฉลิมนางประเคียง	CMDNST 1985: 43; P. Noonsuk 1984: 151; 2004: 81		1 (c. 6 th -8 th cen.)		Yes	1	3	The former course of the Tha Khwai River ran by this site in the north, just 10 meters away from the mound. This ancient course seems to flow to the Saisap River and then on to the bigger Tha Chieo River at the

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	other images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
	คงทิม								foothill of Khao Phrong in the south.
Ban Na Han	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านนาหันตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายหมวกคิ้วขี้ม	CMDNST 1985: 42; P. Noonsuk 2004: 81				Yes			There is a large mound with brick and stone fragments.
Ban Nai Don	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านในคอนตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายชานเพชรนุ้ย	W. Noonsuk 2005: 102				Yes		1	The 10x10 meter pond was 30 meters in the southwest of the brick mound.
Wat Boek	วัดเบิก	P. Noonsuk 1984: 154; 2004: 81		1 (c. 7 th -9 th cen.)		Yes		1	
Ban Ton Rieng	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านต้นเหรียญตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายวิรัตน์ไชยฤกษ์	CMDNST 1985: 32						1	This brick mound site was reported by CMDNST. It has a pond in the north, 4 meters from the mound. The former course of an ancient river was 25 meters from the mound to the north. This river seems to have run from the Kai Fag and Kut Rivers at the Thung Krang, Thanon Nai, and Kut areas.

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	other images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
									According to CMDNST, the aerial photographs suggest that this site was the end of this ancient river; therefore, this site may have been on the ancient sea shore where the river met the sea.
Ban Hua Thon	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านหัวทอนตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายพริ้ง อําเภอยะหาญ	CMDNST 1985: 33; P. Noonsuk 2004: 76	1 (c. late 5 th -7 th cen.)			Yes	1	3	There was a former course of the Tha Chieo River 7 meters to the northeast from the mound. In this ancient river course, a pond was also situated, suggesting then when the river changed its course, the pond was probably dug to keep water for the shrine. There was also a 15 m. long pathway paved by limestone slabs between the mound and the circular well but now it is completely destroyed. The architectural parts from this site can be seen in Figure 3.1.
Ban Thung Khrang	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านทุ่งครั่งตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายสว่าง คตฉิม	CMDNST 1985: 25						1	This brick mound site was reported by CMDNST. There was one mound and one pond. An ancient river, now broken into sections, called "the Kai Fag River" was 200 meters to the east from the mound.
Ban	แหล่ง	CMDNST						2	The pond on the west of the

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	other images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
Khlong Kai Fak 1	โบราณคดีบ้านคลองไถ่ฟัก 1 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณสวนนายสมนึก จงหมาย	1985: 22; P. Noonsuk 2004: 77							mound was in the former course of the Kai Fak River that ran by several sites in this area.
Ban Khlong Kai Fak 2	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านคลองไถ่ฟัก 2 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านของนายเข็มเหนือกระจ่าง	CMDNST 1985: 26; P. Noonsuk 2004: 77						1	There was the Kai Fag River, an ancient river that linked the Tha Chieo and Tha Thon Rivers, 100 meters from the mound to the east.
Wat Phra On	วัดพระโอรน (ร้าง)	CMDNST 1985: 38; P. Noonsuk 2004: 82					1	1	The well was square and constructed with bricks.
Ban Phang Lao 1	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านพังเลา 1 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณนาของนายเนื่อง จิตเขม้น	CMDNST 1985: 36; P. Noonsuk 2004: 81					1	3	
Ban Phang Lao	แหล่ง	CMDNST 1985: 40;					1	1	The well was originally square but is now destroyed. There was

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	other images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
2	โบราณคดีบ้าน พังเตา 2 ตั้งอยู่ใน บริเวณบ้าน นายพยอม ใจ ห้าว	P. Noonsuk 2004: 81							an ancient river, 60 meters to the southeast of the mound.
Ban Suan Hua Wan 1	แหล่ง โบราณคดีบ้าน สวนหัวแหวน 1 ตั้งอยู่ใน บริเวณบ้าน นายส่อง ใจ ห้าว	CMDNST 1985: 10; P. Noonsuk 1984: 155; 2004: 76		1 (c. 7 th - 9 th cen.)		Yes	1	2	A former course of the Tha Thon River System flowed from the northeast. The mound and one of its ponds were surrounded by the ancient river, except at its southwest corner. It seems that the mound was basically on an island in the river. Another pond was dug right in the course of the ancient river in the east where it bended. This suggests that the shrine was probably used for a long period of time, from the time when the river still flowed to the time when it changed its course. The well was 3 meters to the south of the mound. It was 1x1 m. square and constructed with bricks.
Ban Suan Hua Wan 2	แหล่ง โบราณคดีบ้าน สวนหัวแหวน	CMDNST 1985: 9; P.					1	3	The well was circular, with 1 m. diameter.

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	other images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
	2 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายบุตรวิบูลย์ศิลป์	Noonsuk 2004: 76							
Ban Sainun 2	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านไสนุ่น 2 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายทวยเพ็ญรัตน์	CMDNST 1985: 24; P. Noonsuk 2004: 77						2	There are three brick mounds in this area. The Site Ban Sainun 1 was just around 10 meters away to the east.
Ban Sainun 3	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านไสนุ่น 3 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณสวนนายคล้ายสนิมกาญจน์	CMDNST 1985: 19					1	1	This brick mound site was reported by CMDNST. The well was square and constructed with bricks.
Ban Sainun 4	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านไสนุ่น 4 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนางหนูกลีบ								This site was discovered by Mr. Phongdhan Sampaongern.
Ban Thanon	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้าน	CMDNST 1985: 27;						2	There was a former course of the Tha Thon River System

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	other images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
Nai 1	ถนนใน 1 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายเนิม สดุกข์	P. Noonsuk 1984: 161; 2004: 73							around 300 meters to the south of the mound.
Ban Thanon Nai 2	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านถนนใน 2 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณสวนนายลิขิต เห็นจริง	CMDNST 1985: 28; P. Noonsuk 2004: 73	1 (c. 7 th -8 th cen.)					3	There were three mounds and just north of them was a former course of the Kai Fag River.
Ban Phang Kam 1	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านพังท่า 1 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายมาตร หงส์ชู	CMDNST 1985: 46; P. Noonsuk 1984: 157; 2004: 74; Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: fig. 4		several fragments of Yoni(s) (c. 6 th -8 th cen.)	1 Visnu (c. late 5 th cen.)	Yes		3	There was a former course (30 m. wide) of an ancient river to the northeast of the shrine complex. There are architectural parts in this site, such as thresholds (Figure 3.2).
Ban Phang Kam 2	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านพังท่า 2 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายสมจิตร	CMDNST 1985: 37; P. Noonsuk 2004: 75						2	There was a former course of an ancient river to the southeast of the shrine complex, which is now a rice field.

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	other images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
	อินทราช								
Ban Phang Kam 3	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านพังงำ 3 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายนวน สดุกข์	P. Noonsuk 2004: 75				Yes		3	
Ban Phang Kam 4	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านพังงำ 4 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายแก้ม ควรรื่อง ขณะนี้) เป็นของนายวิทยาซึ่งเป็น (ลูกชาย	CMDNST 1985: 45; P. Noonsuk 2004: 75				Yes	1	1	This site may have been on an island in an ancient river.
Ban Phang Kam 5	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านพังงำ 5 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายบพิตร คำเพ็ง	CMDNST 1985: 48				Yes		3	This brick mound site was reported by CMDNST. There were two mounds and three ponds.
Wat Sra Yai	วัดสระใหญ่	P. Noonsuk 2004: 75				Yes			The mound was unidentified but some stone achitectural parts were found, although some of them were from Ban Phang

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	other images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
									Kam 3. The most important feature in this site was the large pond comparable to Sra Kut and Sra Di. It must have been used by several communities around it.
Ban Sra Kut 1	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านสระภูค 1 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณสวนนายปลอดมันคง	CMDNST 1985: 35; P. Noonsuk 1984: 162; 2004: 73	1 linga with yoni in one stone piece (c. 6th-7th cen.)			Yes			This rectangular mound and pond were surrounded by two rows of moats. The Tha Thon River was 1500 meters south of the mound. It flows to Khao Kha in the southeast.
Ban Sra Kut 2	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านสระภูค 2 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณสวนนายอำนาจควรเรือง	CMDNST 1985: 21P. Noonsuk 1984: 163; 2004: 73				Yes			There are several mounds surrounded by two sets of moats and bunds.
Ban Sra Kut 3	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านสระภูค 3 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายอภิศักดิ์ใจ	CMDNST 1985: 52; P. Noonsuk 1984: 164; 2004: 73				Yes		2	

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	other images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
	ห้าว								
Ban Sra Kut 4	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านสระภูค 4 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายจรัส พัฒนฉิม	CMDNST 1985: 23; P. Noonsuk 2004: 73						1	There were two large ponds, Sra Kut and Sra Di, 145 meters from the mound. These ponds were probably shared by several shrines and communities.
Ban Sra Kut 5	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านสระภูค 5 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณที่ดินของนายเนือบ เมืองด้วง	CMDNST 1985: 30; P. Noonsuk 1984: 164; 2004: 73				Yes	1	1	The Kai Fag River connects this site to the Kut, Tha Thon, and Tha Chieo Rivers. It is the same ancient river that passed by the sites of Ban Thanon Nai 2 and Ban Khlong Kai Fag 1. This site has been looted and some pottery sherds are found.
Ban Sra Kut 6	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านสระภูค 6 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายวิเชียร ใจห้าว							1	This site was discovered by the current author in summer 2011. It was just south Sra Di, a large pond. There was also a small pond to the east of the mound. The mound was badly damaged. There were many trees on the mound and rice fields around it. Bricks were still seen on the ground.
Ban Sra Kut 7	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้าน					Yes			This site was discovered by the current author in summer 2011. The mound was completely

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	other images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
	สระฤๅษ 7 ตั้งอยู่ใน บริเวณสวน ป่าลุ่มของ จำป๋ก								destroyed to make an oil palm plantation. Brick fragments were scattered around the area. One large limestone slab (212x93 m.) was found here.
Ban Sra Kut 8	แหล่ง โบราณคดีบ้าน สระฤๅษ 8 ตั้งอยู่ใน บริเวณบ้าน นายเทียบ ค้าง ทอง							1	This site was discovered by the current author in summer 2011. Around 30 meters to the south, there was the site of Ban Sra Huan 1. A small pond was situated 20 meters to the south of the mound. This site was just opposite to Khao Kha across the Tha Thon River.
Ban Sra Huan 1	แหล่ง โบราณคดีบ้าน สระหวน 1 ตั้งอยู่ใน บริเวณบ้าน นายเจริญ เพชรยก	CMDNST 1985: 51; P. Noonsuk 2004: 77						1	This site was not disturbed.
Ban Sra Huan 2	แหล่ง โบราณคดีบ้าน สระหวน 2 ตั้งอยู่ใน บริเวณบ้าน นายนายนี้ม	CMDNST 1985: 20; P. Noonsuk 2004: 77				Yes		1	The Tha Thon River was 200 meters south of the mound.

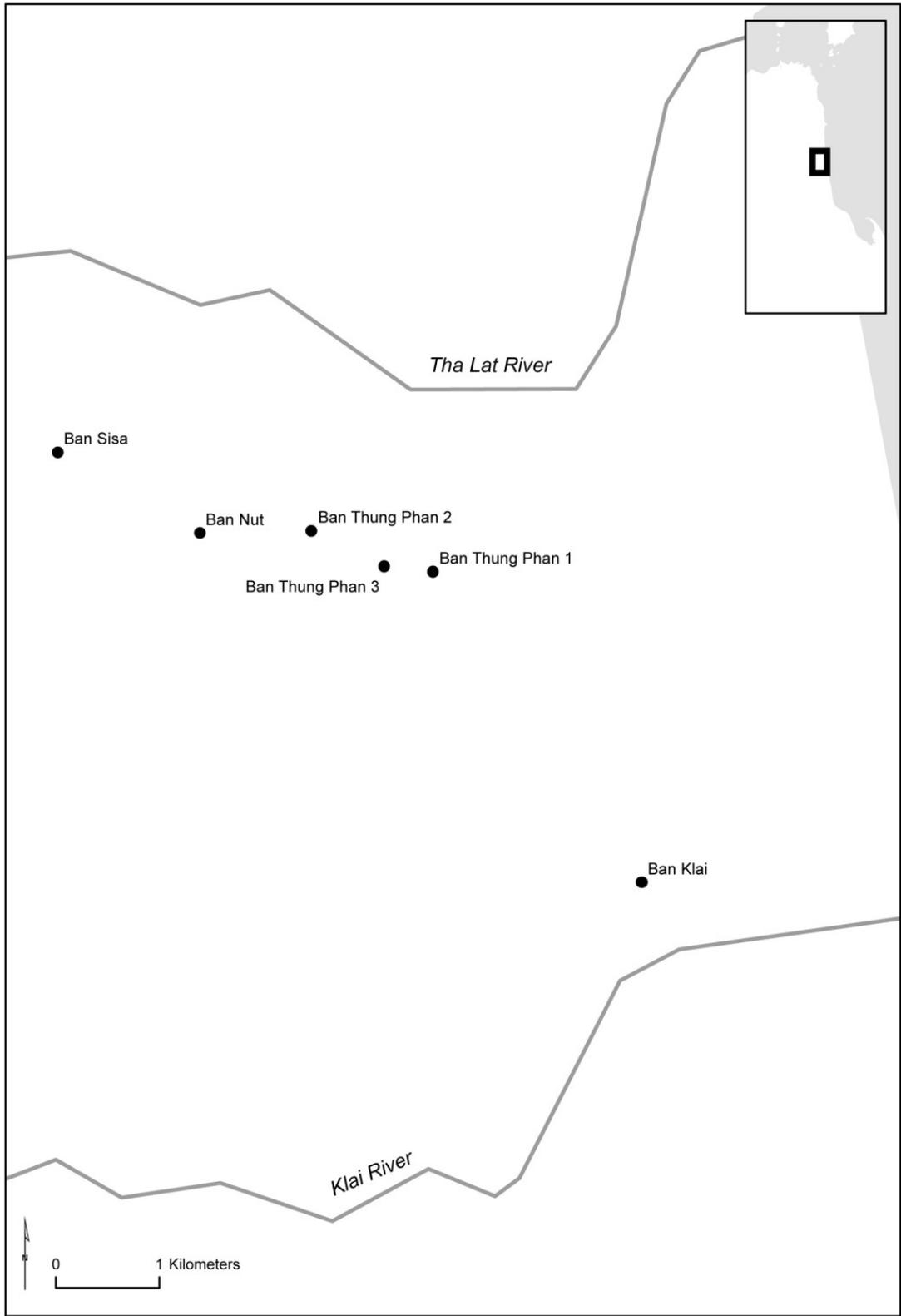
Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	other images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
	แถมแก้ว								
Ban Khun Chan	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านขุนจันทร์ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายจุก รักษาพล								This brick mound site was discovered by Mr. Phongdhan Sampaongern.
Khao Kha	เขาคา	CMDNST 1985: 12; Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 135-136; P. Noonsuk 2004: 67; Srichai 2001c: 171	2 svayambhuvalingas (c. 6 th cen.) 1 (c. 6 th -10 th cen.)	1 (c. late 5 th -6 th cen.) 1 (c. 7 th cen.)	1 Visnu (c. early 6th cen.) 1 Visnu (c. 6 th cen.) 1 Visnu (c. 7th cen.) Gold foil figures of auspicious symbols (c. 7 th -8 th cen.)	Yes			Khao Kha is a small almond-shaped hill extensively modified to be a temple complex with many constructions. The Tha Thon River runs by this site in the Northwest. Main brick mounds on Khao Kha were excavated by FAD during 1987-1993. It was the biggest Hindu temple complex in Tambralinga. The complex is around 24 hectares.
Ban Theppharat	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านเทพราชตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณไร่นางคอง จังหวัดแก้ว	CMDNST 1985: 8; P. Noonsuk 2004: 77						3	An ancient river was 4 meters to the south of the mound. This river linked the site to Wat Thepparat Site.
Wat Theppharat	วัดเทพราชร้างหรือ	CMDNST 1985: 7; P.	1 (c. 7 th cen.)		1 Visnu Madhyama Yogasthanaka			1	There was a former course of an ancient river around 26 meters to the northeast of the mound.

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	other images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
	โบราณสถาน บ้านต่อเรือ ตั้งอยู่ใน บริเวณบ้าน นาหนอง คง อินทร์	Noonsuk 1984: 167; 2004: 76			murti (c. 6 th - 7 th cen.)				This river course also flowed to Ban Theppharat Site in the north. The linga was the biggest and tallest one in Peninsular Siam (147 cm. tall). It is kept at Wat Nantaram, Pak Phanang District.
Ban Na Lae	บ้านนาแล								This brick mound site was discovered by Mr. Phongdhan Sampaongern.

The Cluster of the Tha Lat and Klai Rivers

There are 6 sites in this cluster situated in the coastal land between the Tha Lat and Klai Rivers (Map 3.5). Of them, only the site of Ban Klai is located on the beach ridge. There is also another site, the Rong Lek Site, at the headwater of the Klai River in the foothill area, which in the past probably connected to this cluster through this river.

The Klai River is a large river that usually floods the nearby areas every year. Its estuary was the location of at least four important prehistoric sites as mentioned previously, two of them have Bronze Drums. However, in the Early Tambralinga Period, there was only one site, Ban Klai, which yielded one realistic linga dated to c. late 5th to 6th centuries. The reason why the number of the Early Tambralinga sites is so small in this area possibly because the Klai River has been constantly changing its courses, especially at its mouth, so that it has destroyed these sites, or another possibility is that field research in this area has not been sufficiently carried out. More fine-grained research in this area will probably shed some light on this issue in the future. The details of each site in this cluster are summarized in Table 3.6.



Map 3.5 The Cluster of the Tha Lat and Klai Rivers

Table 3.6 The Sites in the Cluster of the Tha Lat and Klai Rivers

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	Other Images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
Ban Sisa	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านสีสาหรือโลกอิฐตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณสวนนางนุ่น ฐู่จำ	CMDNST 1985: 6; P. Noonsuk 2004: 77				Yes		1	A former course of the Tha Lat River System, called the Thung Lang River, was situated 92 meters to the north of the mound. The stone architectural parts from this site was moved to Wat Plian.
Ban Nut	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านนุดตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนายจันงค์ ศรีวิมาศ	P. Noonsuk 2004: 65						1	
Ban Thung Phan 1	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านทุ่งพัน 1 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณบ้านนางน้ำ สังก์ทอง	P. Noonsuk 1984: 168; 2004: 63	1 (c. 6 th -7 th cen.)	1 (c. 6 th -7 th cen.)	1 Ganesa image (c. early 6 th cen.)			2	The ponds were found 100 meters from the large mound in the south and west.
Ban Thung Phan 2	แหล่งโบราณคดีบ้านทุ่งพัน 2 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณสวน	P. Noonsuk 1984: 169; 2004: 64	1 (c. 7 th -8 th cen.)			Yes		1	The pond was 20 meters to the east of the mound.

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	Other Images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
	นายสว่าง พรหมสุวรรณ								
Ban Thung Phan 3	แหล่ง โบราณคดีบ้าน ทุ่งพัน 3 ตั้งอยู่ใน บริเวณสวน นายสำรุธ รัญจรัญ	P. Noonsuk 2004: 65							
Ban Klai	แหล่ง โบราณคดีบ้าน กลายตั้งอยู่ใน บริเวณบ้าน นายพั้ว กาญ จนธานี	P. Noonsuk 2004: 65	1 (late 5 th -6 th cen.)			Yes			A Buddha image, probably of the Ayuddhaya Period, was found at the site. The linga had been kept at the wooden shrine in front of the land owner's house but was stolen. The linga was categorized in the realistic style and similar to those found at Wat Mokhalan, Khao Kha, and Nong Kong.
Wat Rong Lek						Yes			This site was discovered by the current author. It was virtually in the mountain area, near the headwaters of the Klai River. The mound was probably covered by the fill to build a new monastery. A stone architectural part (sand stone slab) was found.

The Cluster of the Maying River

This is the largest cluster in the heartland in terms of space, expanding from the coast to the foothill areas (Map 3.6). There are 12 sites distributed along the Maying River and its tributaries, including mainly the Ai Khieo and Nok Tha Rivers. There is also the site of Wat Ko Phra Narai in the north on the Tha Phut River. Although this latter site seems to be isolated, it is closest, in terms of both physical distance and cultural affiliation, to Wat Ta Nen in this cluster. Together, they formed an important area where the Vaisnavite tradition was continued for centuries and from which it may have spread to other places. While most of the sites are on the flood plain, there are three sites on the western beach ridge, including, from north to south, Wat Ko Phra Narai, Wat Ta Nen, and Mokhalan, which is also the biggest site in this cluster. The details of each site in this cluster are summarized in Table 3.7.

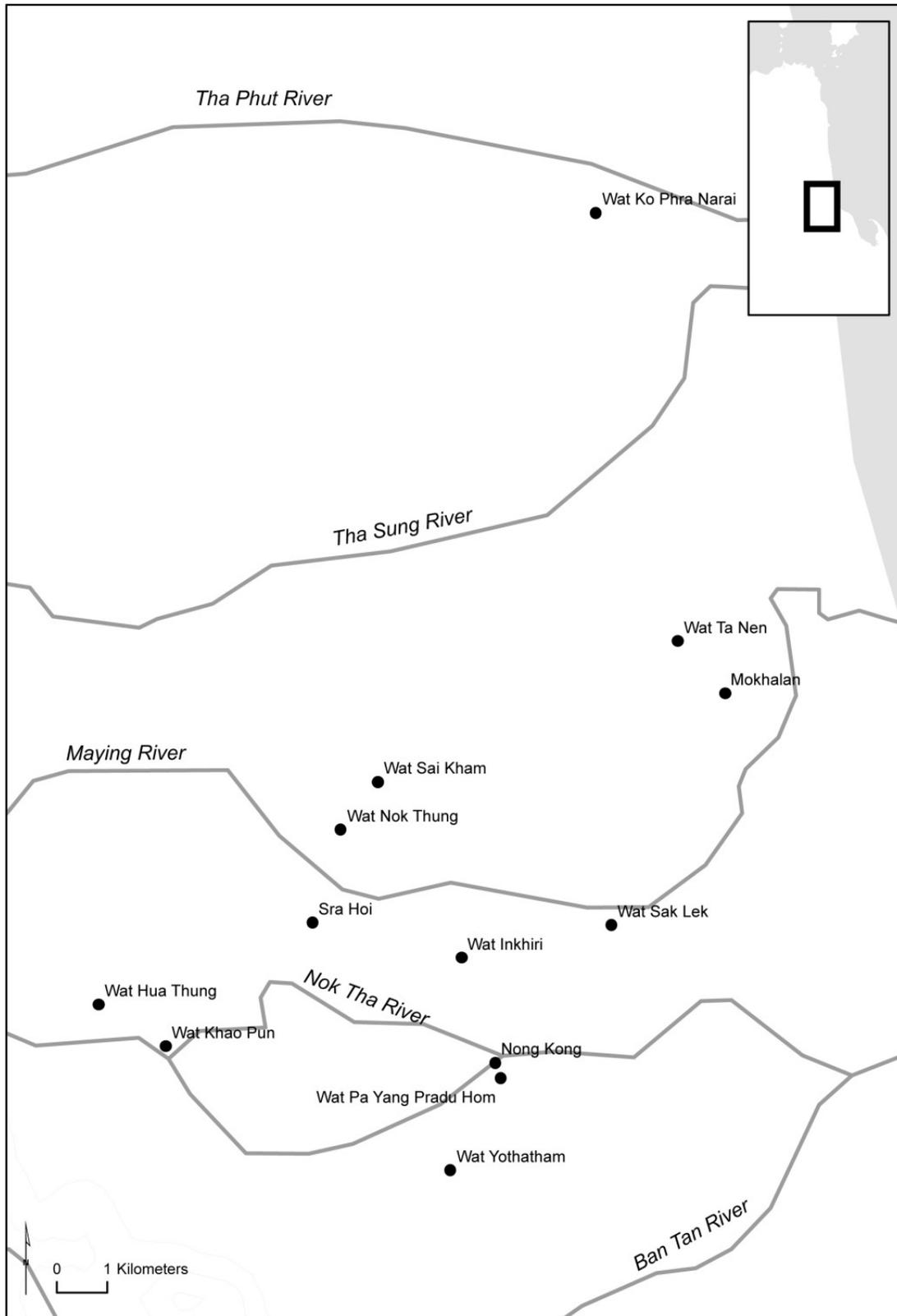
The area on the beach ridge near Wat Ta Nen and Mokhalan appears to be more ancient than the rest of the cluster. There is a 5th century Visnu image found at Wat Ta Nen as aforementioned and also a large group of so-called the “Funan Coins” or the “Pyu Coins” was found at Thung Nam Khem. Situated around 1 km. northeast of the site of Mokhalan, the Thung Nam Kem Site yielded several hundred full-unit silver Rising Sun coins and a large number of segments (consistently ½- or ¼-unit) cut from the bigger coins (Figure 3.13) (Wicks 1992: 221). They were found in a small pot by a villager while digging for 1.5 m. into the ground in his field in around 1967. Soon after, a boy also found another coin in that area (P. Noonsuk 1997:33). The Thung Nam Khem hoard is the largest recorded discovery of Rising Sun coins in Southeast Asia. Robert Wicks (1992: 221) calls them Class A. Coins of this type are distributed over a vast area of Southeast Asia, comprising of upper Burma (Miangmaw, Beikthano, Halin, Shwenyaungbu, and Sriksetra), peninsular Burma (Tavoy, Mergui, and Tenasserim), central

Thailand (U-Thong), Cambodia, and Vietnam (Oc-Eo) (Hudson 2004: 124; Wicks 1992: 116). Despite its wide spread distribution throughout Southeast Asia, this coin type is believed to have originated in upper Burma. That is why they are also called the “Pyu Coins” (Wicks 1992: 118). The precise date of the coins has not been established, but they were probably used in the first millennium CE, perhaps prior to at least the sixth century (Hudson 2004: 124). The discovery of the Rising Sun coins suggests that the area of Thung Nam Khem, Ta Nen, and Mokhalan was an important hub of the socio-economic network across Southeast Asia. Future excavations at Thung Nam Khem would certainly be useful.

Mokhalan is the biggest site in this cluster. A massive number of stone architectural parts of the Early Tambralinga Period were found at the site, including, both complete and incomplete, 20 pieces of thresholds (or lintels), 9 pieces of doorframes, 7 pieces of pillar bases, and 139 pieces of pillars (4 of them have decorations) (Srichai 2001b:152) (Figure 3.14). This site has the most granite doorframes and pillars with floral decorations that are unique to only the Maying and Crytal Sand Beach Clusters (Figure 3.15). Their basic patterns are difficult to date. A group of scholars in the Thai-British Expedition of 1958 studied this site and its stones in which H. H. F. Loofs, a scholar of the group, noticed that alignments of stones at the site resembled the megalithic cultures in Malaysia in the Metal Age, but he noted that the design on some of the stone pillars also resembled that of Khmer art of the 11th to 12th centuries CE. He concluded that these stone alignments were erected no earlier than the 13th century as part of what he thought was the resurrection of the Megalith Cult (cited in P. Noonsuk 2000: 28 and Srichai 2001b: 146). However, the date he gives to the decorated pillars appears to be too late and a cult of megaliths has not been established. P. Noonsuk (2000:31) instead dates them to the 7th to 8th centuries by comparing them to the floral patterns found in the Indian Pallava and the

Khmer Banteay Srei Styles. The current author would like to concur with P. Noonsuk's dating based also on other artifacts found at the site, such as the conventional linga and flat yoni, the type that Jacq-Hergoualc'h dates to the 7th century (2002:fig.26).

The Mokhalan Site was excavated by the Fine Arts Department during 1990-1993. Four brick monuments were unearthed (Figure 3.16). Three of them are aligned in an east-west direction while the fourth is immediately north of Monument No.3. Monuments Nos. 1, 2, and 3 are believed to be later Buddhist architectures, built in part with reused bricks and stone parts from earlier Hindu structures. Monument No. 3 is in a very fragmentary state and believed to be the original Hindu shrine at the site (Srichai 2001b:151). Two lingas and two yoni dated to c. the 7th century were found at the site in total (Figure 3.17). Two small bronze images of Buddha dated to the 12th to 13th centuries were also found in the excavation. It would appear that this site was originally established as a Hindu temple in the 7th century, and was later turned into a Buddhist temple in c. the 12th to 13th centuries, when Buddhism was preeminent in the whole coastal Nakhon and Peninsular Siam. Immediately north of Mokhalan, an important potters' community was situated on the bank of the To Naeng River (or the Mokhalan River), a tributary of the Maying River. This community may perhaps be the only traditional potters community survived in the heartland of Tambraling until today. During my survey in this community in 2011, I discovered a bas-relief terracotta head, perhaps of a Buddhist monk (around 30 cm. wide, Figure 3.18). It may have originally placed on the side a stupa and dated to c. the 7th to 8th centuries because it is similar to those found in the Dvaravati Buddhist tradition in the Chao Phraya Basin in central Thailand, suggesting that Buddhism coexisted with Hinduism in Mokhalan in the early period as well, although not dominant in such period. I publish it's photo here for scholars who wish to study it.



Map 3.6 The Cluster of the Maying River



Figure 3.13 Rising Sun Coins from Thung Nam Khem (Srichai 2001b: 168)



Figure 3.14 Various architectural parts in Mokhalan



Figure 3.15 Decorated granite doorframe in Mokhalan

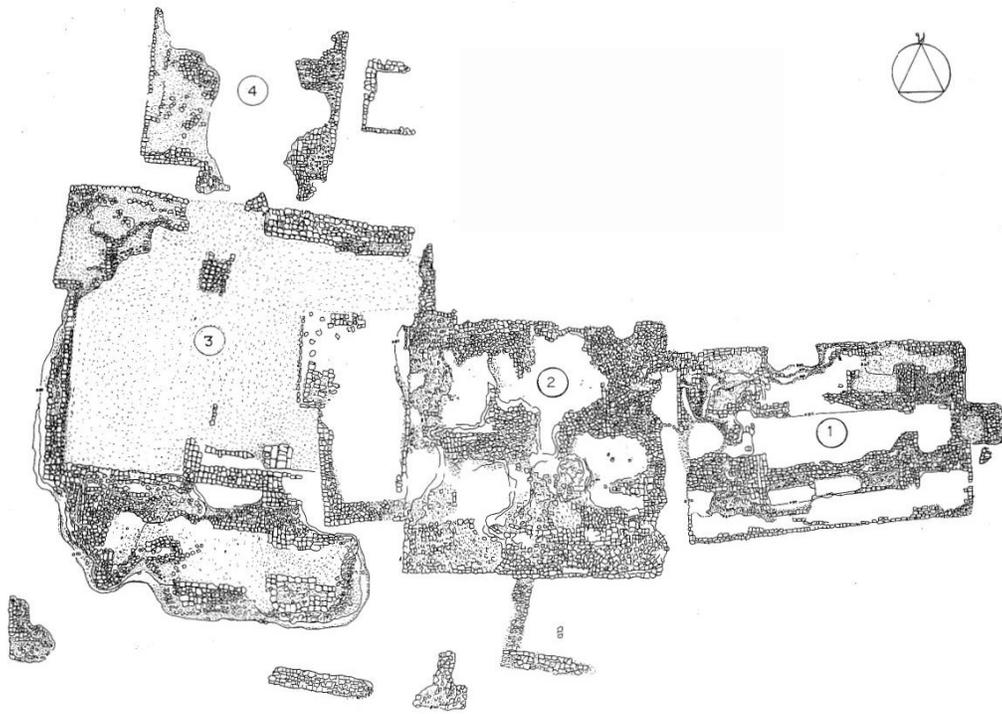


Figure 3.16a Plan of monuments at Mokhalan (from Srichai 2001b: 156)



Figure 3.16b Brick Monuments at Mokhalan



Figure 3.17 Yoni at Mokhalan



Figure 3.18 Terracotta head, perhaps of a Buddhist monk

Table 3.7 The Sites in the Cluster of the Maying River

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	Other Images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
Wat Ko Phra Narai	วัดเกาะพระนารายณ์	P. Noonsuk 2004: 61; Wales 1976:57			2 Vishnu images (c. 7 th cen.)				The site was like an island surrounded by rice fields.
Wat Ta Nen	วัดตาเนน	P. Noonsuk 2004: 62; P. Noonsuk and W. Noonsuk 2003			1 Vishnu image (c. 5 th cen.)				The site was not far from Mokhalan but now completely destroyed by sand mining.
Mokhalan	โมคคลาน	Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 136; P. Noonsuk 1984: 170; 2000: 31; 2004: 52-55; Srichai 2001b: 146	2 (c 7 th cen.)	2 (c. 7 th cen.)	several decorated granite doorframes (c. 7 th -8 th cen.)				Major brick mounds at Mokhalan was escavated by FAD during 1990-1993.
Wat Sai Kham	วัดไทรขาม	P. Noonsuk 2004: 60		1 (c. late 5 th -6 th cen.)	1 bronze bracelet (c. 6 th -7 th)	Yes		1	This site was surrounded by a former course of an ancient river. Some bronze and metal artifacts were also found.
Wat Nok Thung	วัดนอกลง	P. Noonsuk 2004: 60		1 (c. 7 th -9 th cen.) (Figure 3.19)					The yoni was made from quartzite which was a rare medium for artwork in Tambralinga. It is kept in Wat Ya Plong.
Sra Hoi	สระหอย	P. Noonsuk			1 Durga			1	The mound was situated

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	Other Images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
		2004: 55			Mahish-mardini (c. early to mid-6 th cen.)				close to a pond, called Sra Hoi. The Durga Mahishmardini image was found in the mound and was made of terracotta (Figure 3.19).
Wat Sak Lek	วัดซากเหล็ก	P. Noonsuk 2004: 55		1 (c. 6 th -8 th cen.)	several decorated granite doorframes (c. 7 th -8 th cen.)				The site was situated in an island surrounded by the Nok Tha, Ai Khiao, and Plai Uan Rivers.
Wat Inkhiri	วัดอินทรี	P. Noonsuk 2004: 57		1 (c. late 5 th -8 th cen.) (Figure 3.21)					This site was close to the Nok Tha River.
Wat Hua Thung	วัดหัวทุ่ง	P. Noonsuk 2004: 55	1 (c. late 5 th -6 th cen.)	several yonis (c. 6 th -7 th)		Yes			This site is now in Wat Phrom Lok and was quite disturbed. Some grinding stones were found.
Wat Khao Pun	วัดเขาปูน	P. Noonsuk 2004: 55		1 (c. late 5 th cen.)					This site was disturbed by modern constructions of the monastery.
Nong Kong	หนองกง	P. Noonsuk 2004: 58		1 (c. late 5 th -8 th cen.)				1	This site is close to Wat Pa Yang Pradu Hom. Brick fragments can still be seen. Nong Kong is the name of the pond near the mound.

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	Other Images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
Wat Pa Yang Pradu Hom	วัดป่ายาง ประจักษ์ศิลปาคม	P. Noonsuk 2004: 58						1	Brick fragments were seen, especially around the new ordination hall which may have been built on top of the ancient Hindu shrine. Two grinding stones were found.
Wat Yothatham	วัดโยธาธรรม (วัดลูก)	P. Noonsuk 2004: 58		1 (c. late 5 th - 8 th cen.)		Yes			A moonstone (semi-circular stone slab) and a grinding stone were found.



Figure 3.19 Yoni at Wat Nok Thung



Figure 3.20 Terracotta Durga Mahishmardini from Sra Hoi

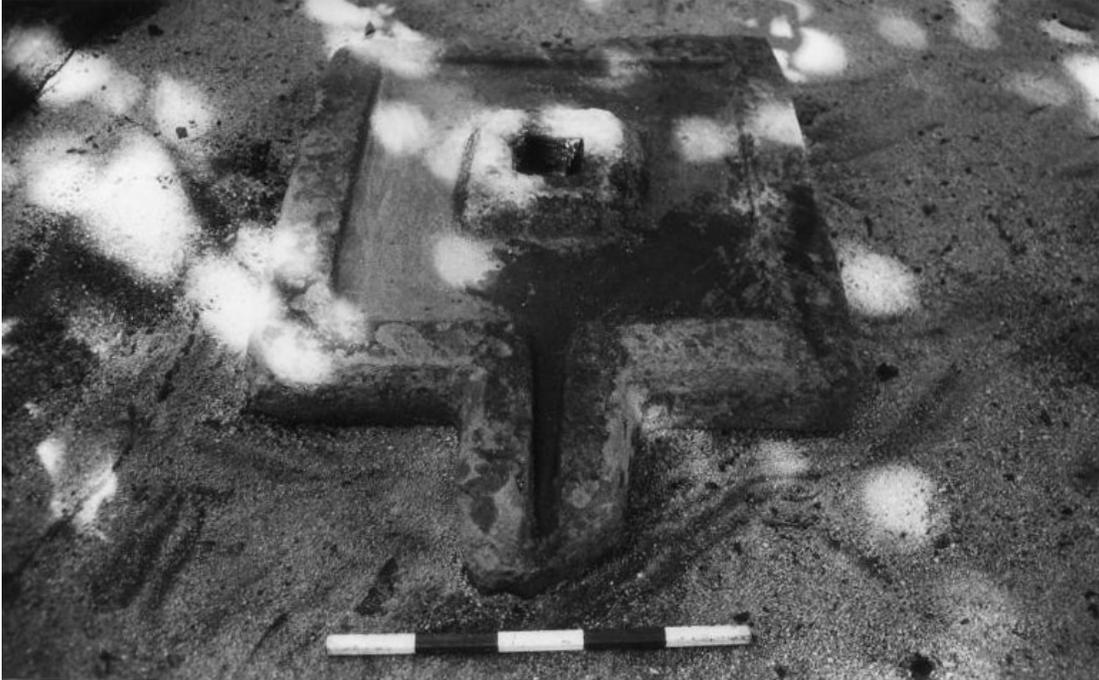


Figure 3.21 Yoni from Wat Inkhiri

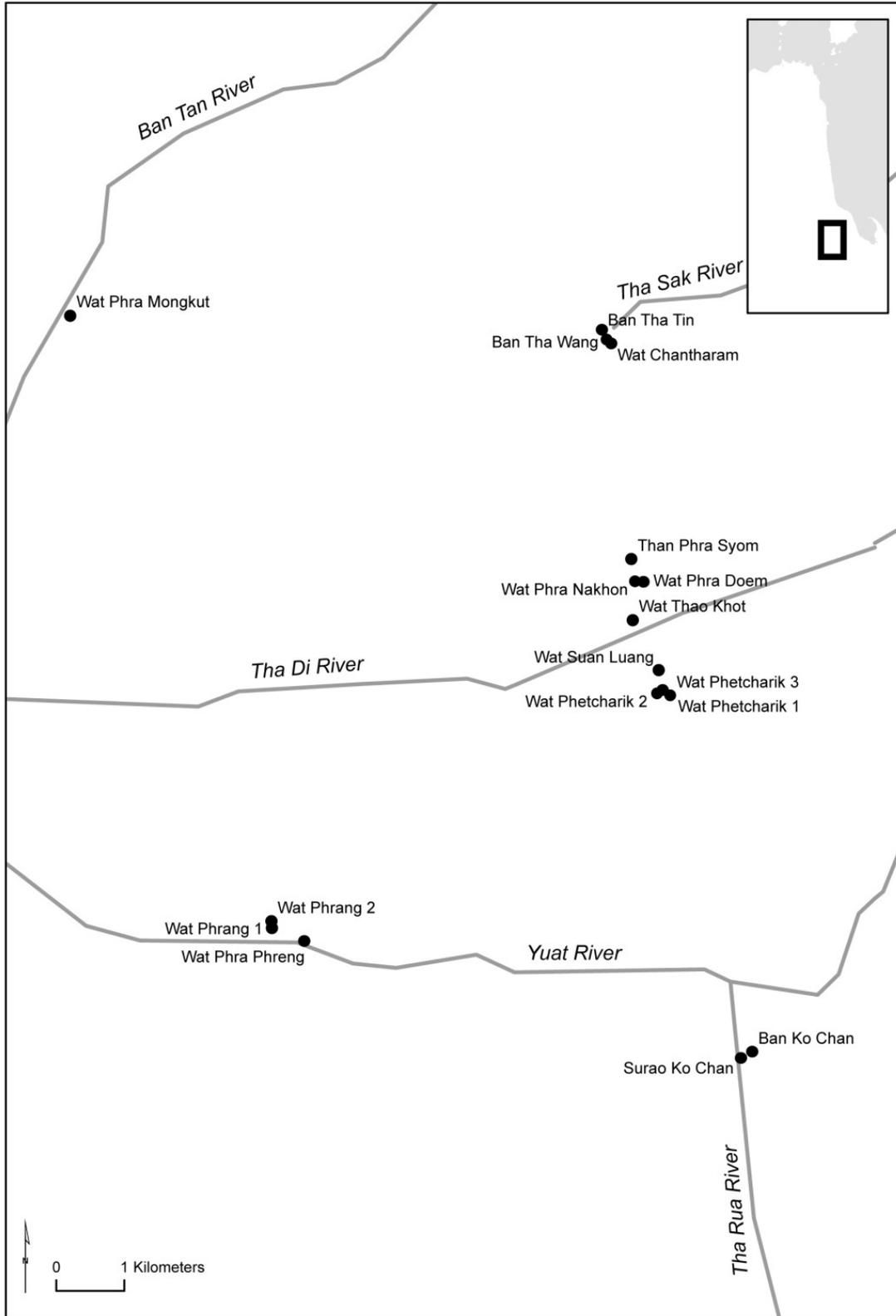
The Cluster of the Crystal Sand Beach

This cluster is located on the Crystal Sand Beach or Haad Sai Keao in Thai (Map 3.7). This beach is generally designated as the middle portion of the eastern beach ridge. It was the sacred place on which Nakhon City was founded in the 13th century and was mentioned in several chronicles, such as the chronicle of Nakhon Si Thammarat or Tamnan Muang Nakhon and the chronicle of the Great Reliquary of Nakhon Si Thammarat or Tamnan Phra That Nakhon (Wyatt 1975). This is the only cluster that centers on the eastern beach ridge. There are a series of rivers cutting through this beach ridge. The two major ones are the Tha Di and Yuat Rivers that linked this beach ridge with the flood plains and the mountain areas. Walking trails, such as those around the Wat Phra Mongkut and Wat Phrang Sites, were also used until recently by people who lived behind the beach ridge. A few kilometers south of Nakhon City and connected through the eastern beach ridge are the areas of Kiakkai and Changhun Sub-Districts where

prehistoric sites, including a Bronze Drum find-site, are identified as previously mentioned. These areas were probably population centers prior to Nakhon City as will be discussed later.

It is important to note that all five inscriptions of the Early Tambralinga Period in coastal Nakhon were discovered in this cluster. However, it is possible that they were moved to and kept in the monasteries, especially in Wat Mahathat, in Nakhon City after this city was founded in the 13th century. The Chong Khoi Valley Inscriptions, however, were inscribed on a large natural boulder which was not moved to the city (Figure 3.22).

There are 17 sites in this cluster; 13 of them are on the beach ridge. Most of the sites in this cluster are located right in the modern city of Nakhon. They have been greatly disturbed and their archaeological evidence destroyed. There are also two isolated sites in the south of this cluster including Sra Rieng (Figure 3.23) and the Chong Khoi Valley where the famous inscriptions are situated. These two sites are connected by the Khok Yang River. It seems that the locations of these two sites coincides more or less with the track of the railroad that runs from Nakhon City to the opening in the Nakhon Mountain Range in Ronphibun District and leads to other provinces in Southern Thailand, such as those on the west coast. It may be reasonable to assume, therefore, that Sra Rieng and the Chong Khoi Valley were on an ancient path that connected coastal Nakhon with the communities on the west coast of the Peninsula, such as those in Krabi and Trang. The details of each site in this cluster are summarized in Table 3.8.



Map 3.7 The Cluster of the Crystal Sand Beach



Figure 3.22 The boulder on which the Chong Khoi Incriptions were inscribed



Figure 3.23 Possible stone threshold in Sra Rieng

Table 3.8 The Sites in the Cluster of the Crystal Sand Beach

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	Other Images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
Wat Phra Mongkut	วัดพระมังกูฎ	P. Noonsuk 2004: 59			several decorated granite doorframes (c. 7 th -8 th cen.)	Yes			This site was excavated by the current author in 2009.
Wat Phra Phreng	วัดพระเพรง	O'Connor 1972: 39; P. Noonsuk 2004: 51				Yes			This site was excavated by the current author in 2009.
Wat Phrang 1	แหล่งโบราณคดีวัดพราง 1 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณสวนของนางสมบุรณ์	O'Connor 1972: 39; 1982			1 Vishnu (c. 5 th cen.)				This site was excavated by the current author in 2009. A brick architecture was found.
Wat Phrang 2	แหล่งโบราณคดีวัดพราง 2 ตั้งอยู่ในบริเวณสวนยางของนางสาวหุมนศรีกำลังเก็บ								This site was excavated by the current author in 2009. A brick architecture was found.
Ban Tha Tin	บ้านท่าดิน	P. Noonsuk	1 (c. late 5 th -8 th)	1 (c. late 5 th -		Yes			This site is situated on the bank of the Tha Wang River. This

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	Other Images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
		2004: 41	cen.)	8 th cen.)					site might have been a ford or bathing place in the past.
Ban Tha Wang	บ้านท่าวัง	P. Noonsuk 2004: 38				Yes			This site is situated on the bank of the Tha Wang River. This site may have been a ghat. It was almost completely destroyed by modern constructions of buildings, roads, and bridge.
Wat Chantharam	วัดจันทาราม	P. Noonsuk 2004: 39		1 (c. 6 th -8 th cen.)		Yes			This site was excavated by the current author in summer 2009.
Than Phra Syom	ฐานพระสยาม	P. Noonsuk 2004: 31	1 (c. 9 th -11 th cen.)	1 (c. 6 th -8 th cen.), 1 (c. 9 th -11 th cen.)		Yes			This site is probably the only shrine that is still functioning as a Hindu shrine since the Early Tambralinga Period.
Wat Phra Nakhon	วัดพระนคร	P. Noonsuk 2004: 24				Yes			The brick mounds were completely covered by the concrete floors constructed throughout the monastery.
Wat Phra Doem	วัดพระเดิม	P. Noonsuk 2004: 23		3 (c. late 5 th -8 th cen.)	several decorated granite doorframes (c. 7 th -8 th cen.)	Yes			This site was excavated by the current author in summer 2009.
Wat Thao Khot	วัดท้าวโคตร					Yes	2		This site was excavated by the current author in 2009.

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	Other Images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
Wat Suan Luang	วัดสวนหลวง	P. Noonsuk 2004: 42		2 (c. late 5 th -8 th cen.)		Yes	3	1	This site was excavated by the current author in summer 2009. The pond was in the northeast corner of the monastery but now was filled and covered by the modern constructions.
Wat Phetcharik 1	วัดเพชรจริก 1	P. Noonsuk 2004: 42		1 (c. 6 th -8 th cen.)	several decorated granite doorframes (c. 7 th -8 th cen.)	Yes	1		This site was excavated by the current author in summer 2009.
Wat Phetcharik 2	วัดเพชรจริก 2 (ฉาปนสถาน)	P. Noonsuk 2004: 43				Yes	1		This site was by the Hua Wong River that runs in the north-south direction along the ancient beach ridge and links the Tha Wang and Tha Rua Rivers. The site is now on the cremation ground of the monastery.
Wat Phetcharik 3	วัดเพชรจริก ตะวันออก	P. Noonsuk 2004: 44		1 (c. 6 th -8 th cen.)		Yes			This site is 200 meters east of Wat Phetcharik 1.
Ban Ko Chan	บ้านก้อจันทน์	P. Noonsuk 2004: 44		1 (c. 6 th -8 th cen.)		Yes		1	This site is by the Tha Rua River. This site may have been a ghat.
Surao Ko Chan	สุหร่ากอจันทน์	P. Noonsuk 2004: 45		1 (c. 5 th -8 th cen.)		Yes			This site is by the Tha Rua River. This site may have been a ghat. It is now a mosque.
Wat Sra	วัดสระเหียง	P.				Yes		1	There were a brick wall and

Site Name	Location in Thai	Reference	Linga	Yoni	Other Images	Stone Arch. Part	Well	Pond	Notes
Riang		Noonsuk 2004: 50							moat surrounding the 50x60 m. mound
Hup Khao Chong Khoi	หุบเขาช่องคอย	P. Noonsuk 2004: 47-49							This is the site of the Hup Khao Chong Khoi Inscription.

A Tale of Two Groups

From the distribution of the Hindu shrines in the heartland of Tambralinga, five clusters may be observed lying in the north-south direction. These clusters may be divided into two large groups—the southern and northern groups—as they demonstrate slightly different cultural characteristics, reflected mainly in the distributions of Visnu images and granite architectural parts. The boundary between them is at the Tha Put River that finally merges with the Tha Sung River at its estuary, not very far from Wat Ko Phra Narai. There is between the two groups the gap of empty space in the site distribution map, where there was no shrine for almost 15 km. between the two groups (see Map 2.1 and 3.1). This gap further emphasizes the physical separation between them.

The southern group includes the Clusters of the Maying River and the Crystal Sand Beach while the northern group consists of the Clusters of Tha Rua Ri, Tha Khwai-Tha Chiao-Tha Thon, and Tha Lat-Klai Rivers. The southern group demonstrates older Vaisana tradition. All three Visnu images of the 5th century found in the heartland were discovered in this group. They belong to the earliest style of Visnu in Southeast Asia and are from Wat Ta Nen, Wat Phrang, and Ho Phra Narai. There are also two bases of Vishnu images of the first half of the 6th century from Ban Nasan, the area where Wat Phrang is situated, and two Visnu images of the 7th century from Wat Ko Phra Narai, around 8 km. north of Wat Ta Nen (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002:122-123). These discoveries suggest that the worshippers of Visnu first settled in the southern group at least in the 5th century and continued their Vaisnavite tradition here for several centuries. They may have been influential in the earliest spread of Vaisnavism in maritime Southeast Asia, especially to the Mekong Delta, West Java, the areas around the Gulf of Siam, and other communities in Peninsular Siam itself. The 5th century Vaisnavite communities in the

southern group also seem to spread the belief of Visnu to the northern group in the late 5th century as evidenced in the discovery of a Visnu image at Ban Phang Kam 1 that can be dated to the same period. The Vaisnavite tradition in the northern group continued until the 7th century as the Visnu images found at Wat Chom Thong and Khao Kha suggested.

Altogether, there are seven Visnu images in the southern group and five in the northern group suggesting only the slight difference in number of the images. Yet, if one takes into account the contexts of the sites of their discoveries, one would see an immense difference. Preecha Noonsuk suggests that Saivism was the most prominent religion in Tambralinga in which linga was second to none and Visnu may be the secondary god when his image was found with linga at the same site (P.Noonsuk 2001b:chapter 3). Therefore, to be certain that Visnu was treated as the supreme god in the shrine according to the Vaisnavite tradition, Visnu images had to be found in the site that no linga was found.

In the northern group, three out of five Visnu images were found at Khao Kha, the most prominent Saivite site in Tambralinga while another two were found at Wat Chom Thong and Phang Kam 1 which have no linga, so only at these two sites Visnu may have been the supreme god. On the other hand, in the southern group, all seven Visnu images were found at the sites where no linga was found. One may say that these were Vaisnavite sites. This fact remarkably demonstrates that Vaisnavism was much older and stronger in the south than the north.

At least two Vaisnavite centers can be observed in the southern group and both of them manifest a long tradition of Vaisnavism. The first is the area between the Maying and Tha Put Rivers. In this area, a 5th century Visnu image was found at Wat Ta Nen and another two of the 7th century from Wat Ko Phra Narai. These sites were situated on the beach ridge opening up to the sea, suggesting their involvement in the maritime trade network in which Vaisnavism was

spread along with trade goods. The second is the area in Na San Sub-District where Wat Phrang is situated and at least three Vishnu images found, one of them is from the 5th century. This area has been one of the most important rice producing areas in Nakhon. The 5th century Visnu at Ho Phra Narai, a shrine built in the Ayutthaya Period, in Nakhon City was, perhaps, originally from this area as well but there is no record of this.

It has to be noted that Vaisnavism coexisted with Saivism in both the southern and northern groups. In the southern group, some early lingas have been identified at Ho Phra Isuan in Nakhon City. One of them is dated to the 5th century or earlier while at least 2 of them were dated to the late 5th or early 6th centuries (O'Connor 1986f:162). These lingas were from somewhere, probably near Nakhon City. They were housed in the shrine (Ho Phra Isuan) which seems to be only built in the Ayutthaya Period. This may indicate that both Vaisnavism and Saivism arrived at the heartland of Tambralinga at the same time. It is difficult to date lingas. Scholars have tended to neglect them due to their columnar simplicity. However, it seems that the Vaisnavite communities were more influential in the maritime trade network as mentioned previously. There is also evidence of at least two strong centers of Vaisnavism since the 5th century whereas none can so far be identified for Saivism in that period, suggesting the significance and continuation of Vaisnavite tradition and communities in the early days in the southern group.

The northern group, on the contrary, demonstrates the significance and continuation of Saivism. Although Khao Kha probably has three Visnu images, it also had two gigantic *Svayambhuva-lingas*. Based on other sculptures found at the site, the lingas which were carved out of the peaks of the hill may date to at least the 6th century. Visnu images must have represented a secondary god in this overwhelming Saivite context. Besides Khao Kha, many

lingas and yonis have been found in the northern group. For example, six lingas of the 7th to 9th centuries were found at Wat Na Khom alone. It seems, however, that both Saivism and Vaisnavism arrived in the northern group at the same time but the Saivite communities seem to be stronger here.

Vaisnavism in both groups seem to fade away after the 8th century. There seems to be no creation of Visnu images after this date while Saivite statues were continued to be found and in fact increased after the 7th century. Inscriptions related to Saivism are found after this date. The 8th century seemed to be the transition to a strong administration which promoted Saivism as the core of its operations. In Inscription No. 28, the king seemed to identify himself with Siva and in the Chong Khoi Valley Inscriptions and Inscription No. 29, official titles are present in the Saivite contexts. Thus, it seems that from the 8th century Saivism was expanding and became prominent while Vaisnavism was vanishing.

Another clear difference between the two groups is that the southern group employed granite in elements of architecture. Granite was used widely in the construction of shrines the southern group but not in the northern group. Some of them have floral decorations that may be dated to c. the 7th to 8th centuries as mentioned previously. It can be seen that these granite architectural parts are not found in the Vaisnavite sites; they are found only in the Saivite sites. Thus, it seems that these granite parts were not associated with Vaisnavism but rather with the Saivite tradition. They emerged perhaps when Vaisnavism was fading away and represented a new tradition in the southern group. However, this granite tradition did not appear in the northern group where Saivism was also popular. It is perhaps because the granite tradition was a unique cultural characteristic of the Saivite south or because granite was relatively easier to acquire in the southern group. These observations have to be examined in the future. In any

case, the evidence described above suggests that the southern group had different cultural traits from the northern group. They both seem to have their own cultural uniqueness which may suggest at least different cultural, if not socio-political, groups in Early Tambralinga (c. the 5th-11th century).

However, despite the differences, both groups shared a similar core of the Hindu tradition. They always created ponds next to their shrines. Their shrines looked similar in the sense that they both used the combination of bricks, stones, woods, and thatch roofs. Their stone architectural parts, except the granite ones, had similar styles. These similarities may suggest that they both shared some similar cultural traits, allowing them to be integral parts of the same kingdom.

CHAPTER FOUR
A BEACH RIDGE SOCIETY:
THE LIVING GEOGRAPHY OF EARLY TAMBRALINGA

Introduction

Looking from the sea to the heartland of Tambralinga, the prominent body of the Nakhon 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 ridge that cut across all clusters of communities from the northern to the southern ends of the kingdom. 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 (see Map 2.1).

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 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 (see Map 1.2).

As we have seen, 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 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 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 Province.

Sixty years ago, villagers had two ways to travel to Nakhon City if they lived in the northern part of the coastal land. They could either walk on the beach ridge or take a boat in the sea to the south. For the sea route, it was not possible to paddle their own small riverine boats in the sea as far as Nakhon City because the waves would flip them over. It would also be exhausting to do so. Villagers had to depend on commercial motorized boats that collected passengers along the coast. It took several hours to travel from Sichon to Nakhon City. It is not known if in the Early Tambralinga Period there were commercial paddle or sail boats for passengers along the coast but it is certainly more difficult to travel in the sea along the coast if one is not a fisherman or Orang Laut (sea people) who live their lives along the coast. Not

everyone can paddle in the sea. A special kind of skill and boat is needed. To walk on the beach ridge was much easier. The old villagers said that they just needed to get up very early and walk or take a boat to the beach ridge, then walk on the beach ridge from Sichon to Nakhon City before the Sun became too strong and the sand of the beach ridge became too hot for their bare feet to walk on. When tired, they could take a rest at roofed shelters where people would leave some pots and pans for passersbys to use. Old villagers in the southern part of the heartland in the Kiakkai and Changhun areas said that they used to walk on the beach ridge to buy cows and water buffalos at Sichon, some 70 km. in the northern part of the heartland, the area that was considered as having the best (most beautiful, as they would say) cattle in Nakhon. These animals were crucial in rice cultivation. Horses were also raised and sold in Sichon. They were important for transportation on the beach ridge in the northern part of the heartland since the sand on the ridge can be hot during the day, perhaps due to the thin vegetation on the ridge, and burn the feet of people who in the past would have been barefoot. However, the hot sand did not stop people from walking on it. The villagers in the southern part of the heartland even said that they used to walk on the beach ridge south to Songkhla in the past. The beach ridge walk was more dependable and easier than the sea route and it was more accessible to everyone, so everybody used it.

It is significant to note that all Neolithic sites in the coastal lands, most of the Dong Son Bronze Drums of the Iron Age, and all the early Visnu images of the 5th century CE were found on the beach ridge. This fact reflects the prominence of the beach ridge as the most important area for movement on the coastal lands in the late prehistoric period. Probably, the prehistoric people used the beach ridge as the route for communication in just the same way as people in the historic period. This observation is supported by the distribution of the 5th century Visnu images

along the beach ridge. These Vishnu images can be perceived as a common vision or important part of belief system that spread along the strip of the beach ridge.

The beach ridge must have been indispensable in the process of state formation of the Tambralinga Kingdom where the state had to mobilize the army from all the habitation clusters and move soldiers along the coastal plains to keep its heartland together. It took two days to walk from northern to the southern ends of the heartland according to old villagers today. The army could make camps along the way. Foot soldiers were supported by naval forces that traveled the sea routes up and down the coastline. The beach ridge and the sea routes were crucial for the existence of the kingdom. The state had to be present or at least to create a sense of its presence in the experience of the people. Several means could be used to achieve such a goal, and one of them is the movement of military force. The beach ridge became central to the operations of the Tambralinga Kingdom.

In this chapter, I will explore various aspects of the landscape and ways of life, and how the two may have entwined with one another in the heartland of Tambralinga. The beach ridge was the core of the Tambralingan heartland, but it was not the only ecological zone of the kingdom. People in Tambralinga spread out to occupy diverse ecological niches from the shores to the mountains. This ecological diversification was the strength of the kingdom in which its communities were able to support and complement one another in terms of resources and geographical advantages. There are three large-scale ecological zones in the heartland from east to west.

The Seashore: the Diversified Resources at the Kingdom's Gate

This ecozone includes the beach ridges, wetlands, estuaries, and seashores. This area is influenced the most by the currents, waves, and winds. These lands were mostly formed by the maximum transgression of the sea water 6,000 years ago (Map 2.1 and Figure 2.1). The maximum transgression formed the beach ridge and when the sea water started to regress, the coastal lands east of the beach ridge began to emerge. More lands obviously emerged in the south than the north of the Maying River. The whole massive Pak Phanang River Basin was included in the new land that probably did not exist as extensively in the Early Tambralinga Period. Therefore, the beach ridge was much closer to the sea in the southern half of the heartland.

Because it was not easily flooded, full of various resources, and close to the sea, this ecozone was an important area of human habitation at least since the Neolithic Period. There is also one possible Mesolithic site at Ban Bang Phan Sai as mentioned earlier. This site may have been inhabited right after the beach ridge was formed. The Mesolithic and Neolithic sites on the beach ridge may represent early fishing communities in this area. However, people must have exploited the marine resources before the Neolithic Period and there must have been many more prehistoric fishing communities on the coast. The location of coastline before 6,000 years ago was further east of the present coastline; therefore, any community situated close to that coastline would have been swept away by the sea during the maximum transgression that formed a new coastline inland. That new coastline became our western beach ridge where earliest prehistoric sites are situated. The prehistoric fishing communities seemed to have moved west as the sea transgressed. It can be expected that archaeological surveys on the beach ridge in the future will find more evidence of prehistoric fishing communities.

The Iron Age coastal communities continued to open themselves up to the sea. These Iron Age communities were located in the same area as those of the Neolithic Period; therefore, they seem to be direct descendents of earlier communities. One area that shows an unbroken continuation of human habitation from the Mesolithic period to the Iron Age and until the present is the estuary of the Klai River. These Iron Age communities were involved not only with fishing, but also with trading. Artifacts found in these ancient communities, such as Dong Son Bronze Drums (Figures 2.2-2.3) and glass beads, suggest that they were part of long-distance exchange network, which included many communities in maritime Southeast Asia. They were also the middlemen who facilitated the flow of goods to the inland areas. The presences of bronze drums at Ban Yuan Thao and Khlong Kutduan and a Western Han mirror at Muang Rae Kao, all situated inland, clearly suggest the facilitating role played by the coastal communities in the exchange network.

This area became the center of trading activities in the Iron Age. The communities in this area possessed the most impressive objects of their time, such as bronze drums and beads. Imagine a world with simple tools and basic ornaments, and then one day huge bronze drums, so shiny, beautiful, and complex, suddenly show up. It would have blown the people's minds. Because they had no way to understand the sophisticated process of their manufacture; they must have thought that these bronze drums were made by the supernatural power and, therefore, possessed that kind of power themselves (Helms 1993). O'Connor offers the following insights on the cultural implications of these drums:

What the bronzes do suggest, however, is that in the period of the late prehistory..., life in the peninsula was complex and, in some coastal areas, probably stratified by social rank. In those communities iron, water buffalos, and diked paddy fields were probably a familiar sight. Wealth from surplus production was available to acquire prestige goods of a monumental character and,

judging from the elaborate iconography on the drums, intellectual life was rich with things to think on and with. (1986a:3)

These large bronze drums (e.g. Figures 2.2-2.3) may not be understood only in terms of trade goods or items that enhanced the prestige of the elites. It is not probable that prehistoric mariners from Northern Vietnam would have ventured to Peninsular Siam to sell the drums as trade goods. More attentions should be paid to their religious meanings since the local people would have had to make sense of these drums on their own terms. Perhaps, the three vertical sections of the drum may represent the three vertical realms of the heavenly domain, the place of the living, and underworld, according to their local beliefs. At the middle of the tympanum of each of these drums, there is an enormous star usually surrounded by concentric rings, flying birds, frogs, and other decorations. It is likely that these drums represented the “cosmic religion” that was shared by various Iron Age communities. They may also reflect the cult of fertility as these communities were already agricultural. The animal figures on the tympanums are related to water. When beaten, the drums also make a thunder sound and that might be related to rain and lightning that fertilize the earth³⁵. To acquire sophisticated things and to understand them enhanced cultural development in this coastal area. Exchange network led to the exchange of ideas and the formation of shared belief systems in the maritime world. The coastal communities became agents of knowledge as well as goods, and the center of population and cultural development.

While still important as the gate to Tambralinga, the beach ridge was, however, no longer the center of population in the Early Tambralinga Period, especially Sichon, the northern part of the heartland. Although the distribution of the 5th century Vishnu images along the beach ridge

³⁵ Stanley O'Connor (personal communication).

suggests the importance of this area for human habitation and trade in the earliest phase of the Early Tambralinga Period, many more sites were established on the coastal plain behind the beach ridge. The expansion of sites inland seems to suggest the expansion of rice cultivation and the attempt to acquire forest products from the mountain areas. In the Iron Age, the communities had not expanded that much to the coastal plain, perhaps because the population was still low and they did not need extensive rice cultivation to support them. The coastal resources and some rice cultivation behind the beach ridge must have been sufficient for them.

This expansion trend is clear in the northern part of the heartland in Sichon District where the coastal plain was narrow and communities did not have to settle on the beach ridge to have easy access to the sea. They settled right between the coast and the mountains to have access to both. They acquired forest products for the maritime merchants and foreign goods from the merchants to trade with the forest groups.

This coastal area has rich and diverse resources. There are fish and marine products in the sea, trees and plant products in the estuaries and on the beach ridges, and animals in the wetland forest. People can also grow rice in the areas behind the ancient beach ridge. This diversity of resources supported the growth of communities and offered them flexibility in their livelihoods as well. They were able to depend on various kinds of food and materials. This diversity guaranteed that people in this area would not have had serious difficulty if one of the food sources was deficient since they had many other kinds to consume. The sub-ecozones are as follows:

The Sea

Besides the significance of the sea as the sphere of trade, it was a crucial source of food and marine products for exchange as well. The Gulf of Siam is famous for its abundance of fish and marine life. The sea here is shallower than the Andaman Sea on the opposite coast and makes coastal fishing relatively easier. Mackerel (pla tu) is particularly abundant and popular in Southern Thai cuisine along with shellfish, crab, and squid. The fish can be dried and traded far away. Some marine life were valuable trade items as well, such as the Giant Clam (*tridacna gigas*), which is the largest mollusk on Earth, capable of reaching 1.2 m. in length and weighing more than 227 kg. It was usually cut up in to pieces to make bracelets, earrings, and beads.

The sea was the source of both salt and shrimp paste, both of which are very important for local cuisine. Shrimp paste is made of fermented ground tiny shrimps, sun dried, and put in jars for keeping and transportation. These preserved marine products, including dried fish and shrimp paste, and salt were traded extensively to inland and to the far-away communities in maritime Southeast Asia as well. Old storage jars for this trade are still seen in villagers' houses and in the archaeological record from my excavations in Nakhon.

Marine products may have been harvested by the sea people or *Orang Laut* (or chao le in Thai). These people are still living in the Andaman Sea on the west coast of the peninsula and in the Indonesian Archipelago. They were masters of the sea and historically played important roles not only in the harvesting of marine goods, but also in trading between coasts and in naval combat among maritime kingdoms (L. Andaya 2008: chapter 6). They were both pirates and traders. They were very mobile and could change allegiances swiftly from one kingdom to the next according to the benefits offered by the rulers of such kingdoms. Using military force to control them (or the forest groups) is not a practical approach since these mobile groups would

just escape to many islands. The sea people also played a significant role in the process of state formation in maritime Southeast Asia and may have been very active in the operations of the Tambralinga Kingdom in the past. Evidence of their presence is difficult to establish because they typically left very little trace of their existence on their seasonal camps (see Engelhardt and Rogers 1997).

The Estuaries, Intertidal Forest, and Beach Ridge

The brackish water of the estuaries supports abundant life. Local people even believe that the fish and marine resources in these areas are larger and more abundant than those in the coastal sea. The intertidal forests are the vital nursery of the marine life. They are dominated by mangroves and nipa palm while no large trees can grow in this area. Mangroves offer the best charcoal for cooking. Nipa palm is particularly useful for people in many ways. Its shoots give off sap when cut, and the sap can be turned into palm sugar when boiled into a syrup using heat. The sap can also be fermented to make vinegar or distilled to make whiskey. The shoots and fruits of the nipa palm can be eaten as well, usually put in curry. The leaves are tied and sewn together into long, flat pieces to be used in the construction of roofs for houses and huts. These leaves are very durable and popular as building materials even today. They are traded far inland because they are not expensive and are considered the best leaves for roofing. They were probably used in the past for the thatch roof of the Hindu shrines as well. Palm leaves were also crucial as material to be written on before the introduction of paper, but these were not taken from the nipa palm; they were from Lan Palms, which grows in the wetland behind the beach ridge.

The beach ridge is not particularly fertile for vegetation due to its closeness to the sea water. However, some large trees can grow here, such as Iron Woods (ton ta khian or *Hopea Odorata*), which offer hard wood for construction. Coconuts are abundant in this area and important for people's livelihoods. They are highly tolerant of salinity. Their fruits can be eaten or squeezed for coconut milk and the shoots can be put in curry or cut for sugary sap. The trunk can be used as wood in the construction. It is of interest to note that there are five indispensable ingredients in the Southern Thai curry, the most common food of the area. These are coconut milk, shrimp paste, salt, sugar, and curry paste (spices usually grown in every house's backyard). All of them can be found in the seashore area. Two of them, namely, shrimp paste and salt, are exclusively from this area. Although we do not know what kind of food the early historic people were eating, it may not have been very different from what is customary today, and curry seems to have been quite common in both South and Southeast Asia for a long time. These basic ingredients for curry have been traded until the present from the seashore area, which is surprisingly rich in natural resources.

The beach ridge was also the place for ceramic production. One large potters' community in coastal Nakhon is located on the bank of a tributary of the Maying River on the western beach ridge. It is very close to the Mokkalan Site. However, it is not known if this community existed in the Early Tambralinga Period when Mokkalan was flourishing. This community was the only ceramic production center in the recent time that we know of. It produced unglazed earthenware and distributed it throughout the heartland and to Pak Phanang District. It seems that the potters' community developed here because good clay is found from the Maying river banks. The kilns are on the high ground of the beach ridge and, therefore, not

flooded in the rainy season. The history of ceramic production in this community should definitely be examined in future archaeological research.

Wetlands and Peat Swamp Forests

Although this area may seem like wasteland to modern-day people, it actually has significant resources according to the old villagers³⁶. There are pockets of wetlands along the western edge of the ancient beach ridge, but the most extensive area of them is in the southern part of the heartland. In the south where an old, massive lagoon once spread between the two ancient beach ridges, there are still vast areas of wetlands and peat swamp forests that are sadly being destroyed by modern plantations and constructions.

Wetlands are basically swamps with a variety of grasses. Some of these grasses have been used to feed cattle and make baskets and mats. They are also crucial for the ecological system as they help purify the water. Wetlands act like a sponge that absorbs water in times of flooding and maintains moisture in the land in the dry seasons. They prevented the flash floods that regularly plague communities on the coastal lands now that these wetlands are largely gone. Wetlands are also nurseries for water animals, which are an important source of meat. These nurseries help perpetuate the food sources of the people in this area.

Peat swamp forests are thick forests west of the beach ridge, which are like floating forests in the rainy season. There are several internal watercourses that flow within the forest, and they have all kinds of resources. These forests were practically the life source for the people. A diverse variety of trees have been relied upon heavily by the people, and the old villagers seem to have an endless list of uses for these trees. They were used for food,

³⁶ Interviews with Mr. Saicho Nawathong (Age 75) at Ban Kiakkai, Nakhon, on 9 July 2009, and Ms. Somsuang Khongtawan (Age 80) at Ban Changhun, Nakhon, on 10 July 2009.

construction, and medicine. People also relied on them, as much as we do drugstores, for the medicines and herbs they needed for survival. People from the seashore came to this area to get timbers for their construction. They had relatives here and usually came during the rainy season when the water in the forests rose and allowed easy transportation of timbers by boats.

Fish and animals were particularly abundant in these fertile forests. Animals that were hunted for food mainly included boars and a variety of deer. There were countless kinds of fish, which were the main source of protein for the people. There were also dangerous animals like poisonous snakes, crocodiles, various kinds of felines, including large tigers. Tigers were especially feared by the people. There are many stories about tigers jumping across fences and taking pigs from people's backyards. People in the village had to organize group hunts for such tigers from time to time. Crocodiles were also abundant and fearsome. Old villagers still recall the resonant noise of hundreds of crocodiles at night in the rainy season, floating on the rivers like continuous rafts. However, people usually knew how to navigate through crocodiles and viewed them as more predictable than tigers.

The areas west of the beach ridge were also used for rice cultivation. Although there are now vast rice fields on both sides of the beach ridge in the southern part of the heartland, these areas were probably not used so extensively for rice cultivation in the Early Tambralinga period since the flood plain east of the beach ridge seems to have developed later. The main area for wet rice cultivation in the Early Tambralinga period was in the coastal plain.

The Coastal Plain: The Granary of the Kingdom

This is the long, narrow area along the western side of the ancient western beach ridge, which was formed by the colluvial and alluvial deposits in the Pleistocene epoch and has usually

been flooded in the rainy seasons and thus suitable for rice cultivation (Figure 2.1). It is much narrower than the flood plains of large rivers in the Chao Phraya or Mekong Basins but larger than those on the west coast of the Peninsula. It was perhaps the most populated area in the Malay Peninsula in the early historic period.

This plain was extensively inhabited by people in the Early Tambralinga period (c. the 5th-11th century). Only one site (Ban Yuan Thao) in this area has been identified as an Iron Age site but there were more than 70 sites here in the Early Tambralinga period³⁷. In other words, most Early Tambralinga sites (c. the 5th-11th century) and, therefore people, were in this ecozone. This enormous increase of sites suggests the expansions of population into the flood plain to grow rice. In the rainy season, these communities were practically floating on rice fields.

All clusters of Early Tambralinga communities were on this coastal plain, except the Crystal Sand Beach cluster³⁸. One of them was the cluster around Khao Kha, which had the Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo, and Tha Thon Rivers feeding it. This cluster was an important socio-political center and perhaps a candidate for early capital of the Tambralinga Kingdom. Its location between the seashore and the mountains allowed it to acquire valuable resources from all ecozones, but more importantly it was located right on a fertile plain suitable for wet rice cultivation.

Rice has been the most important staple in Asia for thousands of years and rice cultivation seems to have been the foundation of the growth of the Tambralinga Kingdom, although it is not known how much rice was produced in the kingdom annually. From the

³⁷ However, it is possible that the incredible small number of the Iron Age sites was also due to the lack of archaeological research in this period and the fact that these sites were difficult to identify on the ground.

³⁸ It should be noted that the Crystal Sand Beach cluster has the highest uncertainty of the provenance of their early historic artifacts.

massive number of shrines and artifacts discovered throughout the heartland, it may be assumed that this kingdom had a large population. Therefore, rice must have been produced sufficiently for the large number of people in the kingdom. Any state-level society has to have sufficient food surplus to support its administrative officials, religious specialists, and the army (see D'Troy et al. 1985). It has to be able to extract the surplus from the fields and then distribute it back to various groups of people, usually according to their socio-political statuses. This process of redistribution is important in the construction and enhancement of the power and status of the head of the state as the giver of life to the society. Whatever the case, it all begins with sufficient food production. If the Kingdom of Tambralinga did not produce sufficient rice for its people, it would have ceased to exist from the beginning. The fact that this kingdom was important in the early history of Southeast Asia and arose as a superpower in the 13th century in the maritime world suggests that it must have had a considerable number of people and abundant rice crops to support them.

Today, this coastal plain continues to be the most important area of rice production and it was very likely this way in the past as well. In fact, it was the only area suitable for wet rice cultivation on the ancient coast since the area east of the beach ridge was relatively new and no Early Tambralinga site has been found there. Although we do not have any evidence so far about how rice was produced in the Early Tambralinga period, it may be assumed that it was not very different from how it has been traditionally produced in the recent past.

According to old villagers³⁹, there were two kinds of rice—heavy and light. The heavy rice, such as the Nang Heng and Thai Dam Rice, requires a great deal of water and is planted in the lowland which is flooded in the rainy season. Light rice cultivation is done on dryer soil in

³⁹ Interview with Ms. Somsuang Khongtawan (Age 80) at Ban Changhun, Nakhon, on 10 July 2009.

the high-ground area, especially on the foothills. The heavy rice takes 6 months to ripen. The old villagers would start to till the field with ploughs dragged by water buffalos or cows in May; then, planted the rice in June-July. There are two ways of planting rice. First, the rice seeds may be sowed directly onto the field and the farmers let them grow a bit before taking out some of the rice seedlings where they grow too close to one another. This kind of rice field is called the broadcast rice field. Second, the rice seeds may be planted in a nursery banded field first; then the seedlings are transplanted into rice fields. This kind of rice field is more common as it offers higher yields.

The coastal plain is flooded with rain water in the rainy season, especially in November and December. The old villagers needed no irrigation system to bring water from the river to the rice fields. Besides water from the rain, the rivers in the lowland would usually overflow and flood the coastal plain as well. People divided rice fields into sections and created rectangular bunds around each section to keep water in the field.

The rice was harvested in February-March when the fields were dry. Rice harvesting is very labor-intensive. Usually, people in a village would take turns helping one another in the harvesting. This labor sharing also tightened social relations. The harvested rice was traditionally kept in a granary for household consumption only. It was shared among relatives and friends and not usually sold in the market. After harvesting, the rice husks in the fields were burned and left until it was time to till the land again in June.

The coastal plain did not have only rice fields in the past. The old villagers also speak of lowland forests and grass lands. The lowland forests are now vastly destroyed, but they were formerly important sources of game, timber, and medicine. Grass lands are also largely destroyed. They were used to raise cattle, like water buffalos, cows, and horses, for which the

coastal plain of Sichon was particularly famous. Elephants were also raised in the lowland villages and also in the foothill areas. They were tamed and bred for heavy work, especially to drag timbers for construction, but now villagers do not remember how to catch and train them. The coastal plain was, therefore, the granary of Tambralinga. It fed the kingdom with rice and cattle. It made possible the very large number of ancient shrines whose ruins we see in the area today.

The Foothill and Mountain Areas: The Exotic Wealth of the Kingdom

Very few archaeological sites dating from the Iron Age (700 BCE-400 CE) and Early Tambralinga Period (c. the 5th-11th century CE) have been found in this area. For the Iron Age, there was Ban Yuan Thao where a bronze drum was found. This site is actually situated on the border between the coastal plain and the foothills. It is close to the mountain and the sources of tin. The location of this site, therefore, suggests a way of life in which people depended on forest resources and natural minerals, such as tin, to supplement a limited production of rice.

Sites which date to the Early Tambralinga Period in this area include Rong Lek, Wat Hua Tung, and Wat Khao Pun. Sites in this area reported by Preecha Noonsuk but not visited by the current author, include Wat Plian, on the bank of the Klai River where the Rong Lek Site is also situated. A sandstone yoni of the 7th-9th century, now kept at the Wat Mahathat Museum, was found here. There is also a linga of the 7th-8th century which is believed to have come from this site. This linga is now kept at Wat Narayanikaram (or Wat Le), Kapong District, Phang-Nga Province (P.Noonsuk 2004a:64).

According to the old villagers⁴⁰ at Rong Lek, the so-called “heavy rice” which takes 6 months to ripen, can be planted in the foothill area. However, the wet rice fields had to be fed by water from rivers, not only by rains in this area. The high ground is not flat and does not keep water well. To remedy this, farmers would build dams on the rivers in the rainy season to increase the water level in the river; then water channels were dug to bring water to the rice fields on the bank of the river. This allowed farmers to grow heavy rice in the foothill area. However, taking into account the very small number of the Early Tambralinga sites, and therefore people, in this area, it is more likely that the Early Tambralinga communities in this area grew the so-called “light rice” as it was more suitable to the foothill topography and did not require irrigation system and a large number of people to build dams and to dig and maintain channels. A smaller scale and less intensive type of rice like “light rice” cultivation was more suitable to feed a smaller number of people.

The initial process of this high-ground, light-rice cultivation involved slash and burn techniques but it was not exactly like the swidden agriculture because the fields were not moved around and farmers planted at the same place for generations. The light rice took only 3 months to ripen. There were several kinds of light rice, but the most popular one was the Nang Nuan Rice with red envelope. The high ground cultivation totally depended on rains. The farmers did not have to till the land, just clear and burn it; then, men would poke holes in the rows for women to drop rice seeds in them. They started to plant in May-June and harvest in October-November. The harvest was not for commercial purposes but would be kept only for household consumption or shared among villagers throughout the year. The foothill area was not actually very suitable for growing rice because it was close to the forest, which was full of birds that

⁴⁰ Interviews with Ms. Chian Nakloet (Age 83) at Ban Rong Lek, Nakhon, on 3 June 2011.

would eat the crops quickly. The upland farmers had to monitor their rice fields closely for several months before harvest season. Some communities in this ecozone, like Kiriwong Village, gave up rice cultivation for these reasons and focused mainly on their orchards to exchange their fruit harvest for rice from the lowland communities (Lertwicha 1989:20).

Surrounded by forests, people in the foothill area usually would have had mixed orchards that included bananas, durians, rambutans (*Nephelium lappaccum*), mangosteens (*Garcinia mangostana*), langsat (*Lansium*), sato (*Parkia sapeciosa*) and other kind of rain forest fruits. These fruits grew best in the foothill area but were traded widely. Sometimes a form of arboriculture was practiced in which the fruit trees were planted or maintained in the forest. Most often, the trees were already part of the forest, so people just took care of them and let them blend into the forest. One particular village that is still practicing this kind of aboriculture vigorously is Kiriwong in Lan Saka District. Today, this village is a highlight of ecotourism in Nakhon Province.

Tin ores were abundant in the foothill area. The Nakhon Mountain Range is actually dotted with tin mines, although most of these use modern technology to blow up mountains and dig up ores of tin and other minerals from deep underground. Prior to these modern mines, tin ores were traditionally extracted from river beds and banks in the foothill area where rivers flow with a strong current, erode minerals from the mountain, and drop them onto the river beds. The rivers could not carry these ores as far as the coastal plain because they were heavy. The ores were thus dropped in the foothill area, and the rivers only carried sand, silt and clay to the lowland.

In the Rong Lek area, for example, tin ores were traditionally extracted by sieving of the Klai and Kan Rivers. Searching for tin involved diving at waterfalls and waterbends because at

these spots the heavy ores would sink into the river beds because the currents would not have sufficient force to push them along the course. A diver only needed a wooden plate to dive down and dig the sand out, and then she/he would resurface and sieve through the sand to find the red tin ores, some as big as a baby's head. Another way to find tin ores is to channel part of the river to clean out soil from the bank to reveal the ores that are too heavy for the water to carry away. This method is more labor-intensive than the first.

Tin from Tambralinga was considered high quality and was highly prized by foreign merchants, including the Chinese in the 14th century (Wheatley 1966:77). In the recent past, the tin ores were still sold to businessmen who came from Nakhon City to buy them at a high price. However, it is not known how tin ores were handled in the Early Tambralinga Period. Were they sold as ores or melted down to extract purer tin to make ingots? Did the merchants go up to the foothill communities to buy the tin or did the foothill people come downstream to sell it at the lowland or coastal communities? To our knowledge, there have not been any ingots found in coastal Nakhon, but this may be due to lack of research in the present. It is likely that tin was traded in the same way that other forest products were in the Early Tambralinga Period. One way or another, these products were probably transported to the east coast or across the mountain to the other side of the peninsula. They ended up in the maritime trade network that would carry them across the oceans.

West of the foothill area lies the massive Nakhon Mountain Range. The mountain and its jagged peaks offered landmarks for incoming ships. This range largely isolates the heartland of Tambralinga from the western part of the peninsula. However, there are a series of river routes and walking trails across this elongated range, especially between Lan Saka and the Kutduan River where a bronze drum was found as aforementioned. There are also two large openings in

the north and south of the range in Nakhon Province. The northern one is at the northern end of Sichon District and opens directly to the Bay of Bandon; the southern opening is just south of the location of the Chong Khoi Valley Inscriptions and opens to Krabi and Trang Province on the west coast. These offered passageways for the people in the heartland of Tambralinga to travel to the west coast of the peninsula.

Aside from these limited passageways, however, the Nakhon Mountain Range has been an enormous obstacle in the communication between coastal Nakhon and the rest of the peninsula. In the reign of King Rama V when the railway was first constructed, the course of the railway to Nakhon City presented a great difficulty. A long tunnel was dug at around our second opening mentioned above, after passing through it the train turned back north for around 35 km. to Nakhon City. This area has been relatively isolated and hard to reach compared to other areas in Peninsular Siam such as the Bay of Bandon in the north and the Bay of Phang-Nga in the west. Yet, Coastal Nakhon was a heartland of one of the most remarkable civilization in Southeast Asia. Why? The current author believes that one of the most important contributing factors lies in the mountains.

The Nakhon Mountain Range offered many of the exotic goods valued so highly by the foreign merchants. It enabled Tambralinga to establish itself as a trading center and as a significant destination for foreign merchants as early as the 2nd century CE. Chinese records in the 13th-14th centuries mentioned the desirable goods from Tambralinga as bee's wax, lakawood, gharuwood, ebony, camphor, ivory, rhinoceros horn, high quality tin, hornbill casques, pearl, and turtles' carapaces (Wheatley 1966:67, 77). It is important to note that only the last two items, pearl and turtles' carapaces, were from the seashore ecozone and none was from the alluvial plain. Therefore, without products of the the forest, the coastal Kingdom of Tambralinga would

not have had anything to attract foreign merchants. The existence of Tambralinga as an important trade center depended on the wealth of forest resources in the mountain area. The availability of these resources was a crucial reason why Tambralinga was where it was. Although the kingdom's heartland was relatively isolated, it had relatively close and easy access both to the mountain area in the west and to the sea in the east.

The biodiversity of the rain forest of the Nakhon Mountain Range is enormous. In the recent past, villagers⁴¹ who lived in the foothill areas or in the valleys in the mountains usually went up into the rain forest to hunt and collect forest products. These products mainly included bee's honey, gharuwood, medicinal plants, and wild animals. Each product required different techniques for collecting, and new collectors had to learn how to do things from experienced collectors. Knowledge was been passed on from one generation to the next. The thick forest was a fearsome space in the traditional conception (Aieosriwong 1995; Tiyanich 1997). To enter this space, one needed a proper knowledge of how to deal with the wild life. Hunters were exclusively men in Nakhon area. They organized into groups and made offerings to the supernatural powers before going into the rain forest. They tracked animals by looking at their footprints, hoping also that they would not run into man-eating tigers. Sometimes, they had to build platforms up in big trees and wait for days for animals to walk by. Forest swamps and streams were common place to hunt animals as they came to drink water. Wild animals hunted included boars, deer, bears, and monkeys. Once hunters made a kill, they would clean out the animal's intestine in the stream and carry the remains back to the village in the foothill. Wild animals were usually too heavy for one hunter to carry it back alone, so he would need a hunting group to help him. When they reached the village, the meat would be divided among the hunters

⁴¹ Interviews with Mr. Damrong Kaeomi (a hunter, Age 70) at Ban Krungching, Nakhon, on 3 June 2011.

and other villagers. Parts of animals, such as hides and horns, could be sold to businessmen in the city.

Collecting aromatic woods and medicinal plants require knowledge. Collecting the wrong medicinal plants can lead to death. Aromatic woods are diverse, but gharuwood is the most common type. However, not all aromatic woods automatically offer an aromatic scent. For example, gharuwood has to have a darkened core which is caused by the penetrating of certain insects in order to give off the desirable scent. Collectors had to be able to identify this characteristic from the surface of the trunk before engaging in the laborious process of cutting the tree down. Even a big gharuwood sometimes only provided a small portion of the darkened wood suitable for making the perfume or incense desired throughout the ancient world, from the Red Sea to China.

Bee products were perhaps the most difficult thing to collect in the rain forest. Bees were very dangerous, but bee's wax, honey, and brood, were highly prized in ancient times. Bee's wax was particularly important in the maritime trade network as it could be used in the production of food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and candles, for example. The lost-wax technique that produced the beautiful bronze statues across Asia was also dependent on the availability of bee's wax and tin; both were mentioned in the Chinese record and could be found in the Nakhon Mountain Range. Thus, one may imagine how important Tambralinga would have been in the maritime trade network.

The collection of natural bee products was very complicated as bees can kill instantly with their stingers or they can make the collectors fall down from a towering tree. Only a handful of hunters had the knowledge to collect bee products safely. First, the collector had to be able to identify the tree on which the beehives might be situated. Different trees gave

different tastes and colors to the honey. Bees usually hide their hives high up in very tall trees. The bee hunter might have to spot the bees at the stream where they get water and follow them back to their hives. Then, once the hive was identified, the hunter would prepare equipment which he would make from the surrounding trees, vines, and leaves, such as wooden knives, ladders, ropes, and torches. Then, at sunset, the hunter would start to chant sacred words, light a torch, and climb up the tree. The chanting would give him confidence and concentration to finish the job properly. The collecting of bee products had to be done at night and sometimes it took several nights to finish, as there were usually many hives on the same tree. A hunter told us that the largest number of hives he collected in one tree was 80! Finally, the hunter would use smoke from the torch to chase the bees away from their hives while continuing to chant. This process was the most dangerous as the hunter would be constantly attacked both by bees and also by protective spirits (nang mai). If the hunter was not experienced, he could fall down and die as often happened. It was said that once the hunter was stung by the bees several times, his body would be numb and would not feel the pain later on although he was stung many more times afterward. The forest spirits could be appeased by sacred chanting. These spirits were very real to the hunters, who believed that they could hear them jumping from branch to branch and felt them breathing on their necks. These spirits could knock them off the tree easily if not properly handled. When ready, the hunter would put the container made of leaves underneath the hive and then cut the hive loose from the tree. The hive would be passed down to the ground in the container by vine rope. Then, the hunter would continue on to the next hive. Many hunters died in the process. Given the difficulties, it is not surprising that bee's wax was highly valued by foreign merchants.

In the distant past, these forest goods were probably collected by the native forest people or *Orang Asli* (or Semang Sakai or Ngo in Thai). Although there are no such groups in the northern part of the Nakhon Mountain Range today, these people are still living in the southern part of the range (called the Bantat Mountain Range), especially in Phattalung, Trang and Satun Provinces; in the Sankalakiri Mountain Range, especially in Yala and Narathiwat Provinces (Maninun and Sirirak 2003:11); and in Peninsular Malaysia. It has been said that these people were also seen in the recent past in the Phuket Mountain Range in Surat Thani Province to the northwest of Nakhon Province⁴². Therefore, it would not be surprising if these people were actually roaming the Nakhon Mountain Range in the Early Tambralinga Period since they are still living in the vicinity of this part of the range.

These forest groups may have been important to the collection of forest products for the Tambralinga Kingdom. Some scholars (e.g. Bronson 1977) believed that these groups were controlled by the coastal centers and had little or no power in the trade negotiations. However, they were actually mobile and had great agency as Orang Laut in the sea according to recent research (see B. Andaya 1993 and L. Andaya 2008). L. Andaya (2008:204) discussed the relationship between the Malayu on the coast and the Orang Asli that the complementarity of their economies encouraged the maintenance of their differing lifestyles. The Orang Asli were indispensable for the Malayu kingdoms as they were the principal collectors of forest products in great demand in the international marketplace, while the Malayu provided them with iron, salt, cloth, ceramics and prestige goods. They had gained an intimate knowledge of the forest and how to collect forest goods as they had occupied a specific bounded area of exploitation for a long time and passed down their knowledge from one generation to the next. To acquire their

⁴² Personal communication with Mr. Chakrit Sittirit, an archaeologist of the 14th Regional Office of the Fine Arts Department.

service and forest goods, the kingdoms in the lowland had to make good offers to them, perhaps in the forms of material gifts, such as iron tools and clothes, and honorary titles (L. Andaya 2008:204). Otherwise, they could move away and work for another kingdom; then, such the lowland kingdoms would be left with no or far fewer forest goods to trade with foreign merchants. This would ruin the economy of the kingdom. Thus, respectful and social ties were usually established to ensure the flow of valuable forest goods to the coastal centers.

Rivers, Walking Trails and Social Connectivity

If the beach ridge was the backbone of the geography of the heartland of Tambralinga, rivers would certainly have been its veins and the walking trails its ligaments. They connected communities together, facilitated the flow of resources and information, and strengthened the unity of the kingdom. They tied all diverse ecological zones described above into one geography of the heartland.

In a simplified map, one may see that a series of rivers flowing from the Nakhon Mountain Range in the west to the seashore in the east of the heartland in more or less straight lines, one after the other. However, in reality, these rivers have, since the ancient past, been bent, turned, and linked to one another as organically as the veins that spread all over the body and link every part together. The organic network of rivers changed through time and left marks on the landscape every time it changed. Therefore, one may even see traces of ancient river courses near Early Tambralinga sites (c. the 5th-11th century CE).

Rivers brought water from the mountains to feed people and rice fields in the coastal lands, much like veins feed every organ in the body. They also brought alluvial deposits to the lowland plain, which made the land fertile for agriculture. Unlike other areas that had massive

river systems and flat flood plains, such as the Tapi River Basin in the Bay of Bandon, the small, short rivers in the Tambralinga's heartland did not usually cause heavy and prolonged flooding that destroyed houses, livestock and rice fields. These small rivers drained water out to the sea better than a single big river, while also giving sufficient water to the rice fields.

Rivers were used as crucial passageways to commute between communities in different ecozones as they cut across all of them from the mountains to the sea. In the recent past, people in the mountain and foothill areas, called by the lowland people "khon nua" or upland people, used rivers to transport their products to the coastal plain and the seashore communities to exchange with the goods from these areas. People from Khiriwong Village who lived near the headwater of the Tha Di River came down to Nakhon City and to Pak Phanang at the seashore with their unique dug canoes filled with fruit and forest products to exchange for salt, dried fish, shrimp pastes, rice and cloths. The early stage of the journey from the headwater was not easy as the water was shallow and the river course was rocky. People had to push and drag the boats for half a day until they reached the point where the river was deep enough to punt and paddle the boats. They usually came down in March to acquire rice because it was the rice harvest month in the lowlands. In August, they would provide the lowland people with food when they were growing rice (Lertwicha 1989:19). They exchanged their fruit produces and forest products, such as bananas, concentrated durians, and sato, with rice. They slept on their roofed boats in the rivers full of crocodiles, but they were not afraid of them as they had learned how to navigate through them. The Changhun River in March would have been filled with boats from the upland areas⁴³. The upland people also came down in September, after fruit harvest, to worship the Great Reliquary at Wat Mahathat in the Tenth Month Festival (ngan duan sip), to buy goods, and

⁴³ Interviews with Mr. Saicho Nawathong (Age 75) at Ban Kiakkai, Nakhon, on 9 July 2009, and Ms. Somsuang Khongtawan (Age 80) at Ban Changhun, Nakhon, on 10 July 2009.

to socialize with other people at the festival. This has been the most important festival when everybody in Nakhon comes to worship the Great Reliquary and send food to the deceased ancestors.

Sometimes, people from the lowland communities would punt boats up to the upland communities to exchange rice for fruit. They always came with several boats and would blow the horn to signal their arrival. There was no fixed price in exchange. Usually, if the lowland people gave the upland people a boatful of rice, then the upland people would fill their boat with fruits in return (Lertwicha 1989:19). The exchange was done in a social setting rather than a commercial one.

An old villager in Rong Lek in the mountain area recalled that her father used to buy bananas from the neighbors and transport them by boat along the Klai River to the sea and then paddle south to Pak Phanang to sell them. These bananas had to be collected when they were still green as the journey to Pak Phanang took several days. The bananas would turn yellow and ripen by the time the boat reach the sea. Pak Phanang was a rice producing area close to the sea on the more recent alluvial plain, and bananas did not grow well in this area. Her father bought salt, dried fish, and shrimp paste on the way back home.

Though coastal, the sea journey was not completely safe. A local senior potter⁴⁴ told us that her mother once went by the Maying River to the sea and then turned south to Pak Phanang to sell pots and pottery items, such as toys and whistles for children, as there was no pottery workshop in that area. The selling took several days, so she had to sleep at the temple. Once the pots were sold out, she bought salt, dried fish, and shrimp paste and started back home. However, on the way back, she got stuck at sea for several days as there was a storm that

⁴⁴ Interviews with Ms. Champen Rakmuang (a potter, Age 57) at Ban Maying, Nakhon, on 5 June 2011.

prevented the boat from entering the Maying River. It was a life-threatening situation that has been remembered through generations.

Besides the riverine passage, people also walked between communities. The most prominent walking trail was, obviously, along the beach ridge through which people from all clusters could commute. People from the southern end of the heartland used this trail to go and buy cows, water buffalos, and horses from Sichon at the northern end as mentioned previously. However, there were a myriad of walking trails scattered throughout the heartland. Among them were main trails that cut across all ecozones and ended up at the beach ridge. One may see the beach ridge as a highway running from the northern to the southern ends of the heartland, whereas the smaller trails were like local roads linking inland communities to the highway. The walking trails had the same function as rivers in terms of passage. They cut across all ecozones allowing different groups to communicate with each other and for different resources to be circulated.

People who lived on or near the beach ridge would usually walk on the trails to the foothill areas with their cows after they tilled the rice fields. They would leave their cows with their friends or relatives there because in the rainy season the lowland would be flooded and their cows would have no place to live whereas the foothill areas would not be flooded (Lertwicha 1989:20). Water buffalos, on the other hand, can survive in the flood and live in a swampy environment. After the rice was harvested and the fields were ready to be tilled again in June, people from the lowland would go to the upland areas to get their cows back for plowing and they would also carry with them rice for their friends and relatives who took care of their cows during the rainy season⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ Interview with Ms. Chian Nakloet (Age 83) at Ban Rong Lek, Nakhon, on 3 June 2011.

It is important to note that along the rivers and walking trails, people in the recent past were exchanging goods based on social ties. The exchange of resources was perceived as enabling each other to fill in resources that the others lacked. They thought of the people in the other ecozones as friends and relatives. They were socially close although they lived far away. When the upland people came down to exchange fruit products for rice, they thought that they were visiting a brother. That is why there was no fixed system of pricing. They were dealing with each other as relatives. This is also true when the lowland farmers had to leave their cows, one of the most valuable things in their agricultural lives, with the upland people. They would never be able to do that if they did not completely trust them. The upland people took care of the cows in their turn because they would lose social connections and their reputations if the cows died due to their ignorance. This social connectivity was based on co-dependence; they needed each other.

The distribution of the Early Tambralinga sites across the ecozones along the rivers from the mountain to the sea suggests that people in the early period also used rivers to travel and to goods. Walking trails, such as those that linked Rong Lek to the Tha Sung Estuary and Wat Phrang to Nakhon City, were probably used the same way in the past. Although walking trails are difficult to identify in the archaeological record, the way of life of villagers in the recent past described previously may offer valuable clues. It is also likely that the exchange system in the Early Tambralinga Period (c. the 5th-11th century) was based on social ties. They would have perceived each other not as their business partners but their friends and relatives. This perception fostered unity among communities, which in turn supported the cohesion of the kingdom.

CHAPTER FIVE

TAMBRALINGA, ITS NEIGHBORS, AND NAKHON SI THAMMARAT

Introduction

Because it was located on the narrow isthmian tract between two oceans, Tambralinga had an openness to trade and cultural influences; its art was both assured and cosmopolitan. Almost every major artistic style developed in South and Southeast Asia is represented there (O'Connor 1996:596). Its strategic position guaranteed the involvement of this kingdom in the socio-political and economic affairs of other polities from the Coromandel shores to South Sumatra and the Lower Mekong. Tambralinga was involved in the Chinese ceramic trade at least from the 9th century. This trade seemed to reach its peak in the 13th to 14th centuries, contemporaneous with the rise of the Nakhon Si Thammarat Kingdom (or the Late Tambralinga Kingdom).

This chapter will discuss the relationships between Tambralinga and its neighbors, especially Srivijaya. It will also explore the settlement pattern of the lower part of Tambralinga's heartland in the 11th- 13th centuries in relation to the distribution of the Chinese ceramics. The chapter will end with the discussion of the rise of the Nakhon Si Thammarat Kingdom (the Nakhon Kingdom) and the preliminary results of archaeological excavations in the modern town of Nakhon.

Tambralinga and Its Neighbors

The immediate neighbors of Tambralinga were in the isthmian tract. Several ancient communities with brick ruins, stone sculptures, and other artifacts have been found throughout this region. They had varying fortunes occasioned by shifting coastline and river courses, as

well as changes in trading patterns (O'Connor 1986a:1). These early historic communities (c. the 5th to 11th centuries) were mainly located on the coasts and served as termini of trans-isthmian routes. There were six major groups, four on the east coast and two on the west coast. From north to south, the groups on the east coast include the areas around the Bay of Bandon, in the heartland of Tambralinga, as well as in the Sating Phra Peninsula, and around the Bay of Pattani. The west coast (or the Andaman coast) was less crowded and included two areas that were hundreds of kilometers apart: in the Takuapa and Bujang Valley areas.

The Takuapa area was an important trading station that had close connection with the Bay of Bandon on the east coast via trans-isthmian routes. The site of Thung Tuk on the eastern side of the island of Ko Kho Khao in the Takuapa area yielded an artifact assemblage comprising of beads, glass fragments, and the Tang Chinese ceramics similar to that of Leam Pho, an important seaport in the Bay of Bandon (Thepchai 1988). These sites seem to serve as the terminal stations on the trans-isthmian routes in the 8th-9th centuries in the upper part of Peninsular Siam. The earlier trading centers, including Phukhao Thong, Khuan Luk Pat, and Khao Sam Kaeo, and the trans-isthmian routes between them had already declined in use⁴⁶.

Recent excavations at Thung Tuk in 2003 by Boonyarit Chaisuwan (2011:96-103) yielded a large amount of Chinese and Persian ceramics, beads, glass fragments that were dated to the 8th-11th centuries; the date range was also confirmed by C-14 dates of charcoal samples from excavations. Eight brick structures were unearthed. In terms of their plans, the religious architectures faced east and had chambers in the central space for enshrining images. Some stone bases with circular depression at the middle would have served to support wooden pillars. Terracotta tiles were also found. Chaisuwan (2011:97) suggests that these characteristics are

⁴⁶ See Boonyarit Chaisuwan's article (2011) for detailed information on the Takuapa-Bandon routes and the development of seaports on the Andaman coast.

very similar to the monuments at the Bujang Valley in Malaysia, where beads, glass, and Persian wares were also discovered. Both seemed to be involved in the same trading pattern and there may have been cultural and commercial connections between the two sites on the same coast. Persian wares of the 8th-9th centuries were also found in our excavations in Nakhon as well and will be discussed later.

The Takuapa area is also famous for its sculptures. Among them, the most important one is the Visnu of Takuapa (found at the Phra Noe Hill), dated to the 7th or 8th century, which represents the peak of the development of the isthmian school of sculpture and is regarded as one of the greatest achievements of stone sculpture to be found in Southeast Asia (O'Connor 1972:55) (Figure 5.1). There is also a group of statues found at the Phra Narai (Narayana) Hill that strongly demonstrate late Pallava style and can be dated between 750 and 850 CE (O'Connor 1972:54). Next to the statues is a stone slab inscribed with Tamil Characters, palaeographically dated to the 9th century, which mentioned the construction of a tank and the presence of the Manigramam merchant guild of South India (Wheatley 1966:196). Tamil activities were seen in Tambralinga as well.

On the Gulf of Siam, the Bay of Bandon was a terminus of the upper trans-isthmian routes. There were a number of early communities in this area⁴⁷. The important ones comprise of Chaiya, Leam Pho, and Khao Siwichai. This area provided two of the earliest Visnu sculptures, one from Chaiya (dated to no later than 400 CE) and another from the Singkhon Cave⁴⁸. Three early Visnu images, dated to the late 6th to early 7th centuries, were also found at

⁴⁷ See Fine Arts Department (2009)

⁴⁸ As mentioned previously, the Singkhon Cave statue is possibly, but not absolutely, Visnu.

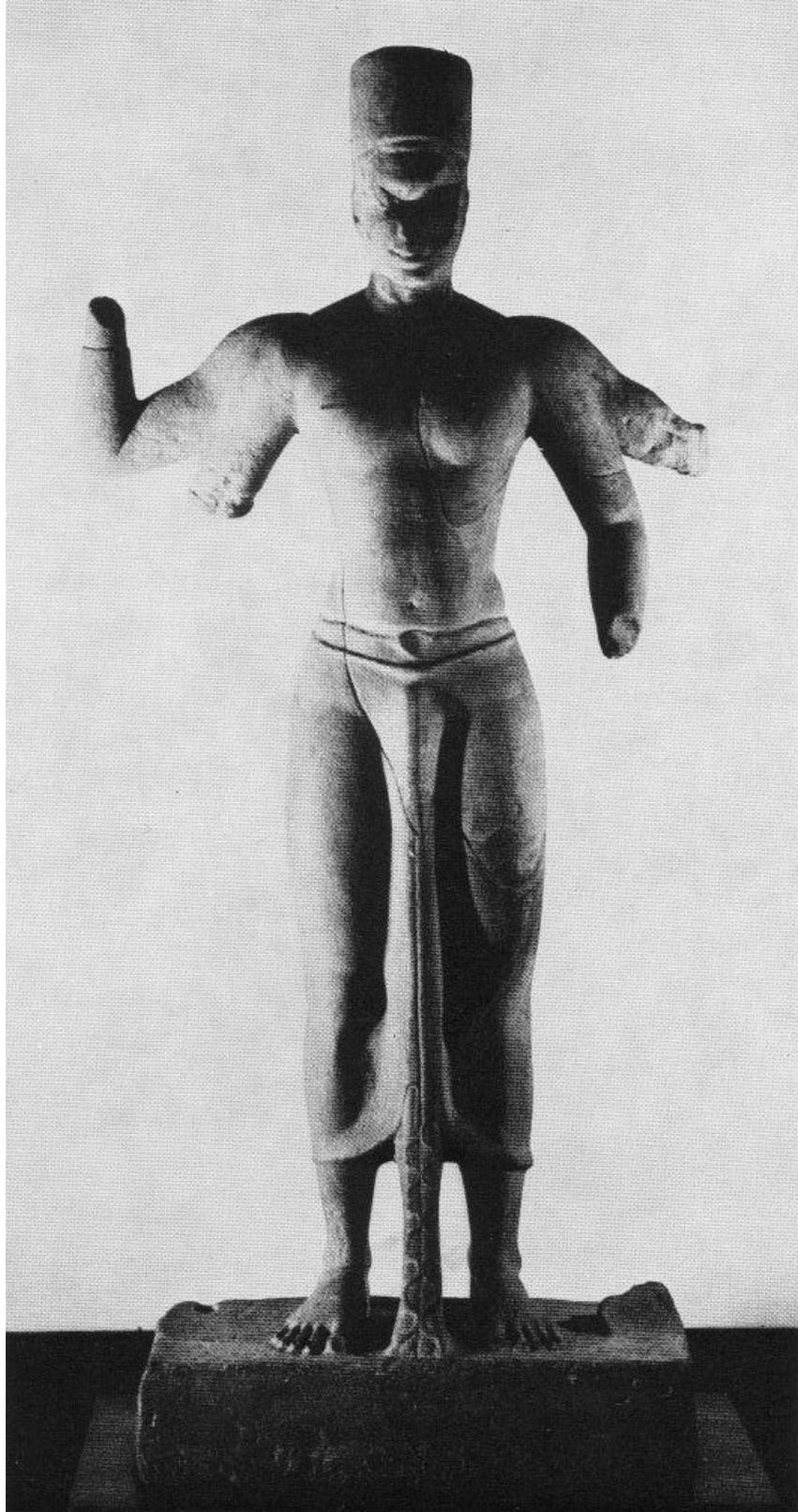


Figure 5.1 Vishnu image from the Phra Noe Hill (Photo courtesy of Stanley O'Connor)

Khao Siwichai⁴⁹. Like Khao Kha in the heartland of Tambralinga, Khao Siwichai is a low hill running roughly from northeast to southwest. There are at least 13 brick structures on the hilltops; some of them had different phases of construction on top of one another. Recent excavations in 2000-2004 at the site revealed complexity of space arrangement on the hilltops that are not yet fully understood and some interesting finds such as lingas, yonis, stone architectural parts, beads, *dharmacakra* (wheel of law), votive tablets, and pottery sherds (Fine Arts Department 2009). It may be preliminarily assumed that this site had been used at least since the 6th century and for both Hindu and Buddhist activities.

Chaiya is a moated town and perhaps the most well-known site in this area. It is located only 7 km. to the west of Leam Pho. In the vicinity of the moated city, three important Mahayana Buddhist structures, dated to c. the late 8th-early 9th centuries and generally assigned to “the Srivijayan art”, were identified, including Wat Kaeo (Wat Keu), Wat Long, and Wat Borommathat Chaiya (or Wat Phra That Chaiya) (Wales 1976:106; Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002:305). Most of the sites in this area were situated on a series of beach ridges; however, these beach ridges were fragmented unlike those in the heartland of Tambralinga. The longest one of them is the ancient Riu Beach Ridge (San Sai Riu), running from north to south, on which Chaiya City, Wat Long, Wat Kaeo are located (Thepchai 1988:7).

At the middle of the isthmus, a moated town called Wiang Sa (or Wiang Sra) was situated. It was on a tributary of the Tapi River that flowed from the Nakhon Range to the Bay of Bandon. Wiang Sa was a link between the ancient communities on the west coast to the Bay of Bandon and Tambralinga on the east coast. From there, merchants could walk through the mountain passes to Tambralinga’s heartland. Today, modern roads are constructed on these

⁴⁹ Khao Siwichai (the Srivijaya Hill) is also called Hua Khao Bon and Khao Phra Narai (Narayana).

passageways. In Wiang Sra, a Buddha image of Sarnath Style dated to c. the late 5th to early 6th centuries, two Visnu images dated to the first half of the 6th century, and two Chola-styled statues dated to the 10th to 11th centuries (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002:120, 143, 382).

South of Tambralinga is the Sating Phra (or Satingpra) Peninsula situated between Songkhla Lake and the Gulf of Siam. This area has several important sites such as Khao Kuha and Sating Phra and provides a Ganesa image dated to the end of the 6th century which may be the oldest one in the Malay Peninsula (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002:133), and two early Visnu images dated to c. the 7th century (O'Connor 1972:46); one of which is first published in this study as mentioned in Chapter Two. Janice Stargardt (1998:139, 158) conducted archaeological studies in this area and proposed that "the Satingpra Civilization" engaged in intensive agriculture supported by an irrigation system of complex fields, tanks, and canals, and this enhanced its position in the trade network during the 6th to 13th centuries. However, her hypothesis was challenged by Jane Allen (2000) who instead proposed that the emergence of urbanization at Sating Phra was merited by its role as a coastal center in the trade network, rather than its irrigated agriculture, since the agricultural plains did not exist during that period of time. The subsistence for people in this trading area was supported by hinterland groups who practiced dryland cultivation in the hills.

The area around the Bay of Pattani is on the east coast, south of the Sating Phra Peninsula. The most well-known site in this area is Yarang which is situated on high ground near a tributary of the Pattani River. This moated town and its vicinity housed a number of brick structures, generally associated with Buddhism. However, some Hindu sculptures were also found at the site, such as a 6th-century linga (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: illustration 82). Recently, P. Noonsuk (2004b) conducted a survey near Yarang and found an ancient Hindu community at

Ban Bana where a yoni, dated to c. the 6th century, and there were some stone architectural parts (c. the 6th to 11th centuries) similar to those at Tambralinga. This community may have had connections with Hindu communities in Tambralinga and coexisted with the Buddhist communities at Yarang. The area around the Bay of Pattani could connect with the Bujang Valley on the west coast of the isthmian tract through river systems and walking trails across the mountains.

The Bujang Valley is located in South Kedah, Malaysia. Four Buddhist inscriptions suggest that this area has been a trading center since the 5th century CE. Archaeological finds, such as Tang and Persian ceramics, glass vessels, and beads, dated to the 8th to 9th centuries are abundant (Nik Hassan and Othman 1990:87). A number of brick structures, dated to the 8th to 13th centuries, were discovered in this large valley between the Merbok and Muda Rivers (Sungai Merbok and Sungai Muda), as well as in the area to the south of the Muda River. These river systems provided passageways to the sea. The sites that were excavated were mostly along the banks of the Bujang River, a tributary of the Merbok River. Although many of the brick structures, stone inscriptions, and sculptures were related Buddhism, some evidence of Hinduism were also found, such as a linga and Hindu temples of *vimana-mandapa* type (Nik Hassan and Othman 1990:1-9). New discoveries in the Bujang Valley have been recently reported in the newspaper⁵⁰; however, I have not been unable to find any scholarly articles on this at the moment. It is reported that the Sungai Batu archaeological project which began in 2009 discovered a religious and metal industry complex at the Sugai Batu area, in which a metal foundry was dated 50 BCE using the radiocarbon technique by the Beta Analytic Inc. laboratory in Florida. It is claimed that the date has made this metal foundry the earliest man-made

⁵⁰ The Sun Daily Newspaper Online on April 4th, 2012. The link is: <http://www.thesundaily.my/news/339238>.

structure in Southeast Asia. Some nearby iron-smelting structures were also dated to 60 CE and a ritualistic monument was dated to 100 CE. Based on an interview by the newspaper with Professor Mokhtar Saidin, director of the Centre for Global Archaeological Research of Universiti Sains Malaysia, thus far, 97 ancient structures have been identified and 29 of them excavated. The Malaysian government was pleased to learn that the Sugai Batu was one of the earliest civilizations in Southeast Asia and had allocated 20 million ringgits through the National Heritage Department for the conservation of the Sungai Batu area. The research in this area will be very important for the studies of the isthmian tract in the future.

To the east across the Gulf of Siam, Tambralinga had a close relationship with the Khmer Empire in the Lower Mekong. That area had social and commercial contacts with the east coast of Peninsular Siam since the late centuries BCE when trade items, such as beads, ornaments, and metal objects were transported across the Gulf of Siam. The direct, intensified connection specifically between Tambralinga and the Lower Mekong can be traced back at least to the 5th century CE when the conch on the hip style of Visnu images may have been transmitted from there to Oc Eo (Figure 2.17). The trade pattern that linked the two areas together across the Gulf of Siam formed a kind of neighborhood with shared culture among them (O'Connor 1986a:8-9). In the beginning of the 11th century after Srivijaya was weakened by Chola's raid, the relationship between Tambralinga and the Khmer Empire grew stronger. Some historical sources, according to Wolters (1958:591), suggest that a ruler, possibly named Jayaviravarman, from Tambralinga carried out an expedition to claim the throne of Angkor in the early 11th century. This reflects a close relationship and cultural similarities between the two kingdoms that granted the Tambralingan prince the confidence that "he shared enough of a common elite culture to be a successful contender for the throne at Angkor" (O'Connor

1986e:147). Their close relationship was also materialized by O'Connor (1986e) who examined a number of artworks, such as votive tablets and bronze sculptures, and ornaments for chariots, in the Khmer styles of the 11th to 13th centuries found in Tambralinga. The Khmer scripts were used in several Tambralingan inscriptions, such as Inscriptions Nos. 24 and 29, and until recently, the scripts were widely used in the Buddhist texts in Nakhon and Southern Thailand.

Across the Bay of Bengal, Tambralinga was in contact with Andhradesa at least since the 5th century CE when the conch on the hip style of Visnu images was introduced. Relationships with the Coromandel Coast of India, and with the Tamil people, may have begun even earlier. The Tamil inscription (No. 29) at Wat Mahathat and a pair of South Indian-styled linga and yoni at Than Phra Sayom in Nakhon (Figure 5.2), both probably dated to the 9th century, suggest that there was a strong Tamil influence in Tambralinga. For the pair of the South Indian-styled linga and yoni, it was published previously but the lower part of the large yoni (the ablution basin for linga) was covered with dirt that only the round shape of its top part could be seen. However, recent excavation by the Fine Arts Department revealed its complete shape that it is a round, tall base with a restricted waist in the middle of its profile. This style of yoni may be comparable to that of the Vijayalana Colisvara temple at Narttamalai in Tamil Nadu, South India, which can be dated to the mid-9th century (Huntington 1999:510-511).

Most likely, there were Tamil communities in Tambralinga and in other places in the isthmian tract. Besides the group of statues of the late Pallava style, dated between 750 and 850 CE, found at Takuapa (O'Connor 1972:54), a number of Tamil-styled statues have been found in various places in the isthmus. For example, a bronze head of Visnu dated to the mid-10th century was found at Wat Suthawat, Chumphon Province, which Krairiksh (1980:192) mentioned that its style was closely related to Chola-style Visnu images of the same period and this statue might



Figure 5.2 South Indian-styled linga and yoni at Than Phra Sayom in Nakhon

have been imported from India at the time of the Chola raid in the isthmus. Two Chola-style statues of Vatuka-Bhairava (c. the 10th century) and Visnu (c. the 11th century) were discovered at Wiang Sra (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002:fig. 183,185; Krairiksh 1980:190) while a Surya image dated to the 10th to 11th centuries was found at Wat Sala Tung, Chaiya (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002:fig. 186).

A powerful Tamil merchant guild, the *Manigramam*, was very active in Takuapa in the 9th century as suggested by the Takuapa Inscription; therefore, it would not be surprising to see the presence of such a guild in Tambralinga. The *Manigramam* would have attempted to

establish their posts at the termini on both sides of the isthmus as well as at the urban centers in the middle of the isthmus to guarantee the flow of their goods through the trans-isthmian routes. The Tamil inscriptions and statues found at Takuapa on the west coast, at Wiang Sra in the middle, and at Chaiya and Nakhon on the east coast probably suggest the attempts of the Tamil merchants to set up stations along the trans-isthmian routes and at their termini on both coasts. To have a trading post at Tambralinga would have been a great benefit to the Tamil merchants because they could extend their trade to the vast market in the South China Sea and to have a close control of their operations in this region. The Tamil commercial interest probably led to the Chola's military expedition of c. 1025 in the Straits of Melaka⁵¹. The Chola may have felt at that time that they had to protect their interest in maritime Southeast Asia. The main purpose of the raid seems to be to weaken Srivijaya and its network. Tambralinga was one of the targets because it was in Srivijaya's network and the Cholas may have wanted to ensure their access through the trans-isthmian routes to the South China Sea. The raid would have made clear that Tamil interest and commercial operations in this area should not be interfered with. This also suggests that Tambralinga was an important trade center crucial enough to the Tamil to pay their military visit⁵².

Tambralinga and Srivijaya

The main link between Tambralinga and Srivijaya is the Ligor Inscription (No. 23) of 775 CE, written in Sanskrit with modified Pallava scripts, found at Wat Sema Muang in Nakhon City. It mentioned the foundation of Buddhist buildings and a donation by the King of Srivijaya

⁵¹ The expedition was recorded in the Tanjore Inscription of 1030 (Sumio 2004:53).

⁵² For more information about the Tamil involvement in Southeast Asia, please see Kulke, Kesavapany, and Sakhuja (2009), McKinnon (1996), and Wisseman-Christie (1998).

to a Mahayana Buddhist Trinity (P. Noonsuk 1997b:165; Veeraprajak 1986:20). The Tanjore Inscription of 1030 in South India from the period of the Chola Dynasty also listed Madamalinggam (Tabralinga) under the targets in the expedition against Srivijaya as mentioned previously (Sumio 2004:53). A Chinese document, *Zhu-fan-zhi*, which presented the situation in either the late 12th or early 13th century, mentioned that Dan-ma-ling (Tambralinga) was a dependency of San-fo-qi (Srivijaya) (Sumio 2004:49). From these textual evidence, the connection between Tambralinga and Srivijaya is clear.

According to historical records, Srivijaya was an early kingdom in South Sumatra, which flourished in the trans-Asiatic trade network between the seventh to thirteenth centuries AD. It was originally centered at Palembang on the Musi River (Wolters 1967; Manguin 1993a: 23). Since there are a number of historical sources, both foreign documents and local stone inscriptions, that are related to Srivijaya, its history has been discussed extensively by historians (e.g. L. Andaya 2008; Wolters 1967). Wolters (1999: 129) and Miksic (2004: 239) proposed that the political structure of Srivijaya was characterized by the mandala political system in which its political management was based on personal relationships between rulers and subjects and its political landscape may have represented a gigantic mandala, a replica or cosmos, with Mount Meru at its center. Kulke (1993) proceeded a step further to discuss the details of the kingdom's political structure. Based on his structural analysis of Srivijayan inscriptions found in various sites in south Sumatra, he suggested that there were several spatial concentric circles of political authority surrounding the kadtuan (royal center or palace) of the datu (ruler) of Srivijaya including (from inner to outer), vanua (kadtuan's immediate surroundings), samaryyada (surrounding neighborhood), and mandala (outlying tributary chieftaincies) which together constituted the Bhumi (land or country) of Srivijaya.

Archaeological research on settlement patterns in South Sumatra demonstrates that there was a number of early historic sites distributing along major rivers and their tributaries, especially those of the Musi and Batang Hari Rivers. This pattern appeared 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). Some of these sites provided statues 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 mainly using rivers as the means of communication and transportation (1985: 36). Although there still exists a debate about the location of the capital of Srivijaya, archaeological study at Palembang supports its candidacy since the site yielded an overwhelming amount of Chinese and local ceramic sherds to the degree that has never been discovered at any other sites in this area. Palembang also housed Buddhist, especially Mahayana, and Hindu statues and monuments (i.e. possible stupa structures) (Manguin 1993a). This evidence indicates its status as a crucial urban, trading, religious center, and probably the capital of Srivijaya.

The term Srivijaya is also used to designate the art of Peninsular Siam from the 8th to 13th centuries, especially the artworks that are associated with Mahayana Buddhism. Scholars believed that this religion was predominant in Srivijaya and that Peninsular Siam was under Srivijaya during that time. However, Stanley O’Connor notes that “wide-ranging trade links brought varied cultural contacts, making Srivijaya’s cultural role in Peninsular Thailand (and the appropriateness of the art-historical terminology) uncertain” (1996:577) and that “the classification ‘Srivijayan art’ is full of problems and confusions” and “it is difficult to match the evidence of style to a classification drawn essentially from the political realm” (1996:596). Pala,

Pallava, and Chola idioms and models, for example, are also evident in the cosmopolitan art of Peninsular Siam. The term Srivijaya, “as a convenient fiction, ...serves as a rough guide to chronology, a category of high generality in which to place any things that cannot be sufficiently discriminated for more accurate sorting” (O’Connor 1996:596-599). The present author discovered an unpublished bronze statuette of Maitreya (the future Buddha), a little more than 10 cm. in height (Figure 5.3), in 2004. It was originally found by Phra Maha Bunnam in a shallow watercourse near Wat Chai Khlong in Nakhon City. It has a stupa on its crown and holds a sacred pot in its left hand. The semi-circular sash and elaborate ornaments suggest that it may be categorized into O’Connor’s Pala-influenced art in Peninsular Siam, which was generally considered ‘Srivijayan art’ previously. It may be dated to c. the 9th century as it is similar to the seated statue of Padmapani from Satingphra (c. the 8th to 10th centuries) (O’Connor 1996:597) and the standing statue of Avalokitesvara from Chaiya (c. the late 8th to early 9th centuries) (Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002:fig. 108).

In terms of Srivijaya’s origin and nature, Dhida Saraya (2011) proposed that Srivijaya first emerged as a collaboration of groups of people who lived by the sea and specialized in trade to protect their interest in the maritime commerce through the Straits of Melaka. She perceived that the emergence of intensified trade in the South China Sea was due largely to the extension of trade in the Indian Ocean. Based on the early sculptures and inscriptions in West Java, Saraya believed that the Sunda Strait was used before the Straits of Melaka as the main maritime channel to the South China Sea. When the Straits of Melaka was used in the early 5th century CE⁵³ as an alternative to the trans-isthmian routes and the Sunda Strait that were used earlier, the

⁵³ This is the date when the Chinese Monk Fa-xian is believed to traveled through the Straits of Melaka. His journey from Sri Lanka to China was between 413 and 414 CE (Saraya 2011:475).



Figure 5.3 Bronze statuette of Maitreya from Wat Chai Khlong

Indian merchants had a relatively easier maritime access to the South China Sea. As the Indian merchants entered into the South China Sea and made considerable profits from trade, the local groups reorganized themselves to protect their interest and share the market. According to Saraya (2011: Chapter 3), this organization became Srivijaya and it was mainly responsible in opening up the era of intensified trade with China in maritime Southeast Asia, especially in the Tang Dynasty.

The collaboration between indigenous groups of people in Srivijaya was also emphasized by L. Andaya (2008). He suggests that the success of Srivijaya in trade was based on its ability to incorporate various groups of people into the kingdom. The most important groups were the Orang Laut and Orang Asli. The Orang Laut were the water people who were skillful sailors and collectors of marine products. Although some of them were pirates, Srivijaya's court was successful in the most part in using them as naval forces who helped protect the maritime trade routes and navigated ships through the Straits of Melaka, which were the treacherous waters for the foreign sailors as there were many submerged rocks and shifting sandbars. Without them, the ships would not be able to arrive at Srivijaya's ports. The Orang Asli were the forest people who had intimate knowledge of how to collect forest products valuable to the foreign merchants. L. Andaya (2008:62) notes that the view that depicts Srivijaya as an empire created and maintained by force cannot be sustained because the nature of the seascape and landscape would have limited the efficacy of any punitive expedition. The Orang Laut and Orang Asli could escape to the many islands and the deep forest respectively if the military forces were employed to control them as they were very mobile. Therefore, Srivijaya's court had to establish a respectful relationship, involving the granting of material returns and honorary titles, with them.

Although Srivijaya was not an empire, it was not just an empty name. It had a great impact on Southeast Asian history. According to O'Connor, it may be perceived as "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" (1996: 596). He notes that Peninsular Siam and Kedah may have functioned within "the greater Srivijayan world" (1996: 596) and envisions Srivijaya as something like the Hanseatic League in the North and Baltic Seas⁵⁴, an association of mutual advantage.

The Hanseatic League or the Hansa was a league of trading towns in Northern Europe during c. the 13th to 15th centuries. According to Johannes Schildhauer (1985:7), the special characters of the Hansa were its economic power and the relatively broad independence of its towns. The foundation of the Hansa began in the 11th century when new implements appeared in agriculture and crafts leading to improved production methods. As the market expanded, the marketing settlements acquired an economic and legal status that distinguished them from their agricultural vicinities. They became the seeds of future towns, which were the place of goods and information, and finally were fortified. Having acquired economic power, the inhabitants of the town, including mostly merchants and craftsmen, sought to free themselves from feudal domination in the 11th century. Their power was money, so they became members of town councils.

The evolution of production and growth of towns led to the spread of the German mercantile influence in the Baltic and Lübeck, the center of the Hansa on the Jutland Peninsula, became the most important link between the North and Baltic Seas as well as between the extensive overland and maritime trade routes. From the 13th century, the Hanseatic League

⁵⁴ This idea was developed when the author had personal communication with Professor Stanley O'Connor.

created a vast commercial network in Northern Europe in which its participatory towns enjoyed a great degree of autonomy and were able to negotiate with the central governments of their home countries. Its traders had privileges when trading overseas and some of them were included in the council of the Hansa that held regular meetings to manage the league and solve problems (Johannes Schildhauer 1985:38).

Something like the Hanseatic League, Srivijaya could be envisioned as a trading bloc with a number of participatory kingdoms and principalities, in which Palembang was the most important center, like Lübeck for the Hanseatic League, situated between the two open seas, the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea. Srivijaya was an organization that focused on trade and commercial collaboration, rather than agonistic engagement. It created market in maritime Southeast Asia and allowed its trading kingdoms their autonomies.

As one of the most important strategies of Srivijaya was to take control of the gates between the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea, including the passages through the Straits of Melaka in the south and the trans-isthmian routes in the north, Tambralinga, like Chaiya, Pattani, and Kedah, became a significant center in the alliance. It controlled parts of the trans-isthmian routes and served as a crucial link between the isthmus and the Lower Mekong. The Cholas also realized the significance of Tambralinga and the trans-isthmian routes it controlled; therefore, they included Tambralinga in their expedition against Srivijaya. This suggests that Tambralinga was important to the existence of Srivijaya⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ The alliance of Srivijaya seems to be in the memory of the people in maritime Asia at least until the 13th century, even after the Srivijayan centers in South Sumatra already declined, if one accepts that “Javaka” in the Sri Lankan text *Culavamsa* means Srivijaya. In the text, Chandrabhanu, ruler of Tambralinga in the 13th century, was called “Javakaraja”, or the King of Javaka, who invaded Sri Lanka twice (Sumio 2004:54). This may suggest that, in the 13th century, Tambralinga was powerful and became the head of the Srivijayan alliance.

Late Tambralinga/Nakhon Si Thammarat

The Late Tambralinga or Nakhon Si Thammarat period is between the 12th and 14th centuries CE when the historical sources suggested the rise to power of a new dynasty, called the Si Thammasok (Sri Dharmasoka), the establishment of a new capital (called Nakhon City), and the predominance of Theravada Buddhism in c. the late 12th century. This period ends with the annexation of Tambralinga/Nakhon Si Thammarat into the Ayutthaya Kingdom situated to the north in the basin of the Chao Phraya River in c. the 15th century. In this period, the names Sri Dharmaraja (Si Thammarat) and Nagara Sri Dharmaraja (Nakhon Si Thammarat), the names that seem to be related to Buddhism as oppose to Tambralinga which was related to Hinduism, began to appear. Inscription 24 from Chaiya, dated to 1230 CE, referred to a ruler of Tambralinga named Chandrabhanu who also bore the honorary title of Sri Dharmaraja (P. Noonsuk 1997:69). According to Sumio (2004:47), from this title came the place-name of his kingdom, Nagara Sri Dhamaraja. The name is of Sanskrit origin, possibly meaning the city or land of the glorious and righteous king, and seems to be related to the Buddhist idea of kingship. This inscription established a strong link between Tambralinga and Nakhon Si Thammarat. In 1292 CE, 62 years after Inscription No. 24, the name Sri Dharmaraja was mentioned again in the Inscription of Rama Kamheng, the first inscription in Thai with the Thai scripts, found at Sukhothai, which was generally considered the first Thai Kingdom, situated in the upper part of Central Thailand (Wolters 1958). However, this time it was referred to as a city or kingdom, which belonged to King Sri Dharmaraja.

However, Tambralinga's name was still used in the contemporary Chinese documents (Sumio 2004:49-52); the *Zhu-fan-zhi* (c. the late 12th or early 13th century), *Dao-yi-za-zhi* (1270's), *Da-de-nan-hai-zhi* (1304), and *Dao-yi-zhi-lue* (1351) seem to refer to Tambralinga as

Dan-ma-ling, and never as something close to Nakhon Si Thammarat (Nakhon). All this evidence points to the possibility that the ruling family of the Nakhon Kingdom, whether or not they were related to those of the Early Tambralinga Kingdom, still considered themselves as part of the long-lasting history of Tambralinga and realized the usefulness of keeping this old name of the kingdom, although they already focused on Buddhism and gave a new name to this kingdom at least since the 13th century. In terms of location, the capital of the Nakhon Kingdom was also located in the coastal land of Nakhon Province which was formerly the heartland of the Early Tambralinga Kingdom between the 5th and 11th centuries as mentioned previously. Therefore, it is possible to consider the Nakhon Kingdom as a subsequent period of the Tambralinga Kingdom. In this section, I will summarize the history of the Nakhon Kingdom, examine its capital, and discuss the preliminary results of my excavations in and around Nakhon City in 2009.

A Brief History of the Nakhon Kingdom

There are a number of historical sources for Tambralinga/Nakhon during the 12th to 14th centuries, including four Chinese documents as mentioned above. The earliest reference of Dan-ma-ling⁵⁶ in the Chinese record was in the *Zhu-fan-zhi* which presented the situations in either the late 12th or early 13th century according to Sumio (2004:49). Wheatley (1966:62) noted that it was compiled by Chao Ju-kua in 1226. It mentioned that this country was a dependency of

⁵⁶ Wolters (1958:592-595), on the contrary, suggested that Tambralinga was referred to as Deng-liu-mei, not Dan-ma-ling, by the Chinese. His idea was questioned by Sumio (2004:48) who believed that it was Dan-ma-ling. Both of them examined the primary sources of the Chinese record and were experts in their fields but their conclusions were different. In addition, Munro-Hay (2001:64-65) suggested that both names may refer to Tambralinga and the confusions of these names were created by the Chinese writers who did not know the ground-truth of the situations in maritime Southeast Asia. Because I am not an expert in this field, I will follow the hypothesis most commonly accepted that Dan-ma-ling was a Chinese transcription of Tambralinga (see also Wheatley 1966:67).

San-fo-qi but also was able to bring Ri-luo-ting and those other countries into its fold and make a common tribute to San-fo-qi⁵⁷. According to Sumio (2004:50), Dan-ma-ling appeared to be the center which exercised the control in the northern part of the Malay Peninsula, while Fo-luo-an, believed to be Phatthalung by him, controlled the lower part. Wheatley (1966:66) offered a version of the translation of the *Zhu-fan-zhi*'s descriptions of Dan-ma-ling as follows:

The ruler of the Kingdom of *Tan-ma-ling* is called Hsiang-Kung [lit.=Minister of State]. Around the city there is a wooden palisade six or seven feet thick and over twenty feet high, which can be used [as a platform] for fighting. The inhabitants of the country ride buffaloes, knot their hair behind and go barefooted. For their houses officials use wood while the common people build bamboo huts with leaf partitions and rattan bindings. Indigenous products include bee's wax, lakawood, gharuwood (*su* variety), ebony, camphor, ivory and rhinoceros horn. Foreign [merchants] traffic in pongee parasols and umbrellas, skeins of *Ho-ch'ih* silk, wine, rice, salt, sugar, porcelain vessels, earthenware bowls and similar coarse and heavy wares, together with gold and silver platters. *Jih-lo-t'ing*, *Ch'ien-mai-pa-t'a* and *Chia-lo-hsi* are similar countries. This country [*Tan-ma-ling*] collects whatever gold and silver vessels it receives, while *Jih-lo-t'ing* and the other countries make similar collections, [all of which] are presented to *San-fo-ch'i* [as tribute].

From this passage, it may be noted that the capital of Tambralinga was already a walled city, although its exact location cannot be determined, and the forest products were still

⁵⁷ San-fo-qi has long been believed to refer to Srivijaya (e.g. Wheatley 1966:60), but Sumio suggested that "the name San-fo-qi, rather than being the name of one specific country, served as a collective appellation for all the Chinese tributary states in the area centered on the Strait of Malacca" (2004:46). He continues: San-fo-qi corresponded "not to Srivijaya or Sribuza, but to the 'Zabaj' of Arabic texts, to the 'Javaka' of south Indian Pali texts, and also to the 'Savaka' found in Tamil inscriptions", and it probably occupied "the entire central and southern part of the Malay Peninsula, together with the Malacca Strait side of Sumatra, and possibly even the western side of Kalimantan as well" (Sumio 2004:46). If one considers my proposal to envision Srivijaya not as a specific country or an empire, but as an alliance of coastal trading kingdoms in the Straits of Melaka and the Malay Peninsula, then Sumio's descriptions of San-fo-qi would fit nicely into this alliance framework.

important to the foreign merchants as they would have been in the Early Tambralinga Period (c. the 5th-11th centuries).

The *Dao-yi-za-zhi* of the 1270's CE mentioned that Dan-ma-ling sent tribute to China already in the year 1196 and did not make any suggestion that Dan-ma-ling was a dependency of San-fo-qi. The *Da-de-nan-hai-zhi* from 1304 is believed to describe the situations in the latter half of the 13th century. It referred to Dan-ma-ling (Dan-ma-ling-guo) as a central country with controlling authority over other countries situated throughout the Malay Peninsula, including Ri-luo-ting, Da-la-zi (Chaiya), Ling-ya-su-jia (Langkasuka/Pattani), Fo-luo-guan (Phattalung?), Ji-lan-dan, Ding-qie-lu (Terengganu), Peng-heng (Pahan) among other countries in the Peninsula. The last reference of Dan-ma-ling in the Chinese record was in the *Dao-yi-zhi-lue* of 1351, which did not mention this country as having a controlling role over other countries anymore and suggested that the most important country that had influences in the Malay Peninsula was Xian (Ayutthaya or maritime Siam) (Sumio 2004:50-52, 61). Wheatley noted that the *Dao-yi-zhi-lue* was compiled by Wang Ta-yüan who himself travelled in the South Seas during the 1330's and 1340's. In Wheatley's version of the translation of the *Dao-yi-zhi-lue*'s descriptions of Dan-ma-ling (1966:77), it appears that this kingdom had an extensive plain where the production of grain exceeded consumption and their indigenous products included high quality tin, pearl camphor, turtle carapaces, hornbill casques, lakawood, bee's wax and *huang-shu-hsiang-t'ou* (gharuwood). These goods, mostly products from the mountains, attracted foreign merchants to the kingdom.

From the Chinese record, it seems that the rise of Dan-ma-ling as a principal power in maritime Southeast Asia was short-lived, for only around a century or two. It was part of San-fo-qi in the latter half of the 12th century but also assumed a controlling role in the northern part

of Peninsular Siam. By 1196, it became more powerful and sent tribute to China. By the second half of the 13th century, it seems to have reached its peak and had control over a large area of the Malay Peninsula. It became one of the principal powers of Southeast Asia. However, by the mid-14th century, Dan-ma-ling seems to have declined in power and gave way to Ayutthaya to become the most influential polity over the isthmian tract (Sumio 2004:52).

The rise of Tambralinga from the late 12th century corresponded to the arrival of a new dynasty mentioned in the local chronicles in Nakhon. The Chronicle of the City of Nakhon Si Thammarat (*Tamnan Muang Nakhon Si Thammarat*) and the Chronicle of the Great Reliquary of the City of Nakhon Si Thammarat (*Tamnan Phra That Muang Nakhon Si Thammarat*), although written in the Ayutthaya period, are believed to present some historical facts of the 13th century (Wyatt 1975). They mentioned the arrival of King Si Thammasok and his younger brothers Chandrabhanu and Phongsasura at the Crystal Sand Beach or the Crystal Island, surrounded by water, where the Buddha's tooth relic was previously buried. Sri Thammasok then founded the City of Nakhon Si Thammarat and the Great Reliquary (the stupa of Wat Mahathat today) at this sacred place. In accordance with the Chinese record, the chronicles noted that the Nakhon kingdom was successful in asserting its control over the isthmus and in establishing a circle of vassals, called the 12 Zodiac Vassals (*Muang Sipsong Nakkasat*). Si Thammasok's name could be a dynastic title, like Ramathibodi in Ayutthaya or Mahathammaracha in Sukhothai (Munro-Hay 2001:53). From the historical documents, the rulers of this dynasty were dedicated Buddhists who founded a number of Buddhist monasteries.

The Si Thammasok Dynasty was possibly first mentioned in the inscription found at Dong Mae Nang Muang in Nakhon Sawan Province in the Chao Phraya Basin in Central Thailand. The inscription was dated to 1167 and had two sides, one in Pali and another in

Khmer with some Thai words, both using the Khmer scripts and probably portraying the same events (National Library 1986, Vol. 4:109-116). The Pali side is more fragmented and seems to referred to King Si Thammasok (Sri Dharmasoka) as King Asoka Maharaja; thus, reflecting that the ruler of the Si Thammasok Dynasty identified themselves with the great Buddhist King of India, Asoka. The Khmer side mentioned that a king named Krung Si Thammasok⁵⁸ ordered the ruler of his vassal city to pay homage to the relic of the deceased King Si Thammasok⁵⁹ (Kamara Tenga Chakata Si Thammasok). Coedès suggested that the capital of King Si Thammasok was Lavo⁶⁰, an important center of Khmer culture with great political significance, which sent embassies to China in 1115 and 1155 (Munro-Hay 2011:52).

From this inscription, it may be possible to assume that the Si Thammasok Dynasty, which had a long line of rulers named Si Thammasok, arrived at Nakhon Si Thammarat from the Chao Phraya Basin in Central Thailand (see also Sukaphanit 1978). It may also be possible that this dynasty was related to the royal family of early Tambralinga, in which one of its rulers, named Jayaviravarman, may have marched with his army through the Chao Phraya Basin to claim the throne of Angkor in the early 11th century (Wolters 1958:591). In that campaign, some of his relatives may have stayed behind and established themselves as rulers of small principalities in the Chao Phraya Basin, the area which also shared a common Khmer culture with Tambralinga. One branch of this family may have become the Si Thammasok which still had strong Khmer culture in the late 12th century as indicated in the inscription. For some unclear reasons, the Si Thammasok may have left the Chao Phraya Basin and moved down south

⁵⁸ Krung can mean lord or king besides its common meaning as city and kingdom (see National Library 1986, Vol. 4:112).

⁵⁹ This king is referred to as Kamara Tenga Chakata Si Thammasok. The honorary title of Kamara Tenga Chakata was used in the Khmer culture for the deceased kings who became gods themselves (National Library 1986, Vol. 4:115).

⁶⁰ It is probably today Lopburi, situated relatively short-distance to the southeast of Nakhon Swan.

to rule Tambralinga, the homeland of their ancestors. This may be the reason why they kept the old kingdom's name of Tambralinga as appeared in the Chinese record, and one of their kings, Chandrabhanu Sri Dharmaraja, still called himself proudly the King of Tambralinga as suggested in the inscription of 1230 (No. 24) from Chaiya, written with Old Khmer scripts. In addition, Tambralinga's name had a long history and it may have been widely recognized in maritime Southeast Asia and beyond.

The period between the 12th and 14th centuries also saw the prominence of Theravada Buddhism and an increasing Thai influence in Tambralinga. The inscription from Dong Mae Nang Muang of the Si Thammasok Dynasty is, in fact, the earliest inscription that contains Thai words, such as Phra and Nam (National Library 1986, Vol. 4:110). This dynasty also had close relationships with the Thai Kingdom in Central, especially the Sukhothai Kingdom, which began to rise in the late 12th century. Therefore, it is possible that there were an increasing number of the Thai-speaking population in Tambralinga/Nakhon Si Thammarat and some of them might have been incorporated into the ruling class.

The Nakhon Kingdom in the 13th century became a very important center of Theravada Buddhism. Inscription No. 1 at Sukhothai from 1292 clearly stated that the Sangharaja (the leader of all the monks) who was most knowledgeable in the Buddhist teachings in Sukhothai was from Sri Dharmaraja (probably referring to Nagara Sri Dhramaraja or Nakhon Si Thammarat) (P. Noonsuk 1997:75). It seems that, in this period, a new network was formed between the Buddhist kingdoms in the western part of Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka; it may perhaps be called the Theravada network. One saw the exchanges of monks and the Buddha images among Sri Lanka, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Sukhothai, the Mon kingdom, and other kingdoms in this network, in which Sri Lanka seems to be the most important center because it

was consider the land that had the longest history and purest practices of Buddhism, called Lankavamsa in Thailand. Although unclear at the moment, this network may have facilitated trade among these kingdoms too. In Tambralinga/Nakhon, Theravada Buddhism became predominant over Hinduism that had previously enjoyed its preeminent status in this kingdom for over half a millennium. The clearest statement of the predominance of Theravada Buddhism in Nakhon in the 13th century was the existence of the Great Reliquary at Wat Mahathat, which still remains the most important monument in Southern Thailand.

The centrality of Sri Lanka in this network excited the ambition of King Chandrabhanu and led to his naval expeditions to the island. From South Indian and Sri Lankan documents, Chandrabhanu's first attack to Sri Lanka was in 1247⁶¹. He began his operation in the southern part of the island, but was defeated by the Sinhalese king Parakramabahu. However, Chandrabhanu managed to take control of another kingdom in the north of the island where he was attacked in turn by the Pandyan king in 1258, and was forced to pay tribute. With unyielding effort, Chandrabhanu launched his second campaign against Parakramabahu's kingdom in the southern part of Sri Lanka again at the end of 1262, this time with additional troops from the Cholas and Pandyas in South India. However, he was defeated again and died in the battle by Parakramabahu's army which was supported by the Pandyan King Vira-Pandya (Sumio 2004:54). Although unsuccessful in the expedition against Parakramabahu, Chandrabhanu established Tambralinga/Nakhon as the only Southeast Asian kingdom in history that could found a vassal in South Asia, which was located in the northern part of Sri Lanka. The expensive military expedition across the Bay of Bengal that finally cost him his life may be

⁶¹ Chandrabhanu here was referred to as the king of Javaka but he was believed to be the Chandrabhanu who was mentioned in the inscription from Chaiya (No. 24) of 1230. After his death in battle against Parakramabahu's kingdom, Pandyan inscriptions mentioned that a prince of Javaka succeeded him to rule the northern half of Sri Lanka but his reign was short-lived as well (Sumio 2004:54). It is not known whether this prince came from Tambralinga/Nakhon or related to Chandrabhanu or not.

perceived as his ambitious attempt to control parts of the maritime trade in the Indian Ocean, as Sri Lanka occupied a strategic location in such trade, to have unrestricted access to Buddhist relics, and to establish himself as the overlord of the purest Buddhist land and of the Theravada network.

Nakhon City

The area of Nakhon City is situated in approximately the middle part of the ancient eastern beach ridge running from north to south (see Map 2.1, Map 3.1 and Figure 5.4). This area was referred to as the Crystal Sand Beach (Hat Sai Kaeo), where the Buddha's relic was buried according to the local chronicles. Today, it is around 12 km. west of the present shoreline. There are two rectangular sites surrounded with walls and moats in this area, which have been believed to be cities or urban centers (Muang), including Phra Wiang and Nakhon Cities (Figure 5.5).

Phra Wiang City, or sometime locally known as Muang Kramom Kok, is situated south of Nakhon City and the Great Reliquary; its extent is around 1 km. long north-south by 600 m. east-west, between the Suan Luang River in the north and the Khu Phai River in the south. This city is surrounded with earthen walls and moats and was called Phra Wiang because it was believed to be the city founded by Phraya Pongsasura, who succeeded to the rule of Nakhon as Phraya Chandrabhanu II, who established himself south of the Great Reliquary at Phra Wiang City, according to the local chronicles (Munro-Hay 2001:316). Various remnants of Buddhist stupas and a number of Buddhist objects and pottery sherds have been found in this city. The dating of the walls around the city is still unknown but, from my excavations that will be



Figure 5.4 Nakhon City on the ancient eastern beach ridge between the Nakhon Mountain Range (left) and the Gulf of Siam (right).
Satellite image from Google Earth



Figure 5.5 Aerial photograph taken in the 1970's of Nakhon City (upper) and PhraWiang City (lower)

discussed later, the area within the walls seems to be heavily occupied in the 13th century. The period also saw the rise of the Si Thammasok Dynasty and Theravada Buddhism in this area.

Nakhon City is rectangular and surrounded by walls and moats. It is around 456 m. wide east-west and 2,238 m. north-south. Although mostly destroyed, parts of the massive walls are still standing until today. It is still not certain when the city was founded or when its walls were erected. According to the local chronicles, King Si Thammasok (II), who re-founded Nakhon (in the 13th century?), ordered his men to set up a secure enclosure, to grow rice, and to make bricks and mortar for the construction of a wall around the city (Munro-Hay 2001:260). Before the brick walls, there may have been earthen walls or wooden palisades around the city if the Chinese document *Zhu-fan-zhi* of the late 12th or early 13th century, mentioned previously, was referring to Nakhon City. The Nakhon City wall is reported to have been restored by prisoners from Lanna (Chiang Mai) who were captured by King Ramesuan (1369-70, 1388-95) but the major restoration occurred in the reign of King Narai (1656-88) of Ayutthaya who sent a French engineer, M. de la Mare (Lamare) to make a plan of the city in 1686 (Munro-Hay 2001:261).

In his recent research, Prapas Chuwichian (2010) proposed that Phra Wiang City is older than Nakhon City based on his thorough studies of the Great Reliquary or the Great Stupa of Nakhon. The Great Stupa at Wat Mahathat has been the most important monument in the history of Nakhon (Figure 5.6). According to Chuwichian (2010:69), it was originally built during the mid-12th to mid-13th centuries because its crucial components, such as the wide hemispherical dome, the square base surrounded with statues of elephants, represented strong influences of Sri Lankan Art in the Polonnaruwa period (c. mid-11th to mid-13th centuries) while other artistic trends also made their marks here. He then suggested that this stupa may have represented the Sri Lankan concept of “the mahastupa”, in which large stupas would have been built outside the



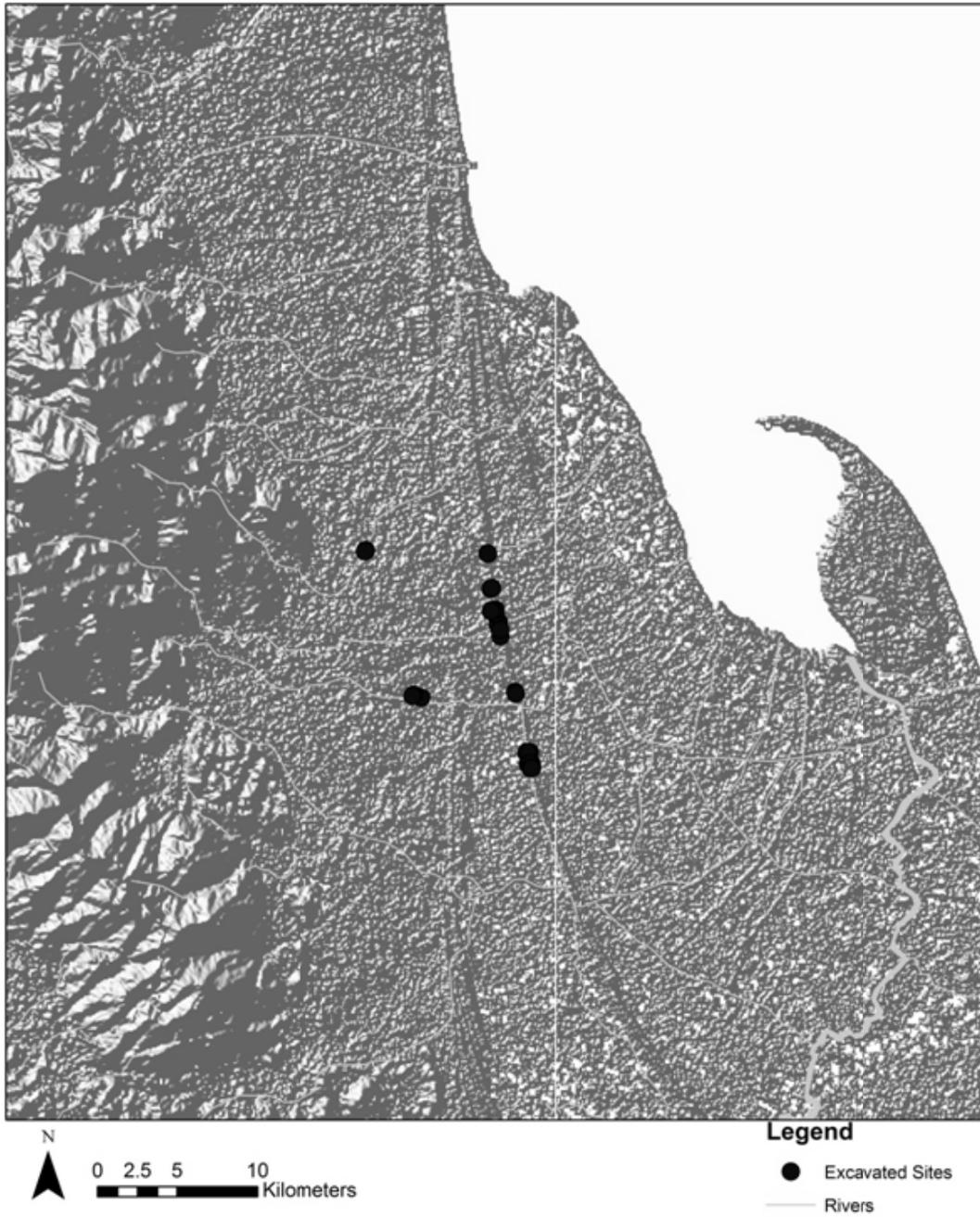
Figure 5.6 The Great Reliquary of Nakhon (with the Nora dancers in front)

city's walls in the area called Alahana Parivena to be the center of the Sangha. In Polonnaruwa, this area was in the north of the city. Thus, the Great Stupa of Nakhon may have been built outside the city originally. This city would have been Phra Wiang City which is situated south of the Great Stupa. He continued that when the Ayutthayan culture grew stronger in Nakhon in the 14th to 15th centuries, a new city, namely Nakhon City, was founded immediately north of Phra Wiang City. It included the Great Stupa within its walls to represent "the mahadhatu" (or mahathat), the center of the city in the Ayutthayan culture, like the Great Stupa of Wat Mahathat in Ayutthaya City (Chuwichian 2010:135). However, in terms of archaeology, it is not possible to determine which city was older at present because their walls and moats have not been dated. In any case, the areas in Phra Wiang and Nakhon Cities seem to have been both occupied heavily at around the same time in the 13th century according to my excavations.

The Preliminary Results of the Excavations in 2009

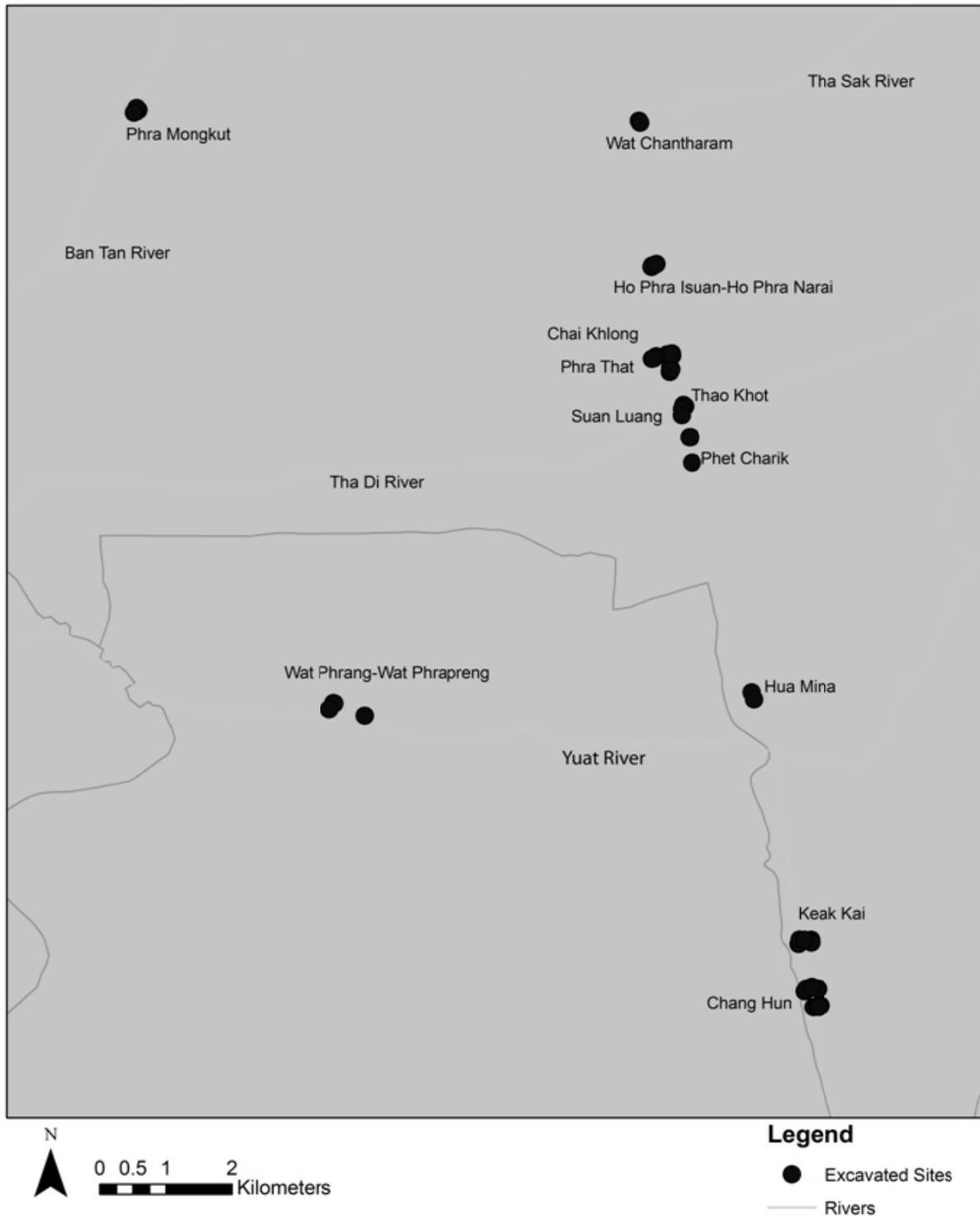
With the permission of the Fine Arts Department, I and my assistant, Nareerat Leelachat excavated 59 trenches (mostly 2x2 m.) in 2009 in the areas of Nakhon City and its vicinities (Maps 5.1 and 5.2). My archaeological fieldwork was largely funded by the Anandamahidol Foundation under the patronage of the King of Siam, and to the lesser extent by the Cornell Graduate School and the Cornell Archaeology Program through the Hirsch Fieldwork Travel Award. The excavations yielded a large amount of artifacts, mostly ceramic sherds. I have not finished my analyses of the earthenware sherds; therefore, this section will focus on the Chinese ceramics discovered in the excavations, which were analyzed by Dr. Pariwat Thammapreechakorn, the chief curator of the Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum at Bangkok University. In addition, the detailed maps, scarp drawings, and full descriptions of each

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Map 5.1 Topography and excavated sites in Nakhon City

Archaeology of Nakhon 2009



Map 5.2 Excavated sites in the areas of Nakhon City and its vicinities

excavation area will not be available in this section, but will be published later in the complete version of the excavation report.

My excavations in 2009 were conducted in three main areas: (1) the area of Nakhon City and its immediate vicinities, (2) the area south of the city in the lower part of the eastern beach ridge, and (3) the area west of the city on the western beach ridge and in the flood plain (Map 5.2). It is important to note that the area of the Nakhon City and its immediate vicinities in our excavations include not only the brick-walled city of Nakhon but also the areas immediately north and south of it, from the Tha Sak to the Khu Phai Rivers; thus, this area also includes Phra Wiang City.

The Chinese ceramics in the area south of Nakhon City in the lower part of the eastern beach ridge were mostly Northern Song ceramics dated to c. the 11th century while the area of Nakhon City and its immediate vicinities were dominated by the Late Southern Song-Early Yuan ceramics dated to c. the mid to late 13th century. This suggests that the area of Nakhon City probably became the urban center and the center of Chinese ceramic trade in the 13th century. The areas of excavations are summarized according to their geographic settings as follows:

The Area South of Nakhon City

This area is situated in around the upper part of the lower half of the eastern beach ridge. It is about 4 km. south of Phra Wiang City and its northern boundary is approximately at the Tha Rua River while its southern boundary is approximately at the Changhun Village (Map 5.2). As mentioned previously, this area, especially in the Kiakkai and Changhun Villages (Ban Kiakkai and Ban Changhun) have provided artifact assemblage of the late prehistoric period, such as a Bronze Drum (Figure 2.3), beads (Figure 2.4), and pottery sherds. A late prehistoric burial was

also found at Ban Changhun. The sites of Ban Ko Chan and Surao Ko Chan also yielded a yoni (Figure 5.7), a linga, respectively, and some stone architectural parts of the Early Tambralinga Period (c. the 5th to 11th centuries). It was also reported that a number of Chinese ceramics (some were complete pieces) from the Tang Dynasty, dated to around the early to mid-9th century, were found in the Tha Rua River by villagers. Most of them were collected by businessmen in Nakhon City. Therefore, this area has been one of the areas that have the longest history of human habitation in the heartland of Tambralinga. We excavated 20 trenches in this area at three main sites.



Figure 5.7 Yoni from Surao Ko Chan

Wat Hua Mina

Wat Hua Mina is called Wat or temple in Thai because it had some brick fragments but it is not a Buddhist temple anymore. It is now a governmental news station (Channel 11). We excavated 2 trenches in this site, which yielded similar finds. In the lowest cultural layer (Basket 5) in Trench HMN.09.1, the newest datable artifact we found was a sherd of Persian glazed ware (or Basra Turquoise ware) (Figure 5.8) which was made of a soft paste, coated blue or cyan both inside and outside of the vessels. It is believed that this kind of wares was made in the Middle East and dated to around the 8th to 9th centuries and it was also found at Fuzhou, Hangzhou, Yangzhou, and Beijing in China, and at Thung Tuk in Takuapa on the west coast of the isthmian tract (Chaisuwan 2011:97) and at Laem Pho in the Bay of Bandon on the east coast (Thepchai 1988:76). On the other hand, in the lowest cultural layer (Basket 3) in Trench HMN.09.2, the newest datable artifact we found was a sherd of the Chinese ceramic of the Tang Dynasty from Chang Sha dated to around the early to mid-9th century (Figure 5.9). The Tang ceramics have been found in a large quantity at Takuapa, Laem Pho and Tha Rua (immediately north of the site). It is possible that this area was part of the Trans-Asiatic trade network in the 9th century in which the Chinese and Persian ceramics began to be traded widely. It may have served as a terminus of the trans-isthmian routes that included major ports like Laem Pho and Takuapa.

This is the first time that the Chinese Tang and Persian Basra ceramics was found in a systematic excavation in the layers that had no other newer materials. This discovery reaffirms that these 9th-century ceramics were not carried to Nakhon in a later date. They probably arrived here in the 9th century and suggested that Nakhon continued to be part of the Trans-Asiatic trade network, although the volume of trade ceramics were much less than those from Laem Pho or Takuapa which probably represented the most important termini of the trans-isthmian trade

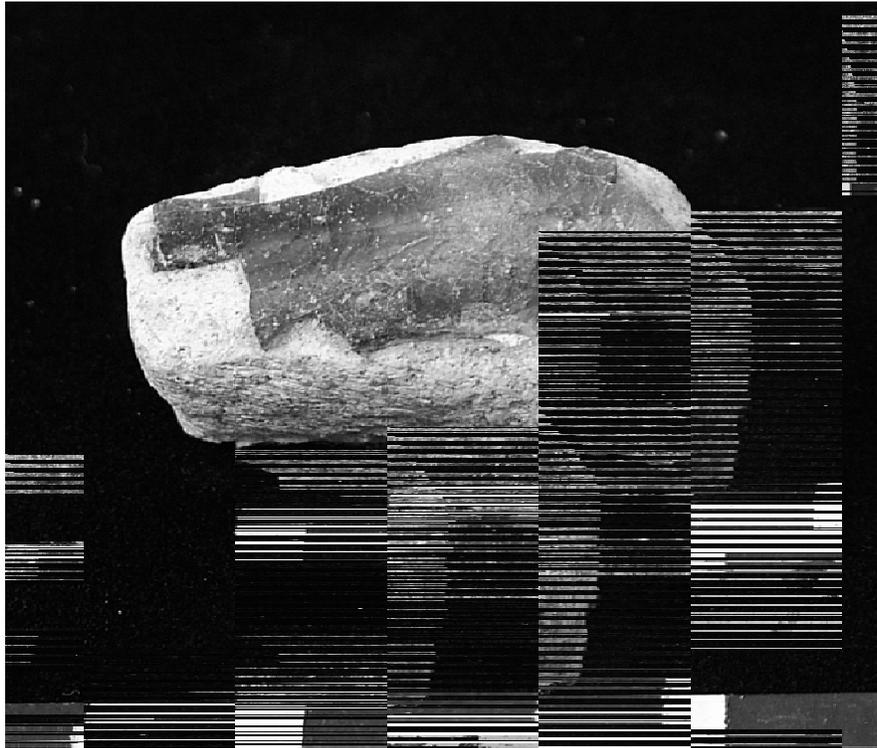


Figure 5.8 Basra Turquoise ware sherd from Trench HMN.09.1

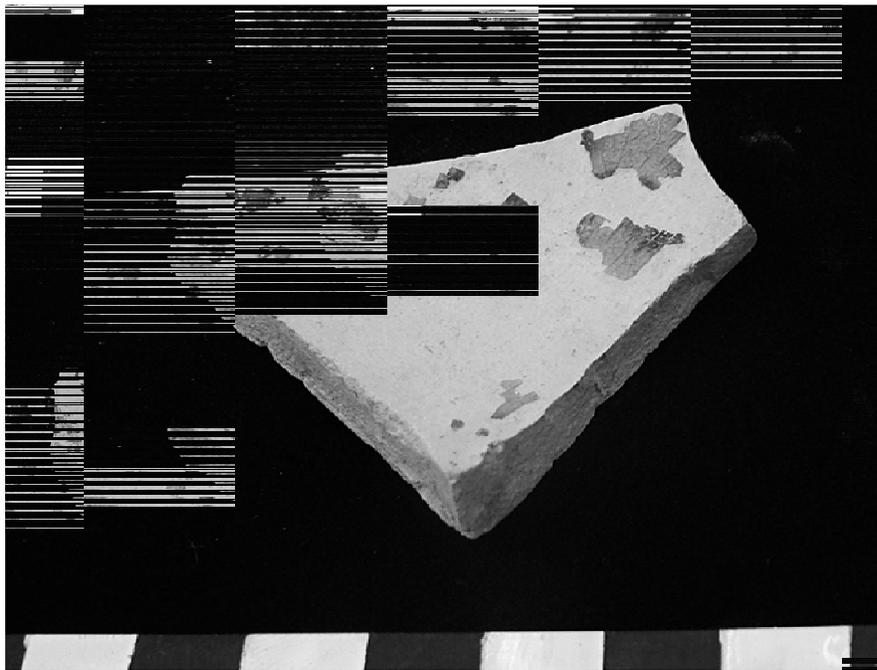


Figure 5.9 Chang Sha sherd from Trench HMN.09.2

routes in that period. The preliminary results of the excavations at Wat Hua Mina are summarized in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Preliminary results of the excavations at Wat Hua Mina

Phase	Approx. Date	Description
1	9 th century	The Tang and Persian ceramics were the newest datable artifacts.
2	18 th century	Some Chinese and Thai ceramics dated to the 11 th to 18 th centuries were found but the newest datable sherds belong to the Ching Dynasty of the 18 th century.

There is still an unclear gap between Phases 2 and 3, perhaps because this site has been disturbed heavily by modern constructions and activities. Future excavations at the site may reveal a layer of pure 11th or 13th century between them, in which the Chinese ceramics of the Northern and Southern Song Dynasties belonged.

Ban Kiekkai

This village provided a Bronze Drum and our excavations in Trench KK.09.1-2 near its findspot yielded some possible pottery sherds and glass beads (Figure 2.4) that may be dated to the late centuries BCE as mentioned previously. After excavating these two trenches, we decided to excavate five more trenches to the east of them, across the modern highway. The finds in this eastern area were very different from those in the west. The late prehistoric artifacts seem not to be found here. The most important finds are Chinese ceramics dated from the 9th to 18th centuries; however, the most prominent types belong to the Northern Song Dynasty of the 11th century (Figure 5.10). The preliminary results of the excavations at Trench KK.09.3-7 are summarized in Table 5.2, and the types and quantity of Chinese ceramics are in Chart 5.1.

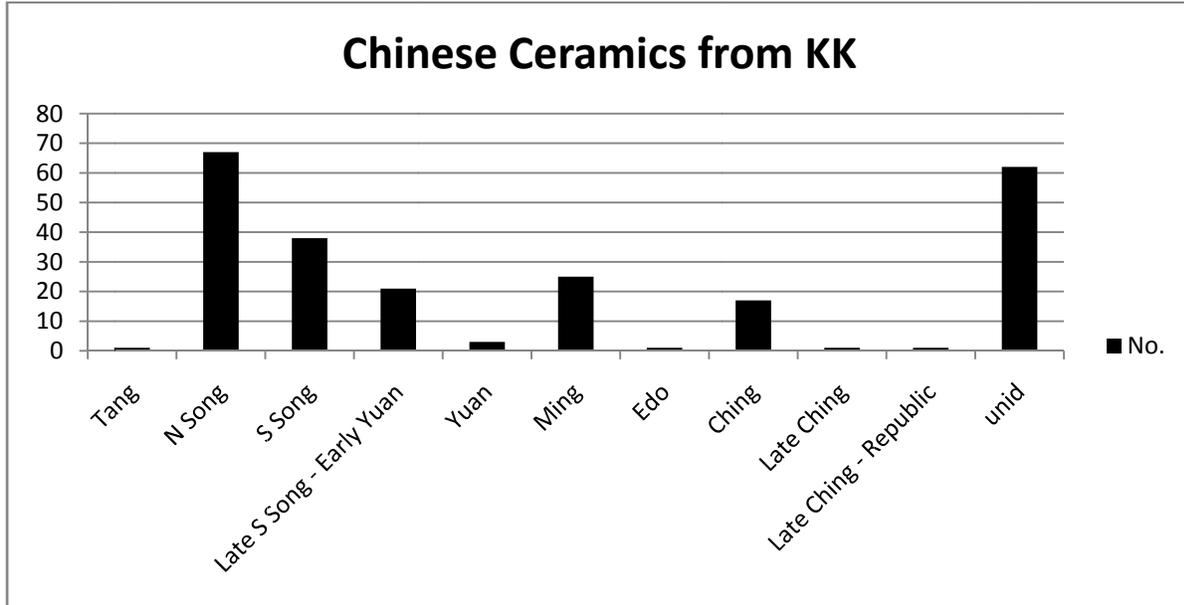


Figure 5.10 Sherd of Northern Song ceramic from Xicun from Trench KK.09.4

Table 5.2 Preliminary results of the excavations at Trench KK.09.3-7

Phase	Approx. Date	Description
1	11 th century	Earthenwares and Chinese ceramics, including those of the Tang Dynasty, were found but the newest datable artifacts were the ceramics of the Northern Song Dynasty dated to the 11 th century.
2	Late 13 th to early 14 th centuries	Earthenwares and Chinese ceramics were found and the newest datable artifacts were the ceramics of the Yuan Dynasty dated to the late 13 th to early 14 th centuries.
3	18 th century	Some earthenwares and Chinese ceramics dated from the 11 th to 18 th centuries were found together in the same layer.

Chart 5.1 The types and quantity of Chinese ceramics discovered at Ban Kiakkai



Ban Changhun

This village is around half a kilometer from Ban Kiakkai to the south. We excavated 11 trenches in this site. Although unsuccessful in recovering any obvious evidence from the late prehistoric period, most of the trenches provided useful information of Chinese ceramics. The preliminary results of the excavations at Ban Changhun are summarized in Table 5.3, and the types and quantity of Chinese ceramics are in Chart 5.2.

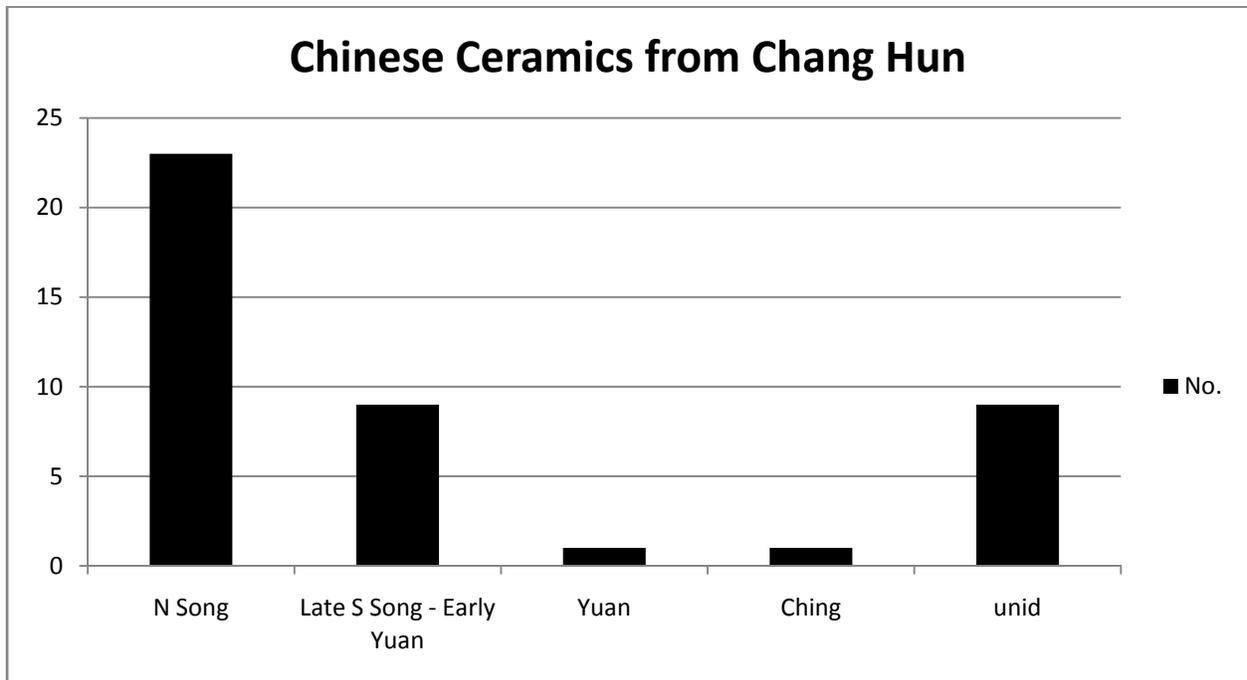


Figure 5.11 Sherd of Northern Song ceramic from Xicun from Trench CH.09.5

Table 5.3 Preliminary results of the excavations at Ban Changhun

Phase	Approx. Date	Description
1	Pre-11 th century	In the lowest layers of some trenches, some earthenwares were found but there was no Chinese ceramics. These layers may represent a pre-11 th century period. Whether or not they were late prehistoric layers remains to be studied in the future.
2	11 th century	Earthenwares and Chinese ceramics were found and the newest datable artifacts were the ceramics of the Northern Song Dynasty dated to the 11 th century (Figure 5.11).
3	Late 13 th to early 14 th centuries	Earthenwares and Chinese ceramics were found and the newest datable artifacts were the ceramics of the Yuan Dynasty dated to the late 13 th to early 14 th centuries.

Chart 5.2 The types and quantity of Chinese ceramics discovered at Ban Changhun



From the evidence presented above, one can see that the Northern Song ceramics obviously are the highest among other types of ceramics and dominated the artifact assemblages from Ban Kiakkai and Ban Changhun. It seems that the ancient communities in this area expanded and probably became the most important center of the Chinese ceramic trade in

Tambralinga's heartland since the beginning of such trade in the history of maritime Southeast Asia in the 9th century. The peak of such trade in this area seems to be in the 11th century when the Northern Song ceramics were abundant in this area but scarce in the area of Nakhon City as will be discussed later. However, the evidence, especially Chinese ceramics, in this area thinned out in the 13th century when that in Nakhon City began to increase. So, it may be possible that the people in this area had moved to Nakhon City when the city was founded.

The Area West of Nakhon City

This area of excavation included Wat Phra Phreng and Wat Phrang on the western beach ridge, around 5 km. to the west of Wat Hua Mina on the eastern beach ridge, and Wat Phra Mongkut in the alluvial plain, around 7 km. to the west of Wat Chantharam on the eastern beach ridge. This was a food producing area, including rice fields and fruit orchards, which was important for the development of the Nakhon Kingdom. As appeared in the Chinese document *Dao-yi-zhi-lue*, the Kingdom of Dan-ma-ling had an extensive plain where the production of grain exceeded consumption (Wheatley 1966:77). The plain referred here probably means the immediate flood plains around Nakhon City which also include the area west of the western beach ridge, where rice production is still the main focus today.

We excavated 14 trenches in this area at three sites, including Wat Phra Phreng, Wat Phrang, and Wat Phra Mongkut. The excavation results of Wat Phrang have already been summarized previously. The site is situated by the Yuat River, which flows to the eastern beach ridge and joins with the Tha Rua River at around the site of Wat Hua Mina. It provided one of the earliest Visnu images in Southeast Asia, dated to the 5th century (Figure 2.7). The excavations revealed at least two brick structures, one of them may be dated to around 700 CE

based on the TL dating technique. Some Northern Song ceramics of the 11th century were also discovered at the site, suggesting that Wat Phrang had a trade relationship through the Tha Rua and Yuat Rivers, as well as walking trails, with the area south of Nakhon City, including Wat Hua Mina, Kiakkai, and Changhun, where Northern Song ceramics were abundant.

Wat Phra Phreng

This site is situated on the western beach ridge, only around half a kilometer east of Wat Phrang. It is in Na San Sub-District, in which several important statues have been found, including two bases of Visnu images (c. the 7th or 8th century), a Ganesa image (c. the 9th or 10th century), a stone head of the Buddha (c. late 8th or early 9th century), a four-armed bronze figure of Bodhisatva Avalokitesvara (c. the 8th century), and a small, four-armed bronze image possibly of Harihara (the 9th century). Although the exact findspots of these statues could not be determined, they suggest the importance of the area of Na San in the cultural development of Tambralinga. At Wat Phra Phreng, one limestone doorframe (Figure 5.12), which is characteristic to the Hindu shrines of the Early Tambralinga period (c. the 5th-11th centuries), was found and is still on the site which is now a Buddhist monastery.

We excavated two trenches at this site. Although unsuccessful in recovering any obvious evidence from the Early Tambralinga period (c. the 5th-11th centuries), we found a brick wall, probably of the Ayutthaya Period (Post-15th century), in Trench PP.09.2 in the same layer with ceramics of the Ming Dynasty from Zhang Zhou dated to late 16th to early 17th centuries. However, in the lower layers, there are some brick fragments probably from the earlier architectures of an unknown date. The future TL dates on this will be useful.



Figure 5.12 Limestone Doorframe
at Wat Phra Phreng

Wat Phra Mongkut

This site is situated near the Ban Tan River which converges with the Tha Phae River before reaching the Gulf of Siam. The ground here is higher than the flood plain in the east and is suitable for fruit orchards. The Ban Tan River and a series of walking trails were used until recently to communicate with Nakhon City and the mountain areas as this site is in the middle between the two. There are some stone architectural parts at this site which is now a Buddhist monastery. Some of them are granite doorframes with floral decorations (Figure 3.3) similar to those from Mookhalan (Figure 3.15) and may be dated to the 7th to 8th centuries as previously mentioned. An ancient brick structure was found around 500 m. to the northwest of Wat Phra Mongkut. It is called Khok It and its coordinate is 597966 933967 (WGS 84). However, no stone architectural parts were found here.

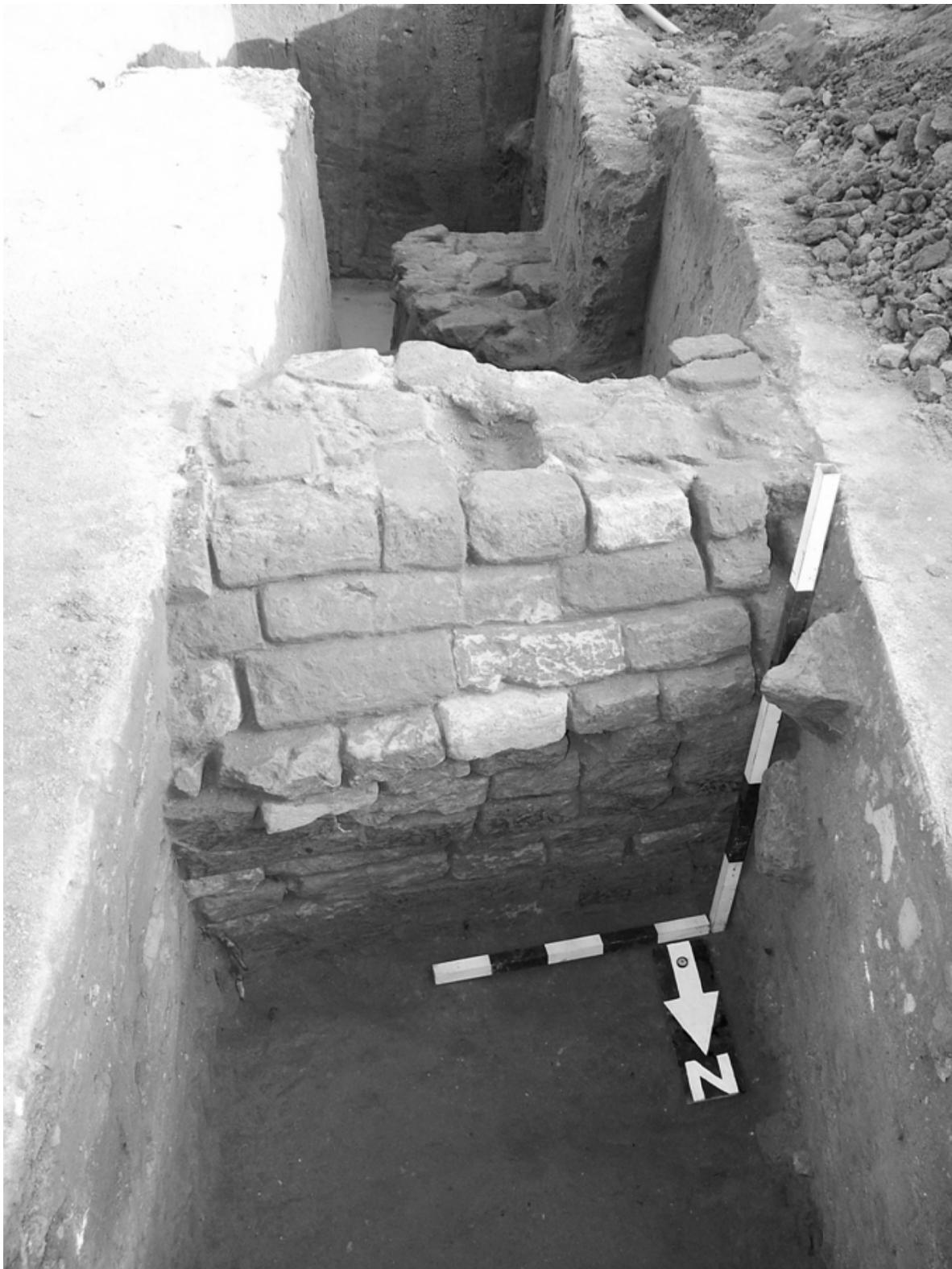


Figure 5.13 A brick structure at Wat Phra Mongkut

We excavated five trenches in Wat Phra Mongkut. In Trench PMK.09.1, 2 and 3, a brick structure (perhaps, wall and floor) was discovered but its date is still currently unknown (Figure 5.13). The date will be determined by the TL dating in the future. In Trench PMK.09.5, located around 100 m. southwest of the brick foundation in an elementary school nearby, some ceramics of the Southern Song to Yuan Dynasties (mid- to late 13th century) were unearthed in the lowest cultural layer (Basket 2). These ceramics may have been transported from the area of Nakhon City during that time. It can be assumed that this site had been occupied at least from the 7th to 13th century before it was re-occupied again less than a hundred years ago according to old villagers.

The Area of Nakhon City and Its Immediate Vicinities

As mentioned previously, this area is defined broadly by the current author to signify the middle portion of the eastern beach ridge, roughly from the Tha Sak River in the north to the Ku Phai River in the south, and including Nakhon and Phra Wiang Cities. It may also be broadly referred to as the area of the Crystal Sand Beach. We excavated 27 trenches in this area, both inside and outside Nakhon and Phra Wiang Cities. A number of Early Tambralinga sculptures, such as lingas, yonis, and Visnu images, and stone architectural parts (c. the 5th to 11th centuries) have been discovered in this area; thus, one of the main purposes of our excavations here was to check if there were any cultural layers or structures underground that can be dated to this period. There were some limitations, however, in the excavations in this area. First, this area is in a modern city with high density of population; therefore, most of its archaeological sites have been heavily disturbed if not destroyed. Second, it was difficult to obtain permission to excavate in the private properties, so that most of the trenches had to be set up in monasteries which were

generally considered public grounds. The abbots were usually generous and tended to allow any activities related to education. This limitation of space forced us to excavate wherever the land was available for us. Third, the level of underground water in this area was quite high and, in most cases, we could not excavate to the sterile layer due to this high level of underground water, especially in the early rainy season when we began our excavations in the city. It is our hope that the future excavations in the dry season in this area may be able to uncover the Early Tambralinga layers and reach down to the sterile. This section will summarize the results of the excavations in this area from north to south, but will focus on the major sites which had relatively less disturbed stratigraphy and provided important information.

Wat Chantharam

This site is situated on the bank of the Tha Sak River, near the other two Early Tambralinga sites (c. the 5th to 11th centuries), including Ban Tha Tin and Ban Tha Wang that provided some granite architectural parts. Today a Buddhist monastery, Wat Chantharam also provided a yoni (c. the 6th to 8th centuries) (Figure 5.14) and several architectural parts (Figure 5.15). We excavated two trenches at the site but the top layers of the trenches were heavily disturbed. In Trench WC.09.1, we found Chinese Tang and Five-Dynasty sherds, dated to the early 9th to early 10th centuries, as the latest datable artifacts in the lowest cultural layer (Basket 5) (Figure 5.16). Thus, it seems that this site was participating in the Chinese ceramic trade in the 9th century like those in the area south of the city. The Tha Sak River may have provided a passageway for these ceramics to arrive at the site from the Gulf of Siam.

Ho Phra Isuan

Ho Phra Isuan or the Isuan (Isvara) Shrine was dedicated to Siva. It has housed several early lingas, some dated to the 5th century (see O'Connor 1986f), and had some stone



Figure 5.14 Yoni from
Wat Chantharam



Figure 5.15 Granite
Architectural Part from
Wat Chantharam



Figure 5.16 Tang ceramic sherd from Wat Chantharam

architectural parts outside the shrine (Figure 5.17). We excavated two trenches at this site. However, the earliest occupation at this site seems to be around the late 15th to early 16th centuries since we found Ming ceramics in the lowest layer. It seems that the shrine, now still standing, is a relatively new structure, perhaps built in the Ayutthaya period (post-15th century), but has kept much older sculptures moved from elsewhere around this area.

Ho Phra Narai

Ho Phra Narai or the Narai (Narayana) Shrine dedicated to Visnu. Like Ho Phra Isuan, it is still functioning as a shrine although there is no Brahmin in place. Among other statues, one of the earliest Visnu images (c. the 5th century) in Southeast Asia was kept here (Figure 2.6). However, the two trenches excavated here provided the same information with those of Ho Phra Isuan, situated just across the street to the west. Ming ceramics we found in the lowest cultural layer suggest the date between c. the late 15th to early 16th centuries for the earliest activities at the site. Again, this shrine seems to be a newer shrine containing much older Hindu images.



Figure 5.17 Stone architectural part at Ho Phra Isuan

Wat Chai Khlong

This site is now a Buddhist monastery situated immediately next to the western moat of Nakhon City. In that moat, a statuette of Maitreya (c. the 9th century) (Figure 5.3) was found. Some stone architectural parts, including a large piece of threshold (Figure 5.18), probably dated to the Early Tambralinga period (c. the 5th to 11th centuries), can still be seen at the site. We excavated three trenches but it seems that nothing earlier than the Rattanakosin period (post-late 18th century) was found. This site may be part of the low flood plain unsuitable for permanent habitation in the earlier periods, and the threshold might have been moved from the nearby area.



Figure 5.18 Stone threshold at Wat Chai Khlong

Wat Mahathat

Wat Mahathat or Wat Phra That is within the walls of Nakhon City. It is the monastery where the Great Reliquary is situated. The area of the monastery was divided into several monasteries in the past. One of them was Wat Phra Doem, situated in the northern part of today Wat Mahathat at around the Buddha's footprint shrine (wihan phra phuthabat) (Figure 5.19), where some granite decorated doorframes (c. the 7th to 8th centuries) (Figure 5.20) and stone architectural parts have been found. Three yonis (c. the 5th to 8th centuries) were also discovered in various areas in Wat Mahathat, some of them have been incorporated in the monastery's rock



Figure 5.19 The Buddha's footprint shrine at Wat Mahathat, formerly the location of Wat Phra Doem



Figure 5.20 Decorated granite doorframe at Wat Phra Doem (today Wat Mahathat)

gardens (Figure 5.21). P. Noonsuk (2001b) believed that the Crystal Sand Beach was the capital of the Early Tambralinga Kingdom as it was a sacred place surrounded by water and that Wat Phra Doem was its religious center. He based his interpretation on the following major evidence. First, there were a number of artifacts that can be dated to the Early Tambralinga period (c. the 5th to 11th centuries) found in Wat Phra Doem and its nearby areas in Wat Mahathat, including the granite doorframes and yonis. Second, he believed that Inscriptions Nos. 28 and 29 that may mention Tambralinga's name originally came from Wat Phra Doem. Third, the fact that the Great Reliquary was founded here in the 13th century suggests the utmost significance of this place, perhaps as the former religious center of the Early Tambralinga Kingdom. In any case, P. Noonsuk was right that the Great Reliquary was established on the former sacred place of Hinduism, where stone fragments and sculptures of the Hindu shrines can still be seen.

We excavated 9 trenches in this site. In Trenches PT.09.3, 4, 5 and 8 in the northern area of Wat Mahathat, close to the Buddha's footprint shrine where Wat Phra Doem was situated, we discovered a large amount of Chinese and local ceramic sherds. The latest datable ceramics in the lowest layers of these trenches were Chinese ceramics of the late Song to early Yuan Dynasties (c. mid to late 13th century). Ceramics here usually concentrated in the spots of black soil, which may represent old trash pits. Although we could not reach the sterile layers in our excavations due to the high level of underground water, the artifacts appeared to thin out as we went past the 13th century layer. Thus, it seems that the area of Wat Mahathat was heavily inhabited in the 13th century. Although it may have been occupied in the Early Tambralinga period (c. the 5th to 11th centuries) as suggested by the presences of the doorframes and yonis, the population in that period may have been low and have left only few traces, very difficult to identify in the excavations.



Figure 5.21 Yoni from the southern part of Wat Mahathat

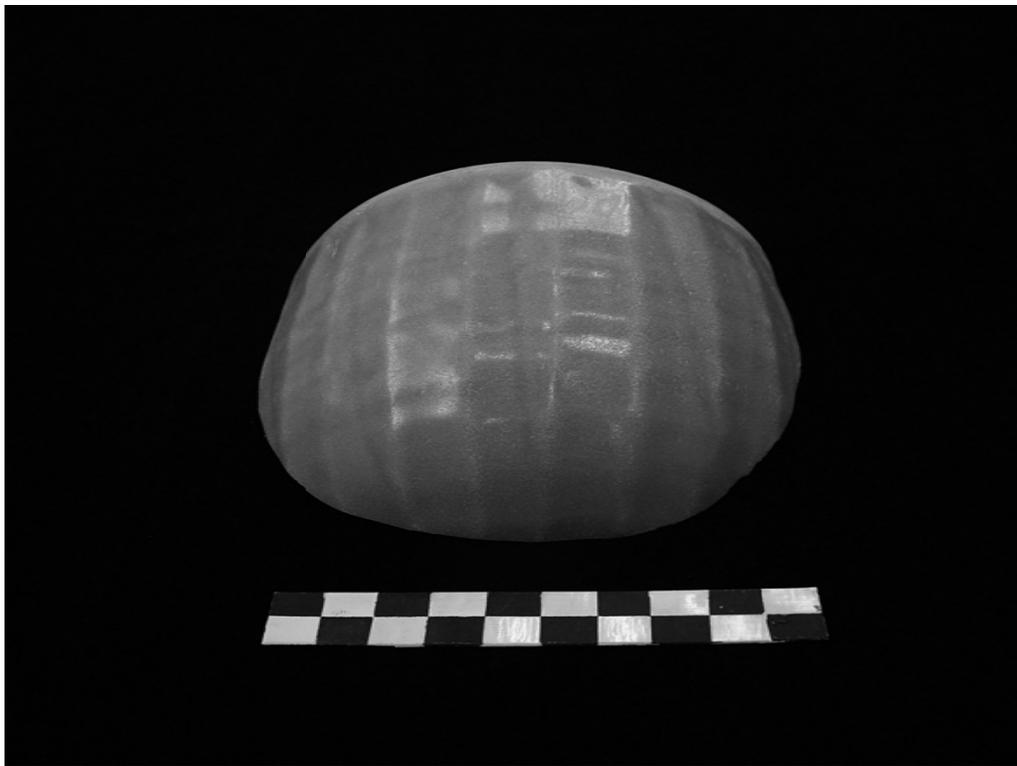


Figure 5.22 Long Quan Celadon from Trench PT.09.3

The most outstanding earthenware was the cream-colored kendis (Figure 5.23) and other fine-paste sherds, which together are commonly called Fine-Paste Ware and a good number of them were found in our excavations at Wat Mahathat and at various sites in Nakhon City. This ware was traded widely and sherds have been identified in many sites in maritime Southeast Asia, such as Sumatra (Muara Jambi and Kota Cina), Sri Lanka (Mantai), Java (Gresik and Trowulan), and the Southern Philippines (Butuan) (Miksic 2009b:87; Sumio 2006:7). However, its production and use are still not clearly understood. The discovery of the Pa-O kiln dated to c. the 12th century in the Satingphra Peninsula suggested that some of these wares, made with a very fine-grained white clay mixed with kaolin and fine-grained sand, were probably produced there (A. Srisuchat 2003:258), although it may not be the only production site. Sumio (2006:8) suggests that the rise of Tambralinga's commercial power in the 12th to 13th centuries was partly due to its production of the high-quality kendis as Tambralinga also included the Satingphra Peninsula. In our excavations in Nakhon, Fine-Paste Ware sherds were concentrated in the area of Nakhon City and its immediate vicinities and they were commonly found in the cultural layers dated to c. the 13th to 14th centuries. The research on the Fine-Paste Ware on the east coast of the isthmian tract will provide significant insights in the future. The excavation results of and the



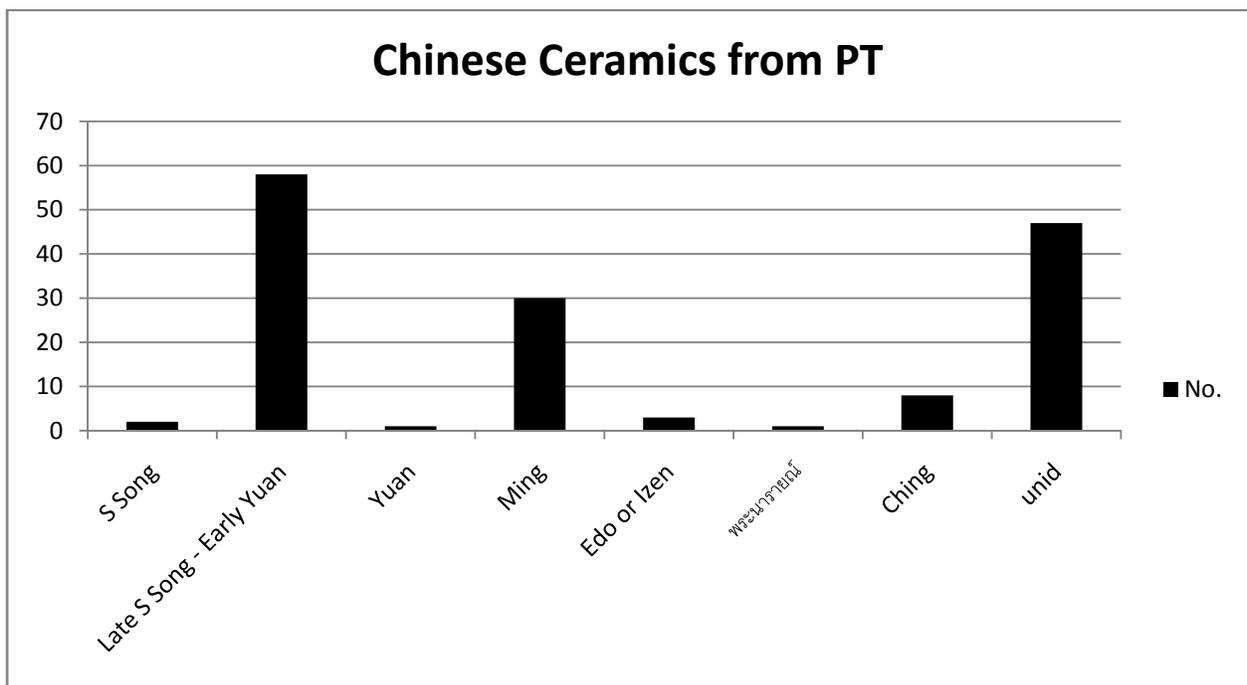
Chinese ceramics discovered from this site are summarized in Table 5.4 and Chart 5.3.

Figure 5.23 Fine-Paste Kendi from Trench PT.09.3

Table 5.4 Preliminary results of the excavations at Wat Mahathat

Phase	Approx. Date	Description
1	13 th century	Chinese ceramics of the late Southern Song to early Yuan Dynasties, dated to the mid- to late 13 th century were found. They were mostly celadons from Long Quan.
2	16 th to 20 th centuries	Chinese ceramics mostly dated from the 16 th to 20 th centuries. Most of the ceramics were from possible old trash pits where everything was dumped and mixed together.

Chart 5.3 The types and quantity of Chinese ceramics discovered at Wat Mahathat



Wat Thao Khot

This site is now a monastery situated between Nakhon and Phra Wiang Cities. It is not located in the walls of any city. The name Thao Khot refers to King Si Thammasok who built this monastery according to local folklores. This roughly translated, Supreme Lord or Lord Ancestor. Stone architectural parts probably belonging to the Early Tambralinga period have been found at the site (Figures 5.24 and 5.25). We excavated four trenches in the monastery and



Figure 5.24 Stone Pillar Base at Wat Thao Khot



Figure 5.25 Granite Doorframe at Wat Thao Khot

its nearby areas. In Trench TK.09.1 (size: 2x6 m.), we fortunately discovered a foundation of a brick structure at 160 cm. below surface (Figure 5.26). Its bricks were 20x20x8 cm. in average and were badly decayed due to their poor baking and the underground water activities. One brick sample was dated using the TL technique and gave the approximate date of 800 CE as mentioned previously. This date fits nicely into the estimated date range of the Early Tambralinga period (c. the 5th to 11th centuries).

This information gives us a valuable clue to a long-standing question about the origins of the stone architectural parts, such as decorated granite doorframes (c. the 7th to 8th centuries), and some Hindu sculptures found in the area of Nakhon City and its immediate vicinities; most of them, especially the stone architectural parts, probably came from this area itself and were used as components of the Hindu shrines. This brick foundation at Wat Thao Khot is the first and only brick structure in the area of the Crystal Sand Beach that has a TL date and that can be dated to the Early Tambralinga period. It may have been only one among a number of shrines spreading along this part of the ancient beach ridge. The Crystal Sand Beach was probably a sacred place at least since the Early Tambralinga period (c. the 5th to 11th centuries) and its sacredness was remembered and passed onto King Si Thammasok who claimed to establish Nakhon City on a sacred place in the 13th century. Although difficult to pinpoint the locations of these early shrines because they cannot be seen on the ground, the stone architectural parts that were scattered on the ground has given us some clues about their locations. Sites where stone architectural parts are found, like Wat Phra Doem, Wat Suan Luang, and Wat Phetcharik 1, possibly have brick structures underground.



Figure 5.26 Brick foundation in TK.09.1

In Trench TK.09.3 (Figure 5.27), a large amount of local and Chinese ceramic sherds were found. The Fine-Paste Ware sherds, including fragments of kendis, were the most distinguished type among the earthenware pottery. Various types of Chinese ceramics, from the Northern Song to Ming Dynasties (c. the 11th to 16th centuries), were found together in the same upper layers of the trench. However, in the lowest layer (Basket 11), the ceramics of the Yuan Dynasty (c. the late 13th to early 14th centuries) were the latest datable artifacts; therefore, it seems that the earliest human activities at this spot could be dated to the late 13th to early 14th centuries when the population of the city increased sharply and the area of human habitations expanded much widely to include areas, like the spot of this trench, which were not used previously in the earlier period. The excavation results from this site are summarized in Table 5.5 and Chart 5.4.

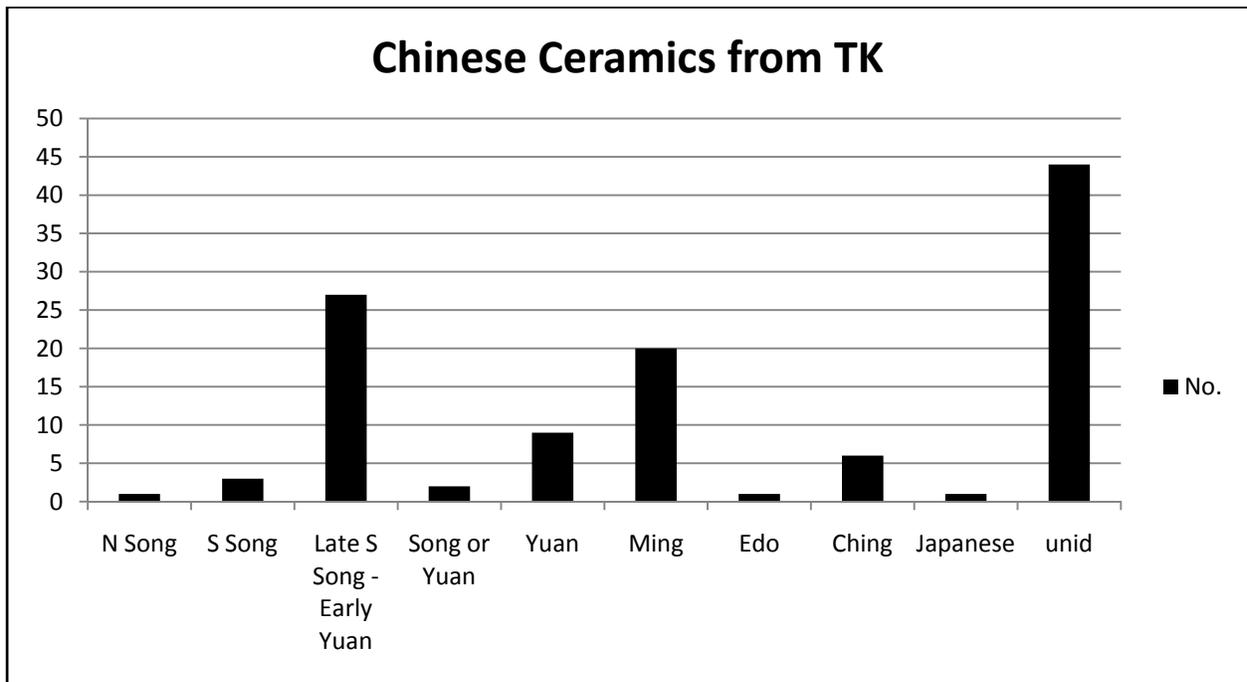


Figure 5.27 Northern Scarp of Trench TK.09.3

Table 5.5 Preliminary results of the excavations at Wat Thao Khot

Phase	Approx. Date	Description
1	c. 800 CE	A brick foundation was dated to c. 800 CE using the TL technique.
2	Late 13 th to Early 14 th centuries	Earthenwares and Chinese ceramics were found and the newest datable artifacts from this layer were the ceramics of the Yuan Dynasty dated to the late 13 th to early 14 th centuries.
3	16 th centuries	Various types of Chinese ceramics, from the Northern Song to Ming Dynasties (c. the 11 th to 16 th centuries), were found together in the same upper layers of the trench.

Chart 5.4 The types and quantity of Chinese ceramics discovered at Wat Thao Khot



Wat Suan Luang

Wat Suan Luang, now a monastery, is situated at the northern end of Phra Wiang City, within the city's walls. The modern street, Ratchadamnoen Road, separates it from the Nakhon National Museum on the east. Two yonis dated to c. the late 5th to 8th centuries and some Early Tambralinga stone architectural parts were found in this site (Figures 5.28 and 5.29). In 2008,



Figure 5.28 Stone architectural part from Wat Suan Luang



Figure 5.29 Granite architectural part from Wat Suan Luang

the area in the northern part of the monastery was vastly disturbed and filled with new dirt in order to build a new front yard for the monastery. After a long process of negotiation, we excavated two trenches at this front yard of the monastery.

In Trench SL.09.1, we found earthenware and various Chinese ceramic sherds, ranging from the Tang to Yuan Dynasties (c. the 9th to 14th centuries), in the upper layers, probably due to human disturbance. However, in the lowest cultural layer, the ceramics of the late Southern Song to early Yuan Dynasties (mid- to late 13th century) were the latest datable artifacts. There is no black trash spot in the trench. Thus, the earliest human activities in this particular space may be dated to the mid- to late 13th century.

In Trench SL.09.2, we found a relatively massive amount of earthenwares and Chinese ceramic sherds in the upper layers of the trench. Then, our curiosity about this strangeness was answered when we discovered an ancient well at 140 cm. from surface. This discovery was very surprising because we excavated only a 2x2 m. trench and the chance was so thin to find a well at the middle of the trench. The terracotta circular well is 80 cm. wide and 90 cm. high (Figure 5.30); however, its topmost part was already broken off, probably due to human disturbance and its lowest part could not be reached in the excavation due to the high level of the underground water. This trench yielded the largest number of complete ceramic pieces among all trenches excavated in 2009. A number of the Fine-Paste Ware sherds were found, usually with the 13th-century Chinese ceramics. Some complete kendis were found within the well (Figure 5.31). The fact that a large amount of ceramic sherds were concentrated here may be because they were used in the past to obtain water from the well. This well seems to be constructed in around the mid- to late 13th century because the ceramics of the late Southern Song to early Yuan Dynasties were the latest datable artifacts in the soil layer that the foundation trench of the well cut through.



Figure 5.30 Ancient well in Trench SL.09.2



Figure 5.31 Fine-Paste Kendi from Trench SL.09.2

This trench was not refilled because the abbot would like to make this ancient well an attraction of his monastery (Figure 5.32). He later constructed a building, in 2010, to cover it and now people from everywhere came to this well, which they called the sacred well, to obtain sacred water for their various purposes.

The well was constructed by putting terracotta well rings on top of one another. First, a foundation trench, around 70 cm. deep, had to be dug and the first ring was placed at the bottom. Next, a person had to be inside this ring to dig up the dirt at the bottom to allow the ring to move down into the earth. Since each ring, around 50 cm. tall, had a roughly conical shape with a smaller opening at the top (approx. 70 cm.) and a larger opening at the bottom (approx. 80 cm.), it was wide enough for a person to work inside. The body of the rings was also strong because it was around 4 cm. thick and fired. Although it was not fired to the degree of stoneware, it was strong enough to stay intact underground for centuries. When the first ring was deep enough, the second ring would be placed on top of it. This process was repeated until the well reached the underground water level. Terracotta wells of this kind have been found in various places in the area of the Crystal Sand Beach, including Wat Mahathat, Wat Thao Khot, Wat Phetcharik, and the Nakhon National Museum⁶². They were different from the wells in the northern part of Tambralinga's heartland, especially in Sichon, which were square or circular in shape and were constructed using bricks. It is possible that these terracotta wells were a new invention in around the 13th century and were common only in the area of the Crystal Sand Beach. They seem to have been very important in the way of life in this area because people relied on them for the supply of drinking water. Less than 60 years ago, people in this area did not have a modern tap water and had to take a bath in the rivers. However, they usually did not use the water from the

⁶² However, they were not discovered in archaeological excavations.

rivers for drinking and cooking, they used water from wells instead. From the density of the ancient terracotta wells in the area of the Crystal Sand Beach, it seems that the population in this area increased dramatically in the 13th century and this area became an urban center. Research on these wells and their locations will shed more light on this topic in the future. The excavation results of and the Chinese ceramics discovered from Wat Suan Luang are summarized in Table 5.6 and Chart 5.3 respectively.

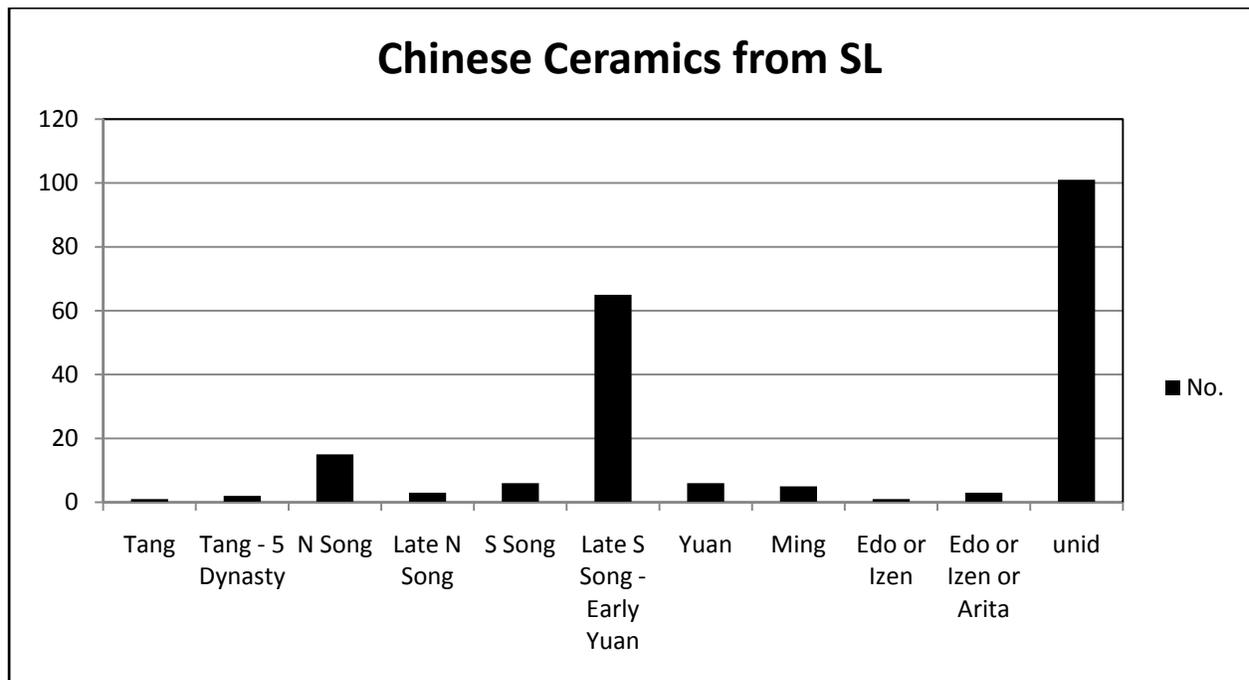


Figure 5.32 New building on top of the ancient well

Table 5.6 Preliminary results of the excavations at Wat Suang Luang

Phase	Approx. Date	Description
1	Mid- to Late 13 th century	A large amount of earthenware, especially the Fine-Paste Ware kendis, and Chinese ceramic sherds were found. Both trenches provided the ceramics of the late Southern Song to Early Yuan Dynasties as the latest datable artifacts from this layer. A terracotta well was discovered.
3	9 th to 14 th centuries	Various types of Chinese ceramics from the Tang to Yuan Dynasties (c. the 9 th to 14 th centuries) were found.

Chart 5.3 The types and quantity of Chinese ceramics discovered at Wat Suang Luang



Wat Phetcharik 1

This site is a monastery called Wat Phetcharik and is located in Phra Wiang City. A yoni (c. the 6th to 8th centuries) (Figure 5.33), several decorated granite doorframes (c. the 7th to 8th centuries), and other stone architectural parts characteristic of early Hindu shrines have been found in the site. The abbot allowed us to excavate only one trench in his monastery, and he



Figure 5.33 Yoni from Wat Phetcharik 1

later turned our trench into a trash pit for his monastery. The top layers of his 3x3 m. trench had been disturbed enormously by modern trash pits. Ceramics dated from the Rattanakosin Period (18th century onwards) were found. Fine-Paste Ware sherds, fragments of kendis, and various types of Chinese ceramics were also discovered in these upper layers. However, in the lowest cultural layer (Basket 7), Chinese ceramics of the Yuan Dynasty from De Hua (c. the late 13th to early 14th centuries) were the latest datable artifacts. It seems, therefore, that the earliest human activities at the spot of our trench can be dated to the late 13th to early 14th centuries.

Settlements in the Area of the Crystal Sand Beach

In sum, our archaeological research suggests that the area of the Crystal Sand Beach or the area defined broadly from the Tha Sak to Khu Phai Rivers, including Nakhon and Phra Wiang Cities, was probably occupied since the Early Tambralinga period, especially from the 7th century onwards. A number of lingas, yonis, decorated granite doorframes, and stone architectural parts all point to the presence of Hindu shrines and their associated human communities in this area in the early period. The early shrines' existence was also confirmed by the discovery of a brick foundation at Wat Thao Khot that was dated to c. 800 CE based on the TL dating technique. The sacredness of the places where the Hindu shrines once stood was simply restated in the 13th century when Buddhist monasteries were established at these sacred places as the Buddhist Kingdom, Nakhon Si Thammarat, began to rise. As we have seen, the Great Reliquary was probably established at the place of former Hindu shrine(s) at the site of Wat Phra Doem. Various Buddhist monasteries in this area today still have stone fragments and sculptures of these earlier Hindu shrines. However, our excavations could not discover substantial evidence of these early settlements. Although this may be due to the large degree of human disturbance and the high level of underground water in the city, it may be also due to the fact that the population in this early period (c. the 5th to 11th centuries) was low and the area was sparsely populated.

The evidence of intensive human occupations was substantiated in around the 13th century. A number of sites, both inside and outside the cities' walls, had a large amount of Chinese ceramics of the late Southern Song to early Yuan Dynasties (the mid-to late 13th century) as the latest datable artifacts in their lowest cultural layers, suggesting the expansion of

human settlements and the extensive uses of this area in this period. This area appears to be the urban center in the heartland of Tambralinga (in coastal Nakhon).

Late Southern Song to early Yuan ceramics dominate the artifact assemblage in this area as shown in the charts above. They increased sharply and probably reflected that the area of the Crystal Sand Beach became a center of the Chinese ceramic trade by that time. This role in the ceramic trade was probably formerly played by the communities in the area south of the city, from the Tha Rua River to the Village of Changhun, where the Chinese ceramics of the Tang to Northern Song Dynasties (c. the 9th to 11th centuries) concentrated. These ceramics were rarely found in the area of the Crystal Sand Beach. Since we see the sudden rise of the 13th-century Chinese ceramics in the area of the Crystal Sand Beach and the sudden drop of such ceramics in the area south of the city, it may be assume that the center of the Chinese ceramic trade had shifted to the Crystal Sand Beach in around the 13th century. Population may have moved from the area south of the city into the city as well.

The rise of the area of the Crystal Sand Beach as the most important urban and trade center in coastal Nakhon in the 13th century, suggested by the excavation results, is in accordance with the information provided by the local chronicles and the Chinese documents. The former mentioned that King Si Thammasok founded Nakhon City⁶³ and built the Great Reliquary that was art historically dated to the 13th century (Chuwichian 2010). The latter suggested that Danma-ling rose to power and became a principal kingdom in the 13th century. The Chinese ceramics discovered in our excavations also indicated that Nakhon City remained involved in the Chinese ceramic trade until the early 20th century because a good number of the ceramics of the Ming to Ching Dynasties (c. the 15th to 20th centuries) were also recovered.

⁶³ It may be Nakhon City or Phra Wiang City.

CONCLUSION

Peninsular Siam, as the isthmian tract of the Malay Peninsula, is a thin, long piece of land continuing down south from the Eurasian landmass and wedging between the Bay of Bengal and South China Sea. Although technically considered part of mainland Southeast Asia, the orientation of life in this region was virtually maritime. The isthmian tract opened to the currents of cultural influences and its arts captured almost every major style developed in South and Southeast Asia (O'Connor 1996:596). At around its narrowest point, called Isthmus of Kra, the earliest port-cities known to date in Southeast Asia seems to have developed since the 4th century BCE, including the sites of Phukhao Thong and Khao Sam Kaeo. They were large settlements with complex organization of space and provided a considerable amount of evidence for the productions of glass and semi-precious stone ornaments, metal items, and pottery for the maritime Trans-Asiatic trade network (Chaisuwan 2011; Bellina-Pryce and Silapanth 2006). They may have also housed communities of Indian craftspersons in the isthmus. After the decline of the ports in Isthmus of Kra for some unclear reasons, their pivotal role in trade was continued by the subsequent ports, such as Tha Chana and Khuan Luk Pat, both situated to the south of Isthmus of Kra, in the early centuries CE. These ports continued to produce glass and semi-precious stone ornaments and probably were linked to the opposite coasts via trans-isthmian routes with assistance of the interior communities and groups of forest people.

One of important kingdoms that emerged in this maritime commercial climate was Tambralinga, which was mentioned in an Indian historical document as a destination of Indian merchants in the 2nd or 3rd century CE (Wheatley 1966:237). Several strands of evidence suggested that the heartland of Tambralinga was located on the coastal land of Nakhon Province.

In terms of geography, Tambralinga's heartland opened to the Gulf of Siam in the east and had the Nakhon mountain range in its backyard. It also connected to the west coast of the isthmus via trans-isthmian routes across the mountains and plains. Two ancient beach ridges running from north to south served as the core of the heartland's landscape, along which communications between various clusters of communities could be made. The coastal land of Nakhon had the highest densities of the Bronze Drums (c. late centuries BCE) and the early Visnu images of the conch on the hip group (c. the 5th century CE). Tambralinga seems to have served as the center of innovation of these Visnu images in Southeast Asia. Its heartland also had the highest density of early Hindu shrines (c. the 5th to 11th centuries) in the isthmian tract. Their foundations were constructed with bricks and they commonly provided similar artifact assemblage, such as stone architectural parts, lingas, yonis, Visnu images, and other religious images. In this study, 89 brick shrines were recorded and they could be divided into 5 major clusters spreading along the beach ridges. The distribution of these clusters also suggested that ancient communities associated with the shrines probably exploited a wide variety of resources in each ecological zone and traded them among each other using a network of river systems and walking trails. The mountain zone was important to the development of Tambralinga because it provided forest products and tin valued very highly by foreign merchants.

A radical change in the history of Tambralinga seems to have occurred in the 13th century when a new dynasty with Theravada Buddhist orientation arrived in coastal Nakhon and established their capital and the Great Stupa (reliquary) in the area of the Crystal Sand Beach. The preliminary results of our excavations in this area supported this view because the area seems to have been heavily occupied in the 13th century based mainly on the Chinese ceramics

discovered in the excavations. In this period, the area of the Crystal Sand Beach seems to have transformed into the most significant center of urban settlement and trade in Chinese ceramics.

Although superseded by the Buddhism, the long-standing Hindu tradition of Tambralinga still lived on in the way of life of people in Nakhon. Until recently, various Hindu ceremonies were practiced year round and Brahmin families still played an important role in the social life of Nakhon (see P. Noonsuk 1984). Some members of the Brahmin families of Nakhon went to Bangkok to serve as high priests in the royal ceremonies. Interestingly, the tradition of these Brahmin families in Nakhon was mixed with Buddhism. I was told by a member of these families in 2009 that, after retired as Brahmin priests, the senior Brahmins in Nakhon usually would ordain as Buddhist monks and went to practice meditation in the forest until their death. Although the Hindu tradition is much weaker today, there are indications of its revival. Brahmin priests are incorporated into Buddhist ceremonies and there is a group of Brahmins who are lobbying the administrative officials in Nakhon to re-establish the Hindu shrine, which was once stood next to Ho Phra Isuan in Nakhon City. Their struggle for revival still continues.

The study of Peninsular Siam and Tambralinga in the past still needs to be developed further. To this end, I founded the Archaeology of Peninsular Siam Project (ArcPen Project) in 2010 under the initial collaboration between Walailak University in Southern Thailand, the Archaeology and Southeast Asia Programs of Cornell University, the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, and L'École Française d'Extrême-Orient. This project is intended to be a long-term archaeological exploration of Peninsular Siam, with its initial focus on the coastal land of Nakhon. This project will also promote education and training, publication, and heritage management that will help and encourage the preservation of

archaeological sites that are now destroyed daily. The fieldworks of this project will enhance our knowledge in archaeology of this significant region.

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