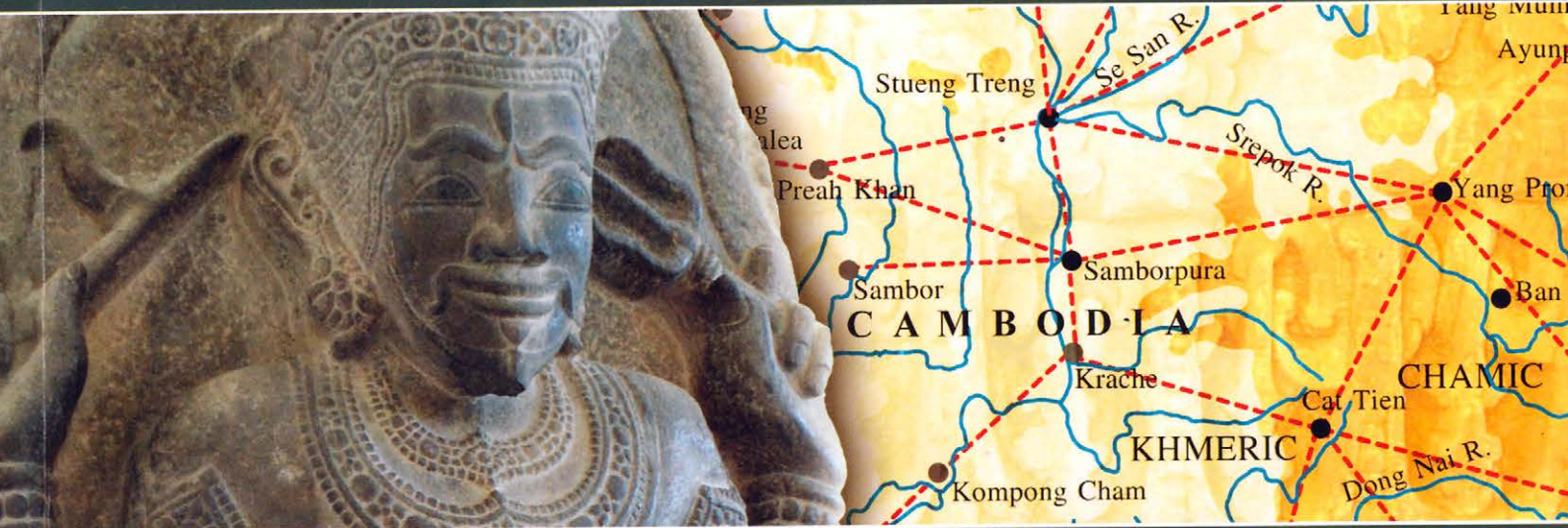


Crossing Boundaries - Learning from the Past to Build the Future:

An Archaeological Collaboration between Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam

Tran Ky Phuong



Crossing Boundaries - Learning from the Past to Build the Future: An Archaeological Collaboration between Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam

Tran Ky Phuong

© Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD)

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the author.

This research report is a result of the visiting scholar and non-degree research fellowship programs supported by the Rockefeller Foundation. The programs facilitate opportunities for scholars, researchers and NGO workers in the region to broaden and deepen their conceptual understanding and analysis of issues relating to trans-border and cultural diversity, in the context of political and economic changes in the Mekong Region.

The visiting scholar fellowship program provides an opportunity for regional scholars to research and write about issues related to sustainable development, cultural diversity and trans-border issues in the Mekong region, in a working environment at the Regional Center for Social Sciences and Sustainable Development (RCSD), Chiang Mai University, that is supportive and intellectually stimulating. The non-degree research program is designed to accommodate mid-career regional researchers, NGO workers and members of the media, who wish to conduct research focusing on resource politics and cultural transformation in the Mekong Region.

Copy Editor: Gary Morrison

Photo: Tran Ky Phuong

Design and Layout: Wajee Ruangphornwisut

Published in January 2013 by:

The Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD)

Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University

239 Huay Kaew Road, Tambon Suthep, Amphur Muang, Chiang Mai

50200 THAILAND

Telephone: 66 (0) 5394 3595/6

Fascimile: 66 (0) 5389 3279

Email: rcsd@cmu.ac.th

Website: <http://rcsd.soc.cmu.ac.th>

Contents

Acknowledgements	7
1. Introduction	8
2. Literature Review	10
3. Methodology	11
3.1. Field Surveys and Interviews	11
3.2. Data Collection	12
4. Findings	13
4.1 Archaeological Finds in Northeast Cambodia	13
4.2 Archaeological Finds in Southern Laos	23
4.3 Archaeological Finds from the Cham Kingdom in Central Vietnam	40
5. Preliminary Conclusion	47
6. Discussion	52
References	54
About the Author	57

List of Figures

Fig. 1.1	Map Showing the Field Research/Archaeological Areas Concentrated along the Sekong, Sesan and Srepok Rivers	9
Fig. 4.1	The Brick Temple of Preah Ko	15
Fig. 4.2	Map of Prasat Preah Thiet	15
Fig. 4.3	Prasat Preah Thiet on the Sekong Riverbank in Stueng Treng	16
Fig. 4.4	An Eighth Century Lintel from the Pre-Angkorian Period at Prasat Preah Thiet	16
Fig. 4.5	An 8 th Century Lintel - the so-called 'Thalaborivat' of Prasat Brambounlovang	17
Fig. 4.6	Key Archaeological Sites along the Sekong and Mekong Rivers in Stueng Treng	18
Fig. 4.7	Map of Badeum on the Sesan Riverbank	19
Fig. 4.8	Map of Badeum	20
Fig. 4.9	Artifacts Remaining at Badeum	20
Fig. 4.10	Map Showing the Main Archaeological Sites in Attapue Province	24
Fig. 4.11	Vat That Archaeological Site	24
Fig. 4.12	Plan of Vat That and Vat Si Khun	25
Fig. 4.13	Vat That and Vat Si Khun - on the Banks of the Sekhaman River	25
Fig. 4.14	The Main Archaeological Sites in Xaisetha	26
Fig. 4.15	Square Stone Pedestal from the Pre-Angkorian Period at Vat That	26
Fig. 4.16	16 th /17 th Century Buddha Statues at Vat That	26
Fig. 4.17	Temple Foundation Remains - Vat Si Khun	27
Fig. 4.18	Buddhist Chakravatin Stone Carving at Vat Luong Kau (from the 16 th /17 th centuries)	28
Fig. 4.19	Pre-Khmeng Style 8 th Century Lintel at Vat Fang Deng	29
Fig. 4.20	Brick Elephant at Vat Fang Deng	29
Fig. 4.21	Broken Columns Found at Vat Fang Deng	29
Fig. 4.22	Plan of Vat Ong Sen and Vat Nong Y Moun - including the Network of Barays	30
Fig. 4.23	Pre-Khmeng Style Lintel from the 8 th Century at Vat Ong Sen	31
Fig. 4.24	Bricks, Stones and Laterites from an Ancient Temple at Vat Ong Sen	32

Fig. 4.25	Doorjambs found in the Vicinity of Vat Ong Sen	32
Fig. 4.26	Network of Barays Remaining at Vat Nong Y Moun	33
Fig. 4.27	Laterite Foundation-base at Vat Xetthaphone	33
Fig. 4.28	Member of the Kui/Souy Ethnic Group near Remains at Vat Xetthaphon	34
Fig. 4.29	Moonstone at Vat Khum Kham	35
Fig. 4.30	Waterspout at Vat Khum Kham	35
Fig. 4.31	Doorjambs at Vat Khum Kham	35
Fig. 4.32	Remains of a Religious Structure at Ban Soak/Sok	36
Fig. 4.33	Architectural Remains along the Sekong River in the North of Attapue Province, Laos	36
Fig. 4.34	An Elderly Lave Woman in Ban Takhum	37
Fig. 4.35	A 7 th Century Sandstone Carving of a Brahmanic Stele at Ban Takhum, in Muong Sanxai	38
Fig. 4.36	Wooden Canoes on the Sekong River	39
Fig. 4.37	Southern Part of the Sekong River in Muong Samansay	39
Fig. 4.38	Architectural Remains of Nang Ka Dam, at Ban Nang Dzong, Muong Lamam in Sekong Province	39
Fig. 4.39	A Communal House (<i>roong</i>) in a Bahnar Village in Kontum	40
Fig. 4.40	A Bahnar Man in Kontum	40
Fig. 4.41	Brick Foundations of a 3 rd to 5 th Century Temple Uncovered at Bang Khleung	41
Fig. 4.42	Chinese Style Eave Tiles Found at Bang Khleung Site in 2010	41
Fig. 4.43	A 14 th Century Siva Statue of Yang Mum (Museum of Champa Sculpture, Danang)	41
Fig. 4.44	The 14 th Century Brick Cham Temple of Yang Prong in Dak Lak Province	42
Fig. 4.45	7 th Century Cham Rock Inscriptions at a Katu Village in Tay Giang (Muong Hien) District in Quang Nam Province	43
Fig. 4.46	A Katu Woman in Muong Kalum, Sekong Province, Laos	44
Fig. 4.47	A Katu Traditional Communal House (<i>guol</i>) in Muong Thaten, Sekong Province, Laos	44
Fig. 4.48	12 th /13 th Century Khmer Radiant Bodhisattva, found at Tra Kieu in Quang Nam Province - Housed at the National Museum of Vietnamese History in Hanoi	45

Fig. 4.49	Khmer Avalokitesvara from the 13 th Century Found in Quang Tri (Museum of Cham Sculpture, Danang)	46
Fig. 4.50	Khmer Statues Found near the Thach Han Estuary in Quang Tri.	46
Fig. 5.1	Map of Trade Routes Connecting the Main Ancient Political and Commercial Centers in Mainland Southeast Asia.	49

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD), at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, and also its Director, Dr. Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, for giving me the opportunity to carry out this research based on funding from the Rockefeller Foundation. I should also thank RCSD's administration personnel – and especially Ms. Chanida Puranapun, who took care of my project. My thanks also go to Prof. Surasawasdi Sooksawasdi for the advice he gave me during my studies, and my colleagues - Phon Kasaka at the Royal Academy of Cambodia, and Thonglith Luongkhot of the Division of Heritage and Archaeology at the Ministry of Culture and Information in Laos, for their contributions. I would also like to express thanks to my friend and colleague, Dr. Rie Nakamura, for her encouragement during my project, and Prof. John Miksic for his friendly advice when setting it up.

Tran Ky Phuong

1

Introduction

This research is based on field work carried out by a research team in northeast Cambodia, southern Laos and central Vietnam, where a large number of Khmer and Champa archaeological sites still remain. The goal of the research was to trace the interconnections between two important Southeast Asian civilizations - the Angkorian and Champa, proposing that interactions between these two empires greatly affected their growth and development, and also their decline. While previous studies have focused on the sea-routes that existed between Champa on the East Sea/South China Sea coast in Central Vietnam, and Angkor on the shores of Tonle Sap lake in Cambodia, here I aim to explore the overland routes that once existed between these two empires. Previous explorations by principal investigators have found that these civilizations were possibly connected by an infrastructure that included rivers, ports and paths/roads, with towns and villages located at important transportation nodes. Even as these routes wound over and through the mountains of the Annam Cordillera, much of their length was navigable based on year-round river travel. The research work carried out here tracked - archaeologically and ethnographically - the remains of these routes.

Based upon landscape archaeology, the architectural sites recently found in Attapue Province in Laos, together with other archaeological sites found in northeast Cambodia (École Française d'Extrême-Orient et Ministère de la culture et des beaux-arts 2006), are convincing evidence of the existence of watershed and overland routes along the Mekong, Sekong and Sesan rivers, routes that connected northeast Cambodia with southern Laos and the Central Highlands of Vietnam during and after the eighth century AD. Several *muong* (a socio-political unit akin to a state/district/region) were built along the royal highways linking

the Khmer Empire and the Kingdom of Champa. This study, based on ethnological and archaeological surveys, hopes to provide new evidence regarding the existence of these overland trade routes, and puts forward practical suggestions for future research in this area.

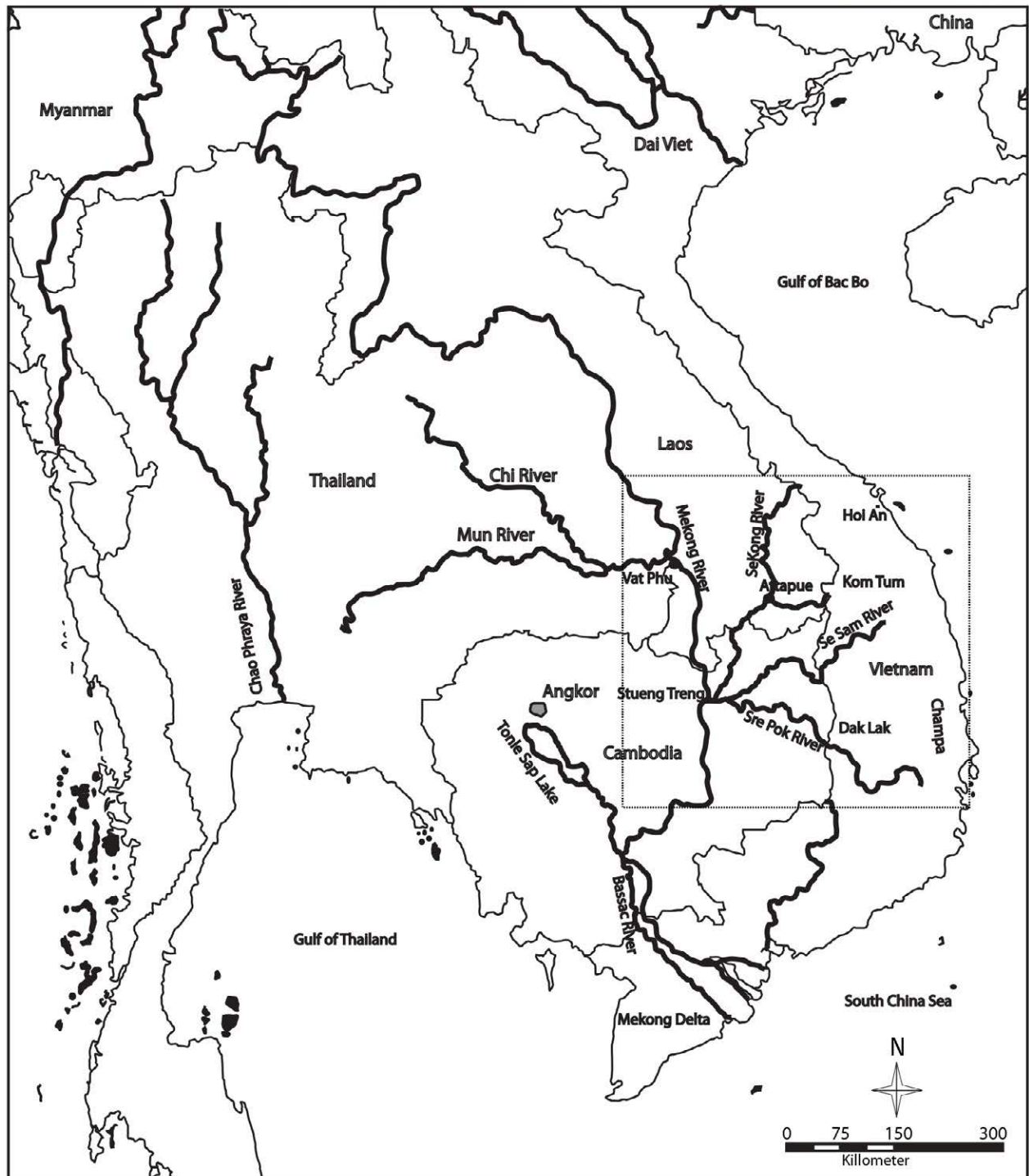


Figure 1.1 Map Showing the Field Research/Archaeological Areas Concentrated along the Sekong, Se San and Sre Pok Rivers (inside square) .

2

Literature Review

Much research work has been carried out into the relationship between the Khmer Empire and the Kingdom of Champa, with most researchers believing the trade routes between these two kingdoms consisted of the key waterways - the Mekong river and the East Sea (Ishizawa 2005: pp. 162-93/map on p.198). Recently, some historians have started to re-examine this issue by discussing the war that took place between the Khmer King Jayavarman VII and the Kingdoms of Dai Viet and Champa, suggesting that Jayavarman VII wanted to occupy the ports in Champa in order to trade directly with China (Vickery, n.d.: p. 107, and personal communications with the author at the CIEE Spring Course in Phnom Penh, 2009).

The excursions of French explorers in the early twentieth century, especially those of August Pavie, as described in the book by Henri Maitre entitled *Les Jungles Moï, Exploration et histoire des hinterlands moï du Cambodge, de la Cochinchine, de l'Annam et du Laos' in 1912*, surveyed the territories covered by ethnic groups living along the lower sections of the Mekong river, as well as in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, and helped maintain the idea that barter exchange and interactions took place among ethnic groups in the area. In particular, recent historical/archaeological discoveries have helped develop further the idea of a link between the Angkor Empire and the Kingdom of Champa through the land routes connecting northeastern Cambodia (the present-day provinces of Stung Treng and Ratanakiri) with Laos (the provinces of Champasak, Attapue and Sekong) and the Central Highlands of Vietnam (the provinces of Dak Lak, Kontum and Gia Lai). It is this inter-regional route that has helped us to learn more about the tribal (clan) alliances that developed within the territory of the Khmer Empire, and that it was these ethnic groups that were key factors in the formation of connections in the area in relation to fields such as trade and military affairs.

3

Methodology

To achieve the aims of the study, an ethno-archeology approach was conducted using the following steps.

3.1. Field Surveys and Interviews

3.1.1. The research team carried out surveys of the remarkable architectural relics to be found in Stung Treng Province in northeast Cambodia, Attapeu Province in southern Laos and also in Central Vietnam, including the networks of *barays* to be found there, as well as undertook surveys of the geographical landscapes and natural ecological environments in these areas.

3.1.2. The team interviewed Katuic and Bahnaric people living in mountain villages along the Sekong river; especially the Katuic living in Muong Kalum and Muong Tha Ten villages in Sekong Province, and also in Tay Giang, Dong Giang and Nam Giang districts in Quang Nam Province. The team also interviewed elders in Hat Ngao and Sanamsay villages in Attapeu Province along the Sekong river - not far from the border between Laos and Cambodia. The team focused its interviews on the exchange of goods that took place in the past around the watersheds and the people's use of elephants to carry them, plus explored the close relationships that existed between these ethnic groups.

3.1.3. Field Survey Objectives

- (1) Conduct ground surveys in order to identify settlements within the area
- (2) Produce detailed maps of the study sites using GPS and an eye-leveling machine, and

- (3) Document the existing sites and temple foundations, those dating from the pre-Angkorian through to the modern period.

3.2. Data Collection

Data was drawn from published research work and discussed directly with researchers in the areas - at conferences focused on the issues related to my study. The research team also met with researchers managing the Living Angkor Road Project (LARP) at an international conference entitled 'Angkor and its global connections', held in Siam Riep during June 2011, to learn more about the connection between Angkor and the Khmer relics to be found in Thailand.

4

Findings

In order to conduct the research, the team carried out investigations and surveys at various archaeological sites in Cambodia, Laos and the Central Highlands of Vietnam, concentrating on areas alongside the Sekong, Se San and Sre Pok rivers in Stueng Treng Province in Cambodia, Attapue Province in Laos and Kontum Province in Vietnam.

4.1 Archaeological Finds in Northeast Cambodia

The team concentrated on the archaeological sites located at the confluence of these three rivers where they enter the Mekong river, first mapping and photographing the main sites in Thalaborivath and Sesan districts of Stueng Treng Province. Thalaborivath, a district in Stueng Treng Province, northern Cambodia, is located at the confluence of the three rivers, and artifacts, inscriptions, temples and water reservoirs (*trapeang*) there reveal the presence of human habitation during the pre-Angkorian period. Based on these artifacts, French scholars presumed that Thalaborivath was in fact *Bhavapura*, an ancient capital city during the pre-Angkorian period, and that the sites there might be related to those of the Chenla period after the eighth century. Due to the geography of the area, trade has been carried out here throughout history.

Badeum is one of the main archaeological sites in Sesan district, Stueng Treng Province, and it has been suggested that Badeum was positioned at the confluence of the three rivers entering the Mekong, but on the Sesan river bank, making it a convenient spot to transport goods up the Mekong from the Delta, and across the mountains from the central coastal area of Vietnam. The identification of a

potential port site at Ba Côn, some ten kilometers from Badeum, hints at the important economic role this area played.

It was therefore necessary to examine the architectural and portable artifacts found across the study landscape - to assess the temporal depth and spatial extent of the civilizations based there. Emphasis was placed on the study of foreign ceramics, such as Chinese porcelains, those that would be indicative of long-distance trade. By assessing the relationship between the architectural features found, the team was also able to examine social structures, identify potential market locations and document the construction of religious monuments in the area.

Extending the survey along the Sekong river allowed the team to test the notion that this was a pre-Angkorian capital city, one which may have played a pivotal role in facilitating relationships between contemporaneous sites up and down the Mekong. A further impetus for undertaking this work had been the recent influx of settlements and developments into the area, for local people have recently begun to settle within the temple complex itself, inadvertently damaging the archaeological record of the site.

4.1.1 Prasat Ba Chong

Prasat Ba Chong is located on the south bank of the Sekong river, in the village of Phum Ba Chong (west of Stueng Treng). It is made of pre-Angkorian brickwork, and earthenware and stoneware pottery can be found, exposed by the riverbank. A section of the site is currently being used to off-load merchandise from riverboats, moor fishing boats and for general access to the river, all of which has led to a progressive collapse of the bank into the river, though the overall extent of this has yet to be determined.

4.1.2 Prasat Preah Ko

Prasat Preah Ko is also known as Prasat Preah Boran and Prasat Preah Srei, and is located on the west bank of the Mekong river, opposite the mouth of the Sekong river in the village of Phum Thala, Thalaborivath district. Prasat Preah Ko is a pre-Angkorian structure built of fired clay-bricks with carved sandstone elements; possibly the remains of an eighth century temple. A *linga* pedestal, an inscription and two *makara* heads from this site are now housed in the district office. A big statue of the sacred bull *nandin*, from Preah Ko, is housed in a shrine in front (due east) of the *prasat*.



Figure 4.1: The Brick Temple of Preah Ko

4.1.3 Prasat Preah Thiet

Prasat Preah Thiet is located on a promontory called Phnom Tanatika, overlooking the left bank of the Sekong river in the village of Phum Prek, Stung Treng. Here, remnants can be seen of what may have been four large platforms with pre-Angkorian foundations; brick pavements, a paved approach up the north side of the hill, a *trapeang* (water reservoir) bound on the north and east sides by raised earthen walls (*berms*) and running downhill to the northwest, and rice fields extending north and northeast of the *trapeang*. The surviving architectural elements suggest this site was a major foundation.



Figure 4.2: Map of Prasat Preah Thiet



Figure 4.3: Prasat Preah Thiet on the Sekong Riverbank in Stueng Treng



Figure 4.4: An Eighth Century Lintel from the Pre-Angkorian Period at Prasat Preah Thiet

4.1.4 Prasat Brambounloveng

Prasat Brambounloveng is also known as Prasat Sala Bounloveng and Prasat Kangtacho. This Prasat is located on the right bank of the Mekong river, opposite the mouth of the Sekong in the village of Phum Kang Ta Cho, Thalaborivath District. This represents a pre-Angkorian foundation, and consists of carved sandstone elements and fired-clay bricks. It is possibly part of the remains of an eighth century temple.

4.1.5 Prasat Bros

Prasat Bros is located on the right bank of the Mekong river, in the village of Phum Kang Ta Cho, and is a pre-Angkorian foundation with sandstone elements and made of fired-clay bricks. There are also portions of a doorway here, including a sandstone lintel and doorjamb. This also represents the possible remains of an eighth century temple (see Map 4.6).



Figure 4.5: An 8th Century Lintel - the so-called 'Thalaborivat' of Prasat Brambounlovang



Figure 4.6: Key Archaeological Sites along the Sekong and Mekong Rivers in Stung Treng

4.1.6 Badeum

Badeum is located in Badeum village, Sam Kouy commune in Sesan District, Stung Treng Province, and can be found on the south bank of the Mekong. Badeum consists of a small number of temple foundations, and the survey research site can be divided into three groups: a central, a northern and a southern group.

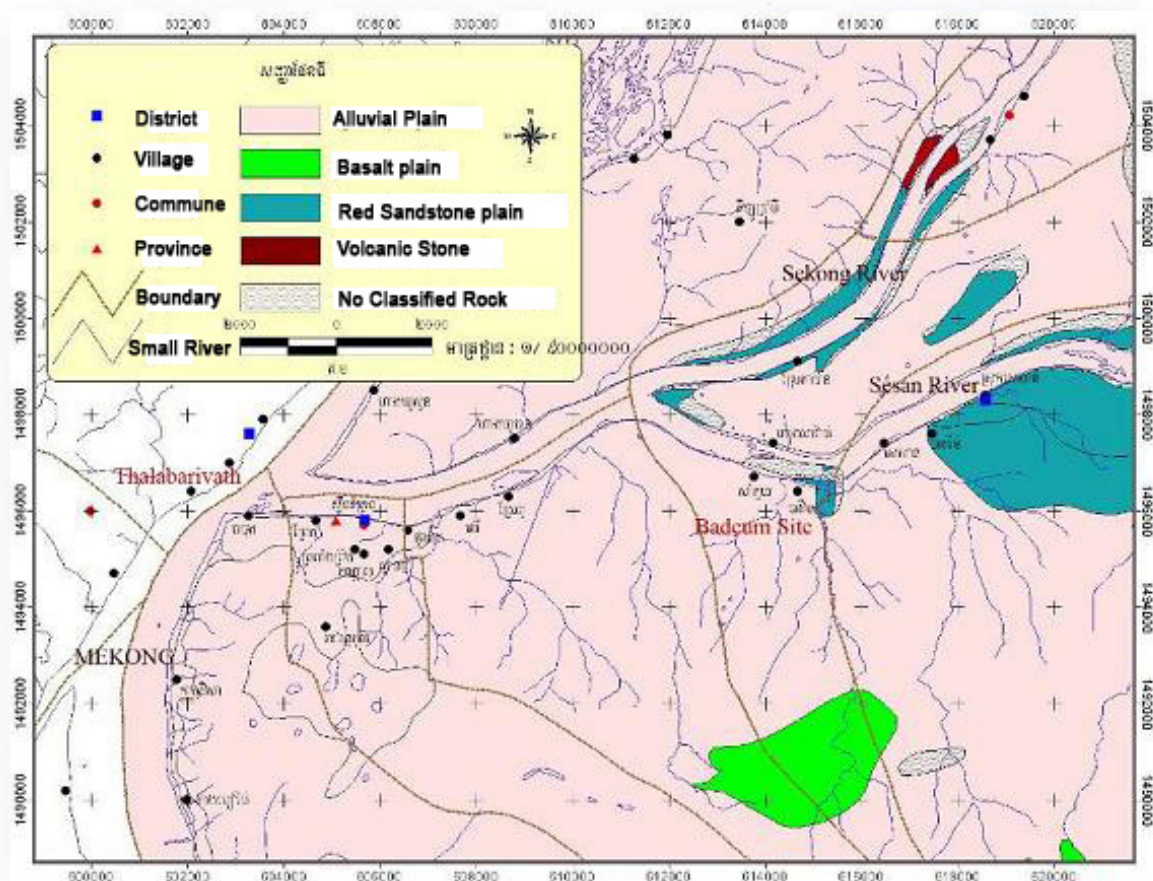


Figure 4.7: Map of Badeum on the Sesan River

1. Northern Group

The northern group is located along the Sesan river, at the north end of the village road. This group of foundations is in very bad condition because villagers have built their houses on the mounds. As a result, the number of mounds is not clear, and one has even been looted for treasure. The whole group is located on flat land and is situated at the same height as the road. Temple bricks are scattered all over the mounds, and some pieces of sandstone - representing architectural elements of the temple - are still in-situ.

Soon this northern group of remains will be completely destroyed, meaning a key archaeological source will be lost.

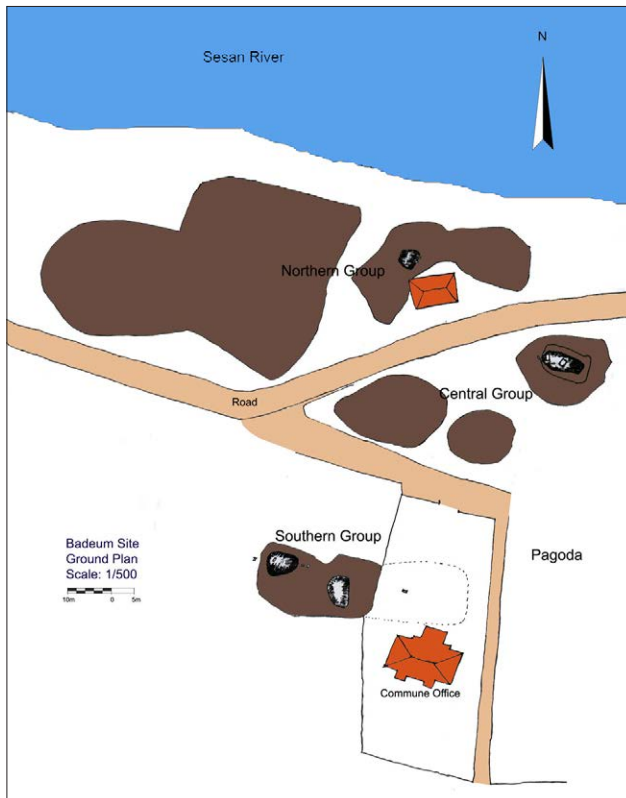


Figure 4.8: Map of Badeum



Figure 4.9: Artifacts Remaining at Badeum

2. Central Group

The central group is located at the southern end of the village road and has been surrounded by a fence since 2005. All the artifacts collected from this site are being stored inside the fenced area near the mounds. The elevation of the whole group is not more than two meters above the surrounding area.

The central group consists of eastern, central and western temple foundations. The western group is lower than the other two groups, and there are no architectural elements remaining of the western foundations. Bricks are scattered around all three sets of foundations, and the eastern foundations have pieces of sandstone remaining, plus remarkably the door frames and sills. Unfortunately, the eastern group has been looted, though there is one door frame which stands separate from the foundations.

Based on the temple foundations found as part of the central group, the temples at Badeum were built in a cluster. This is very similar to another temple called Prasat Brambounloveng, at the Thalaborivath site, where a cluster of temples was built on the same terrace. The foundations of the central group are thus in a cluster formation, with complexes and three main towers - a western, central and eastern tower.

3. Southern Group

The southern group is located at the south end of the village, near the commune office. The condition of the southern group is the same as that of the northern group. Houses have been built on the site, with villagers removing the mound to create enough land for housing. The remains of the foundations provide no information as to the number of buildings that may have existed here.

The commune office was built on top of the foundations in 2006, and while clearing the earth on the mound before the construction, workers found a stone inscription, now stored in the pagoda. The foundation bricks are visible on the surface, in front of the commune office.

Reasons for Destruction of the Site at Badeum

The site at Badeum is gradually being destroyed for the following reasons.

Population Increase

According to a 1969 digital map, at that time there were only a few houses in Badeum village, so the site must have been well preserved up to that point due to the sparse population and small number of dwellings. The few families that did live there had little impact on the site. However, the statistics from 1998 show the presence of 332 families – with 1813 males and 931 females (Statistics 1998). Statistics from the Samkouy commune office show there to have been 424 families – with 2094 people (of which 1058 were males and 1036 were females). Since then, the population in the area has continued to increase, and by 2006 the site already had a large number of houses, with villagers building their houses along the road, cutting across the site.

Land Development

As the population has increased, so have development activities, with houses built and roads extended. For example, the Samkouy commune office was built in 2005 on a mound within the southern group, during which time soil was removed from the mound. After the mound had been excavated, a stone inscription was found, now stored in the pagoda.

Farming

In addition to the commune office, some villagers have built their houses near the temple mound. Farming is the most common livelihood activity among the people in the area, and they plant fruit such as bananas, papayas, mangos, grapefruits, guava and custard apples, among others. They have also planted crops on the mound, and to clear land for their crops, have continued to clear soil, with the local government and relevant institutions yet to interfere in order to preserve the sites.

Looting

The looting of archaeological sites in Cambodia is very common, and has occurred in many places across the country, mainly at the temples and burial sites. The destruction of the site at Badeum has partly been caused by looting - people loot the mound in search of gold or other precious objects widely considered as treasure (*Khmer term: komnab*).

Construction of the New Road

The old road was built through the middle of the group, dividing the southern and central groups, but after the pagoda was constructed another road was built which avoided the pagoda campus. This road now runs along the river north of the central group.

In 2005, the Director of the Department of Culture and Fine Arts in Stung Treng raised funds to build a fence around the central group, with the support of the Tax Office. At the same time, all the artifacts scattered around the site were collected together and stored inside the fenced area. Even though the artifacts were not sheltered, they were kept in one place where people could see them.

In June 2007, a road project was implemented, covering the entire Badeum village area, its aim being to extend and improve the existing road – to make it easier for the villagers to move around. Although good for transportation, construction of the road destroyed the western mound and parts of the eastern mound also, plus the managers of the road project did not inform the provincial Office of Culture and Fine Arts in advance, and ended up removing the fence which had been built by its Director, Mr. Som Sa Em. As a result, the eastern mound was completely destroyed and the western mound partly removed, with local villagers collecting temple bricks from the mound for their own use.

4.1.7 Preliminary Conclusion

The archaeological sites in Stung Treng Province, those at which a number of brick works, sandstone artifacts, inscriptions and ceramic shards have been found, may have been religious centers - those linked to trade centers (permanent/periodic markets) of the time. In terms of landscape archaeology, these architectural sites are convincing evidence of the existence of a watershed and overland trading network based on the Mekong, Sekong and Sesan rivers, connecting northeast Cambodia with southern Laos and the Central Highlands of Vietnam during the early Khmer/Champa periods in this region, that is, from the eighth century onwards.

4.2 Archaeological Finds in Southern Laos

The research team concentrated on the archaeological sites located along the Sekong and Sekhaman rivers, mapping and photographing the key sites in Attapue Province at Muong Xaisetha, Muong Samankhisay, Muong Sanxai and Muong Samansay; and at some other historical and ethnically important sites in Sekong Province.

Attapue Province is in southern Laos, bordering northeast Cambodia and the Central Highlands of Vietnam (located between N14°20'/15°00' and E106°30'/107°35'). The area is in a large valley formed by the Sekong and Sekhaman rivers (known as the 'holy rivers') and bounded by Phou Luong or the 'Great Mountain' (the 'holy' mountain) to the west. This flat, prosperous plain has, over the years, been enriched by alluvium from the two large rivers, and in fact the name *Attapue* (*it-ke-pue*) means 'large mound of buffalo dung' in the Lao language. Local people say that formerly this was a key buffalo trading location in the region.

It is quite easy to travel from Attapue Province to Stueng Treng in northeast Cambodia along the local waterways, or to the Central Highlands of Vietnam over land. There are many ethnic groups in the area, most of whom speak Mon-Khmer languages - those belonging to the Bahnaric and Katuic branches. These people have retained much of their oral history, including legends related to the exchange and barter of products in the region¹ over time.

Muong Xaisetha is about fifteen kilometers east of the capital of Attapue, and here there are a number of old pagodas, including Vat That, Vat Si Khun, Vat Luong Kau, Vat Fang Deng, Vat Ong Sen, Vat Nong Y Muong and Vat Xetthaphone - all of which house artifacts from the pre-Angkorian to the post-Angkorian periods. These pagodas are located along banks of both the Sekhaman and Sekong rivers.

Vat That, in Ban Vat That, Muong Xaisetha, is a big Buddhist pagoda on the left bank of the Sekhaman river (N14°48.702'/ E106°56.518'), and here the research team found a large number of ancient bricks, including a pre-Angkorian square stone pedestal (39 x 39 x 20 cm) dated from the eighth or ninth centuries, and broken pieces of a 175 cm long sixteenth/seventeenth century stone Buddha statue - with the head, arms and legs present and sitting in a *padmāsana* or lotus position. These artifacts provide a great deal of information about the long history of this site, from the pre-Angkorian right through to the post-Angkorian periods.

1. Every year, the Katu people living in Sekong Province (Laos) and Quảng Nam Province (Vietnam), those who are relatives, visit each other on a regular basis. In the past they would spend a week visiting and trading/exchanging products. Nowadays, however, the Katu in Sekong take their own products to Quảng Nam, such as textiles and dried river fish, and bring back products from Quảng Nam, including salt, tools, utensils and so on (according to author's fieldwork carried out in June/July 2009 in Sekong and Quảng Nam Provinces).



Map. 1.1.

Figure 4.10: Map Showing the Main Archaeological Sites in Attapeu Province: (1) Vat Khum Kham, (2) Ban Sok/ Soat, (3) Vat Xetthaphone, (4) Vat Ong Sen, (5) Vat Fang Deng, (6) Vat That, (7) Vat Luong Kau, and (8) Ban Takhum (Brahmanic stele)



Figure 4.11: Vat That Archaeological Site

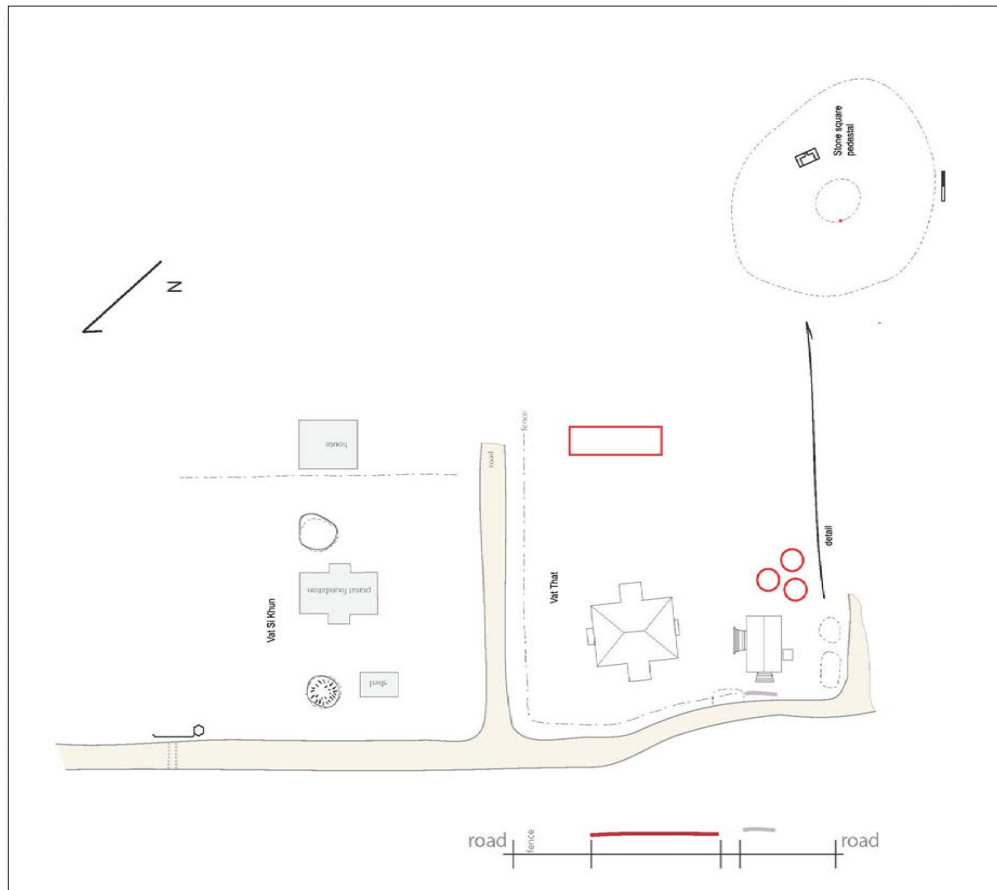


Figure 4.12: Plan of Vat That and Vat Si Khun

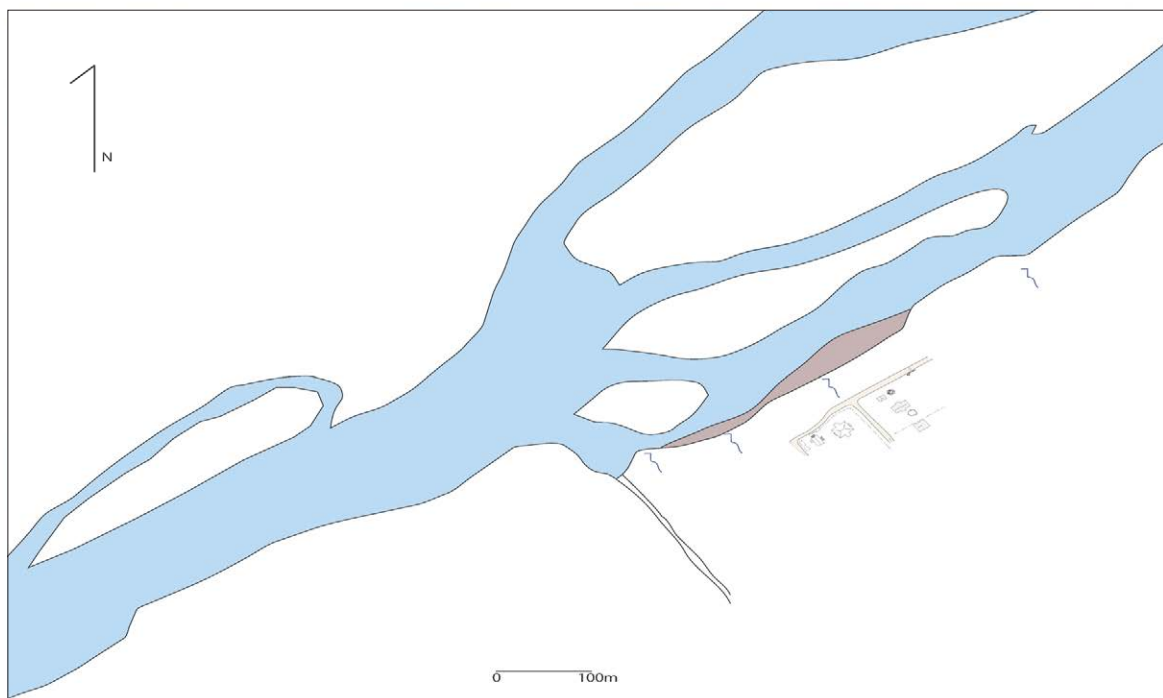


Figure 4.13: Vat That and Vat Si Khun - on the Banks of the Sekhaman River



Figure 4.14: The Main Archaeological Sites in Xaisetha



Figure 4.15: Square Stone Pedestal from the Pre-Angkorian Period at Vat That



Figure 4.16: 16th/17th Century Buddha Statues at Vat That

Vat Si Khun in Ban Vat That, Muong Xaisetha, is located in front of Vat That, and here the research team found two large mounds of bricks - the remains of the foundations of the ancient structures.



Figure 4.17: Temple Foundation Remains - Vat Si Khun

Vat Luong Kau, in Ban Vat Luong, Muong Xaisetha, is an old wooden pagoda nearby Vat That (N14° 48.587' / E106°56.384'), and is where the research team found two ancient brick *stupas* set on a round base, believed to be from a broken twelfth or thirteenth century Angkorian bronze statue, and a twelfth or thirteenth century *pesani* (grinding stone), 32 cm long. A sixteenth/seventeenth century Buddhist stone carving was also found - approximately 120 cm high, a so-called *Chakravatin* ('universal monarch') - a very rare piece among Southeast Asian Buddhist art.



Figure 4.18: Buddhist Chakravatin Stone Carving at Vat Luong Kau (from the 16th/17th centuries)

Vat Fang Deng, in Ban Fang Deng, Muong Xaisetha, is on the right-hand bank of the Sekhaman river (N14°48.610' / E106°56.025'). It is a large Buddhist pagoda in which the research team found important specimens of pre-Angkorian sculpture, including a pre-Khmeng style eighth century lintel carved with an image of Garuda with a human face (220 x 90 cm), and also two broken architectural features - two round columns with floral carvings (22 x 39 cm and 23 x 22 cm) and an eighth century round brick elephant (110 x 50 cm).



Fig.1.4. ➤

Figure 4.19: Pre-Khmeng Style 8th Century Lintel at Vat Fang Deng



Figure 4.20: Brick Elephant at Vat Fang Deng



Figure 4.21: Broken Columns Found at Vat Fang Deng

Vat Ong Sen, in Ban Sakhe, Muong Xaisetha, is located on the left bank of the Sekong River, 30 km to the north of Attapue (N14°56.516' / E106°53.021'). This is a remarkable site which includes a large number of architectural remains and a network of *barays* in its vicinity. The architectural remains include an Angkorian waterspout, square stone-bases, a pedestal and a laterite foundation-base. The bricks here are of a large size - 30 x 15 x 6 cm and 27 x 16 x 7 cm. The most notable artifact at this site is a pre-Khmer style eighth century lintel (214 x 79 cm). These remains are convincing proof of a big Khmer temple having been built in this area, together with a network of *barays* made of laterite and brick. The archaeological sites at Vat Ong Sen and its vicinity were built over a long period from the pre-Angkorian to the Angkorian periods - between the eighth and twelfth/thirteenth centuries. This place; therefore, may have been one of the main political/commercial centers in the region at that time.

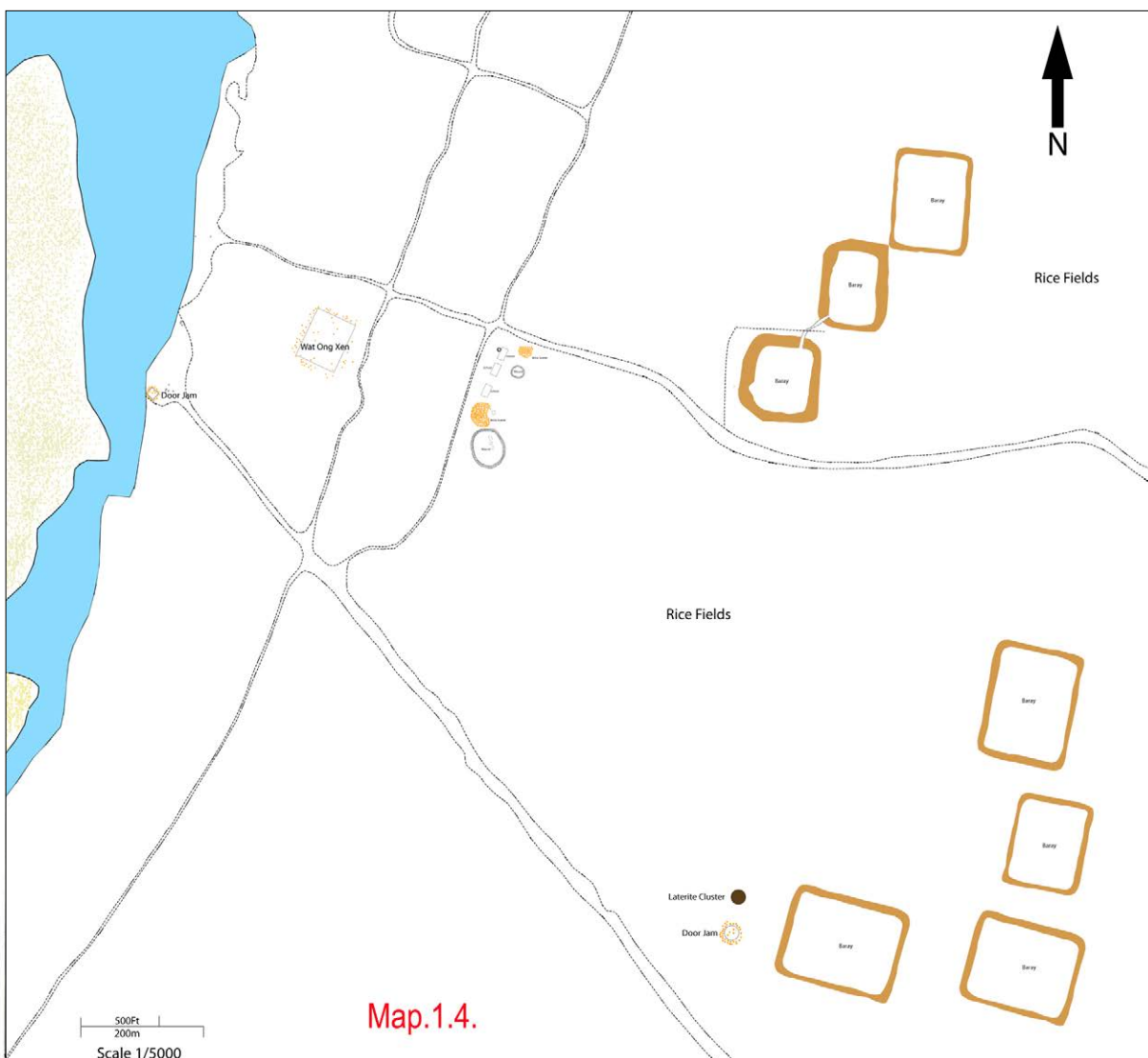


Figure 4.22: Plan of Vat Ong Sen and Vat Nong Y Moun - including the Network of Barays



Figure 4.23: Pre-Khmeng Style Lintel from the 8th Century at Vat Ong Sen



Fig.1.6.

Figure 4.24: Bricks, Stones and Laterites from an Ancient Temple at Vat Ong Sen



Figure 4.25: Doorjambs found in the Vicinity of Vat Ong Sen



Figure 4.26: Network of Barays Remaining at Vat Nong Y MOUNG

Vat Nong Y MOUNG, in Ban Sakhe, Muong Xaisetha, is near to Vat Ong Sen (N14°56.477' / E106°53.125'). The site includes two doorjambes (152 x 76 x 22 cm and 90 x 76 x 22 cm) and a network of *barays* or ponds in the shape of a square. The *barays* are made of brick, stone and laterite, and are still used by the local people.

Vat Xetthaphon, in Ban Kengsay, Muong Xaisetha (the old name of this area is Muong Sung), sits on the left bank of the Sekong river (N15°04.912' / E106°50.354), and is to the north of Vat Ong Sen, and here, the vestiges of stone, brick and laterite structures still remain, as well as high stone steps which run from the river to the site. This site possibly belongs to the Angkorian period.



Figure 4.27: Laterite Foundation-base at Vat Xetthaphone



Figure 4.28: Member of the Kui/Souy Ethnic Group near Remains at Vat Xetthaphon

Muong Samakkkhisay, the capital of Attapue Province, is located at N14°48.354' / E106°50.144', and there are a number of architectural remains to be found in this district, including at Vat Khum Kham in Ban Sok/Soat.

Vat Khum Kham, in Ban Khum Kham, Muong Samakkkhisay (before 1998 this area belonged to Muong Xaisetha) is located on the right bank of the Sekong river, at the foot of Phou Luong or the 'Great Mountain', around 40 km to the north of the capital (N15°04.971' / E106°50.296'). This is a large archaeological site at which can be found a number of architectural features from the pre-Angkorian period, including two moonstones (136 x 70 x 20 cm and 125 x 90 x 23 cm), a *somasutra* or waterspout (151 x 30 x 20 cm), a square stone pedestal (52 x 52 x 52 cm), two large doorjambs (160 x 83 x 23 cm and 174 x 55 x 25 cm), and two pieces of a broken *yon*i (39 x 36 x 15 cm and 32 x 33 x 15 cm). The bricks found here are 31 x 16 x 8 cm in size and the laterites, 42 x 26 x 17 cm.

Ban Sok/Soat in Muong Samankhisay (before 1998 this area belonged to Muong Xaisetha) is located on the right bank of the Sekong river, and is about three kilometers to the south of Vat Khum Kham - in the opposite direction from Vat Xetthaphon which is on the left bank of the river. Here, the research team found the remains of bricks and laterite from a religious structure that is still revered by the local Oy people - a group of Mon-Khmer speakers.



Figure 4.29: Moonstone at
Vat Khum Kham



Figure 4.30: Waterspout at
Vat Khum Kham



Figure 4.31: Doorjambs at Vat
Khum Kham



Figure 4.32: Remains of a Religious Structure at Ban Soak/Sok



Figure 4.33: Architectural Remains along the Sekong River in the North of Attapue Province, Laos



Figure 4.34: An Elderly Lave Woman in Ban Takhum

Muong Sanxai, in Ban Takhum, is populated by people from the Lave ethnic group - a Mon-Khmer speaking group, and here the research team found a perfect stone Brahmanic stele at some ruins in a jungle next to the upper part of the Sekhaman river. The stele carvings contain three key attributes of the Hindu Trimūrti, these being a *kamandalu* (sacred water vessel) with an *akṣamālā* (rosary) and a Brahmā lotus flower to the left, a *triśūla* (trident) from Śiva in the middle and a *cakra* (discus) of Viśnu on the right. The stele measures 83 x 70 x 14 cm, and is a unique specimen of a Lao Brahmanic stele. The stele can be dated to the late seventh century, and when compared with other similar pieces found in Khmer sculpture, is unique, having been carved in the shape of a turtle (Jessup and Zéphir 1997: pp. 175-76). Nearby the stele, the team found two stone pieces of a doorjamb. This site is located 45 km to the northeast of the capital of Attapue Province (N14°52.310' / E107°05.500').

Muong Xanamsay is about 35 km to the south of the provincial capital, and sits alongside the main branch of the Sekong river, as it flows down from Attapue Province in the southernmost part of Laos into Stung Treng Province in the northeast of Cambodia. The watershed part of this river is very deep and flat - there are no waterfalls and so it is very easy to travel up and down the river by boat. Local people in Ban Hatngao (not far from the border of Laos and Cambodia) told the research team that formerly it took about six or seven days to travel by boat from Attapue/Xaisetha to Stung Treng², and that until the early part of the twentieth century, a lot of trade activities went on, connecting the people of these two centers. The local people told us that their ancestors traded many goods with the people of Xieng Teng, such as ivory, crocodiles, deer and snake skins; turtle shells, rattan, timber and salt. Nowadays, the local people still inter-marry across the two areas, and a large proportion of the people from Xieng Teng can speak both Laotian and Khmer³.

Geographically and ethnically, the very close relationship between Attapue and Stung Treng provides clues to the former connections that existed between the two centers. Each of them was known as a *Muong*, and so was ruled by a *Chau Muong* (*Patau Muong*) - a chief or lord (Maitre 1912: p. 455; Stuart-Fox 2002: pp. 1-6).

2. During the early twentieth century, French steamboats used to travel on the Sekong river; it took only four days to travel from Stung Treng to Attapue in this manner (Maitre 1912: p.366).

3. Interview with Mr. Kham Lieng (aged 70) in Ban Hatngau, Muong Sanamsay, on 9th July 2010.



Figure 4.35: A 7th Century Sandstone Carving of a Brahmanic Stele at Ban Takhum, in Muong Sanxai



Figure 4.36: Wooden Canoes on the Sekong River

In Sekong Province can be found the remains of an ancient brick structure in the jungle, called Nang Ka Dam ('Miss Raven' in the Alak language), which is located in Ban Nang Dzon ('Miss Grackle' in the Alak language), Muong Kalam in Sekong Province. Here, the research team found only a big mound of bricks (8 x 6 m), and scattered bricks (28 x 13 x 6.5 cm). There are stepping-stones from the river to the ruin, and it is located on the right bank of the Sekong river, 80 km to the south of Attapue Province. This is the northernmost Khmer site to be found on the Sekong river in southern Laos.

It should be noted that the Sekong river in the northern part of Attapue Province, from Ban Sok and Ban Sakhe up to Muong Lamam in Sekong Province, is inaccessible by boat, except for canoes, due to the rocky undercurrents and small waterfalls to be found along the route (Maitre 1912:366).



Figure 4.37 (Above): Southern Part of the Sekong River in Muong Samansay



Figure 4.38 (Left): Architectural Remains of Nang Ka Dam, at Ban Nang Dzon, Muong Lamam in Sekong Province

4.3 Archaeological Finds from the Cham Kingdom in Central Vietnam

The research team also carried out field research in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, where a large number of Cham sites still remain. Surveys were conducted at the following sites:

In Kontum Province:

The research team carried out a survey at the archaeological site of Kon Klor, which is nowadays located in Kontum and where several excavations were carried out some years ago by the Vietnam Institute of Archaeology - looking at the pre-history of the area. Cham inscriptions and artifacts have been found at this site, such as the architectural features of a temple and a stone inscription describing the Avalokitesvara cult of a local chief named Mahindravarman in 914 (Hickey 1982: pp. 91-93). Kon Klor is located on the banks of the Krong Poko river, which flows to the west of the Truong Son range to connect with the Sesan river in Rattanakiri and Stueng Treng Provinces in Cambodia.

This land is home to the Bahnar people, who acted as middlemen in the trade activities that took place between the coastal settlements of Champa to the east and the western hinterlands in the southern highlands of the Indochina Peninsula. We interviewed a number of elderly Bahnar people living there to learn about the trade activities that took place during the early parts of the twentieth century, and they were able to provide us with stories about the slaves and buffaloes traded to Attapue in Laos.



Figure 4.39: A Communal House (*roong*) in a Bahnar Village in Kontum



Figure 4.40: A Bahnar Man in Kontum

In Gia Lai Province:

The team carried out surveys in Ayunpa town (about 100 km from the coast), where several Cham artefacts remain, having already investigated along the river in the town, which flows to the east before joining the estuary in Tuy Hoa. Ayunpa (formerly called Cheo Reo town) is located in a large valley where there are many Jarai and Bahnar-Jarai

villages. In these villages, we heard stories about the 'King of Fire' and 'King of Water'. We also visited the excavation site of Bang Khleung in Ayunpa region, which was excavated in July 2010 by Vietnamese archaeologists from Gia Lai Provincial Museum and the Center of Archaeology at the Southern Institute for Sustainable Development in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). The archaeologists uncovered third/fourth century Chinese style terracotta eave-tiles at a small brick temple ruin in Bang Khleung - along the upper part of the Ayunpa/Ba river - representing the southernmost point of Chinese cultural influence to have been found so far in the Central Highlands of Vietnam from the early periods (Nguyen 2010, and personal communication with the author in HCMC, September 2010).



Figure 4.41: Brick Foundations of a 3rd to 5th Century Temple Uncovered at Bang Khleung



Figure 4.42: Chinese Style Eave Tiles Found at Bang Khleung Site in 2010

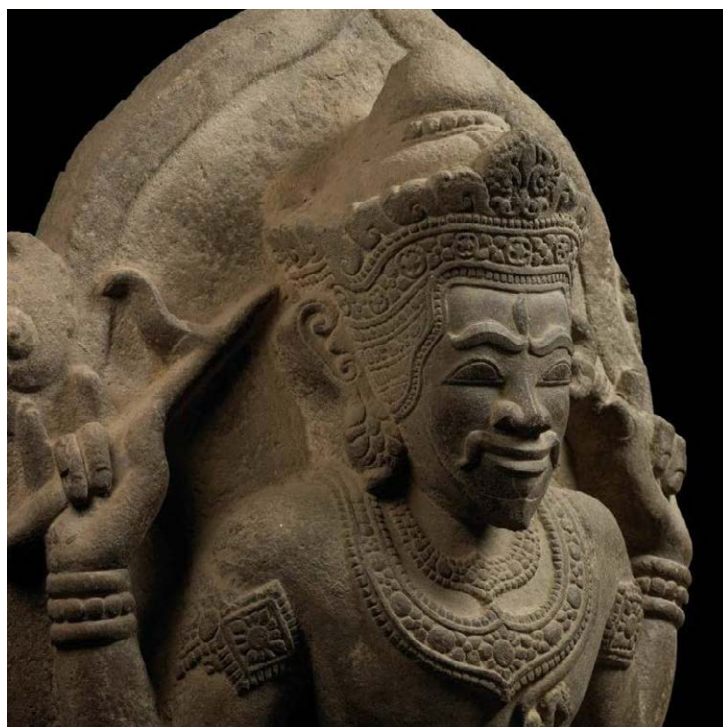


Figure 4.43: A 14th Century Siva Statue of Yang Mum (Museum of Champa Sculpture, Danang)

We also visited the Yang Mum site, where a perfect Siva statue from the fourteenth/fifteenth centuries was found. This statue is now on display at a Cham Museum in Danang (Hickey 1982: pp. 93-98). Yang Mum is not far from Ayunpa to the north, close to An Khe town in An Khe district, Binh Dinh Province, which was a key trading center for lowland-upland product exchange up to and including the last century.



Figure 4.44: The 14th Century Brick Cham Temple of Yang Prong in Dak Lak Province

In Dak Lak Province:

The team carried out an investigation at the temple of Yang Prong in Ea Sup district - a fourteenth/fifteenth century Cham brick temple located in a Jarai village. The Jarai have retained some of the legends related to the highland Cham, those who formerly lived in the area. The temple is located on the east bank of the Ya Hleo river, and joins with the Sre Pok river to the southwest. Yang Prong seems to have been the westernmost Cham temple, as beyond this can be found only scattered Khmer sites - all the way to Ban Lung in Rattanakiri Province in the northeast of Cambodia.

South of Yang Prong is Ban Don, a Mnong village, whose residents are skilled hunters and trainers of elephants, with the hunting and capture of elephants still practiced today.

In Binh Dinh Province:

There are thirteen Cham relic complexes preserved in Binh Dinh Province dating from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, and these typically consist of groups of Thap Bac towers ('silver towers'), in one of which a Bayon style bronze statue showing Buddha sheltered by a Naga was found - which is believed to have been made in Cambodia. This statue is now on show at the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh (Jessup and Zéphir 1997: pp. 272-73).

In addition, the Duong Long group of three towers built in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries has a 43-meter high main tower in the middle, which is one of the tallest brick towers in Southeast Asia. With regard to the silhouette and ground-plan, the Duong Long group of towers is very similar to the group to be found in Phimai in Thailand, only the construction materials are different. For the Duong Long towers, the materials are a combination of brick, sandstone and laterite, while the towers in Phimai are mainly built of sandstone and laterite. Sandstone decorative elements on the false doors of the Duong Long towers are evidence of the artistic influence of the Khmer culture on Cham architecture, something art historians have already highlighted (Stern 1942: pp. 71-2,

Boisselier 1963: pp. 303-8). The evidence for such art, that found in Vijaya (Binh Dinh Province), indicates that an exchange of art took place via the trade route linking Cambodia and the Champa Kingdom, as the western part of the Champa Kingdom was an area in which ethnic people speaking both the Chamic (Ede and Jarai) and Bahnaric languages (Bahnar and Sedang) lived, and a well-known periodic market was held in an area called An Khe, about a dozen kilometers west of the Duong Long towers. An Khe was a well-known trade center and a stopping point between the highlands and lowlands, right up to the twentieth century.

In Quang Nam Province:

Further to the north of central Vietnam, in Tay Giang or Hien district in Quang Nam Province, there are Cham rock carvings from the seventh century to be found in an area inhabited by the Katu ethnic group - the so-called 'Samo' inscriptions uncovered by French scholars. The site is located at the headwaters of the A Vuong river, which flows to the east, and is located some 50 km to the west of My Son Sanctuary and the Great Cham Estuary in Hoi An. The inscription includes some words in both Sanskrit and local languages related to a buffalo sacrifice, and this represents important evidence proving the westernmost influence of the Cham on the Katu group (Wittayarat 2004-05: pp. 14-17). The Katu people in this area still maintain close relations with the Katu people living in Laos along the Sekong river⁴, plus they still have many legends related to the exchange of goods with the former lowland dwellers - the Cham.



Figure 4.45: 7th Century Cham Rock Inscriptions at a Katu Village in Tay Giang (Muong Hien) District in Quang Nam Province

4. We conducted field research in the Katu villages of Sekong Province in Laos during June and July 2009. The Katu people living there said that it takes three to four days on foot to travel from the Katu villages in Muong Kalum, Sekong Province to the Katu villages in Tây Giang district (Muong Hien) in Quảng Nam Province, Vietnam. Tây Giang district is roughly 80 km from the coastal port of Danang. This mountainous area is connected to the lowland via the large A Vương river and its tributaries.

Furthermore, a stone statue named Radiant Boddhisattva was found in Tra Kieu or Simhapura, not in Binh Dinh as some researchers previously suggested (Boisselier 1963: p. 326; Southworth, personal communication with the author during November 2011 in Danang). This Boddhisattva statue suggests a close relationship existed between Simhapura, the capital of Champa Amaravati state, and the Khmer Empire during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This relationship was probably forged and maintained via the Katu people, who had an intimate relationship with Champa royalty (as seen in the Samo inscription).

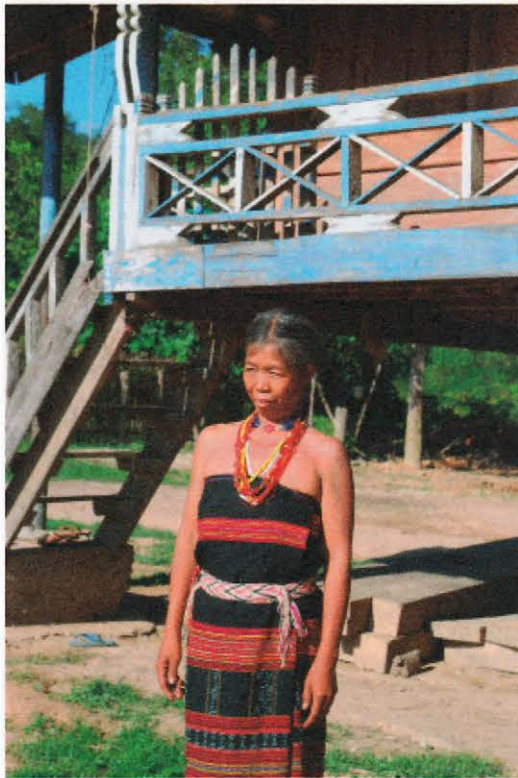


Figure 4.46: A Katu Woman in Muong Kalum, Sekong Province, Laos



Figure 4.47: A Katu Traditional Communal House (*guol*) in Muong Thaten, Sekong Province, Laos



Figure 4.48: 12th/13th Century Khmer Radiant Bodhisattva, found at Tra Kieu in Quang Nam Province - Housed at the National Museum of Vietnamese History in Hanoi.

In Quang Tri Province:

Thach Han river, one of the major rivers in Quang Tri Province, connects the central lands with the Cua Viet estuary (*vvyar* in the Cham language), the site of a very important Cham port-city in the northern part of the Kingdom, the landscape and role of which was similar to that of Cua Dai estuary in Hoi An, Quang Nam Province. Along the Thach Han river, there are a lot of Cham archaeological sites, and in particular a Bayon-style statue of Avalokitesvara to be found at Co Thanh ('ancient citadel') in Quang Tri, a site several kilometers away from the Cua Viet estuary. This important statue highlights the profound influence of the Khmer empire on the Kingdom of Champa. With regard to the sculptural techniques used for this statue, it is likely to have been sculpted in Cambodia and then brought to the area. Notably, a Cham stele found in My Son from the early thirteenth century mentions Khmer military aid being provided to a Cham prince in the area at this time (Trần 2004: pp. 318-24).

This evidence shows the significant influence of the Khmer Empire on the northern Champa Kingdom, that which bordered the Vietnamese Kingdom of Dai Viet. According to researchers, after unsuccessfully attacking the Vietnamese Kingdom of Dai Viet in Nghe An Province in the early thirteenth century, the Khmer King Jayavarman VII assailed the area of Quang Tri, in order to take control of the Cua Viet estuary and with the aim of opening a direct trade route with China (Vickery n.d.: p. 109, and personal communication with the author in March 2009, Phnom Penh).

There was a famous periodic market named Cam Lo located at the headwaters of the Thach Han river – the biggest periodic market in this area, and which continued to act as a gateway to Laos up to the early part of the twentieth century. One of the reasons why Cam Lo was an important border gateway is that the flat terrain in this region made it easy to carry out trade between the Cua Viet estuary and Savanakheth in Laos, as elephants were a popular mode of transport at that time. In the early twentieth century, some wealthy families in the area still possessed herds of a dozen or more elephants - used for transporting goods between Laos and Vietnam (Huynh 2004: pp. 128-40, Nguyen Phuoc 2009: pp. 151-217). This represented the main route connecting the northern Champa Kingdom and southern Laos; thus, in this context, the Khmer sculptural works found in Quang Tri are proof of the land trade route that existed between the Kingdom of Champa and its minor states, under the influence of Khmer culture from southern Laos.

All the above-mentioned Cham sites in the Central Highlands of Vietnam were found nearby villages belonging to the Katuic, Bahnaric or Chamic (Jarai) people; considered to have been economic and political centers in the hinterlands that connected with the port-states/polities of the Champa Kingdom located along the central Vietnam coast (Tran 2010: pp. 207-215).



Figure 4.49: Khmer Avalokitesvara from the 13th Century Found in Quang Tri (Museum of Cham Sculpture, Danang)



Figure 4.50: Khmer Statues Found near the Thach Han Estuary in Quang Tri.

They show the strong connections that existed between the Khmer and Champa Kingdoms during the 13th century (Museum of Cham Sculpture, Danang)

5

Preliminary Conclusion

The archaeological sites recently found in Attapue Province in southern Laos, including a number of brick works, sandstone sculpted artifacts and networks of *barays*, were once considered religious centers, those linked with key trade centers, and most had permanent and/or periodic markets.

In terms of landscape archaeology, the architectural sites recently found in Attapue Province, together with the other archaeological sites found in northeast Cambodia (École Française d'Extrême-Orient et Ministère de la Culture et des Beaux-arts 2006), are convincing evidence of the watershed and overland route trade networks that existed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, based on travel along the Mekong, Sekong and Sesan rivers. Stueng Treng/Xieng Teng was the main center connecting northeast Cambodia with centers in the Central Highlands of Vietnam via the Sesan river, passing through the land of the Jarai people - a Malayo-Polynesian speaking group who had a mysterious King of Fire (*Patau Pui*) and King of Water (*Patau Ya*), to whom all the Khmer kings had to send their ambassadors in order to offer tributes each year (Maitre 1912: pp. 450-55, Dournes 1977: pp. 9-42, Hickey 1982: pp. 121-43). From old Khmer text written in 1601, we have learned that the Khmer kings formed an alliance with the Jarai King of Fire and King of Water, in order to protect the eastern edge of the Khmer empire (Tranet 1983: pp. 75-107). It should be noted that Stueng Treng and a part of the Central Highlands of Vietnam (including present-day Kontum and Dak Lak Provinces) belonged to Laos until 1904/05, and so Attapue most likely came under the umbrella of Muong Champasak (Breazeale 2002: pp. 319-20, Fig.5).

From the above evidence, we can consider there to have been a connection between the sites at Angkor, Vat Phu and My Son, and especially the latter two, as demonstrated

through the many Bahnaric and Katuic language speaking ethnic groups who settled along these roads. These groups represent lively witnesses - allowing us to learn about past relationships still preserved through legends and oral histories, especially among the Katuic groups, who played an important trading role and who still live along the Vietnam-Laos border - in the provinces of Sekong and Attapue in Laos, and the provinces of Quang Nam, Thua Thien-Hue and Quang Tri in Central Vietnam. The research team found that most of the important archaeological relics exist in areas where these ethnic groups lived and continue to live. Many legends related to the capture and training of elephants are still transmitted orally (such as the domestication of elephants in Phu A Sha - a famous tourist destination to the southeast of Vat Phu). Among these ethnic groups, the Suy (Kuy) people played the most important role, because they possess hunting skills and are good at domesticating elephants; moreover, they are talented forgers who once owned big iron mines in Cambodia. This group now lives scattered along the Cambodia-Laos-Thailand border, and more recently it has also been hypothesized that the Suy people were the dominant class during the Angkorian period (Jacques 2007: p. 32).

As we have shown here, the religious centers, as represented by temples and monuments, were symbols of the ruling class (rulers), and also large economic/commercial centers. By controlling the overland exchange of goods on the roads from east to west and vice-versa, these centers helped form and develop the religious architectural monuments to be found there.

This trade exchange route included trails (paths) linking *ban/muong* (mountainous villages/districts) along the major rivers in the region (the Mekong, Sekong and Sesan rivers). The residents who lived there could thus utilize a "riverine exchange network", which has been typical of Central Vietnam since the pre-historic period, in which these trails linked *ban/muong* together in order to distribute goods using elephants on the roads, and using boats on the rivers. Each village acted as an exchange center for goods, and the ruling class was the protector and the patron of this trading axis, in which big, religious centers such as those at Angkor, Vat Phu and My Son were symbols of the power and wealth of the local rulers.

The ancient routes based on the above-mentioned archaeological remains suggest a link between the main, ancient political centers and the commercial centers or *muong* occupied by the ethnic groups speaking Mon-Khmer and Malayo-Polynesian languages located along the way. The land routes that may have connected the ancient political and commercial centers across mainland Southeast Asia are shown in Figure 5.1

Looking at this map, one can visualize the interactive relationships that may have existed between the sites found across the Indochina Peninsula. Goods were also exchanged at centers located in current highland villages.

During its research, the team was concerned in particular with the route linking the west to the east, a route along which archaeological relics have been found alongside such major rivers as the Sekong, Se San and Sre Pok, those connecting Stueng Treng - the main trade center, with Kon Klor in Kontum Province and on to Cham ports established along the central coast of Vietnam.



Figure 5.1: Map of Trade Routes Connecting the Main Ancient Political and Commercial Centers in Mainland Southeast Asia. Shows the royal highway that linked the Khmer Empire and Champa Kingdom(s), based on the archaeological remains described in this paper.

Recently discovered relics in Attapue have helped to clarify the important role of the Se Kong river, an area in which few if any archaeological surveys have been carried out. Evidently, the Khmer art relics found in Attapue (with most found at Muang Xaisetha - once the main center) date from the seventh/eighth centuries right up to the sixteenth/seventeenth centuries. Attapue has also been found to possess the most important collection of Khmer monuments in the upper northern part of the Sekong river, along which live ethnic peoples speaking the Katuic and Bahnaric languages, such as the Lave, Suy/Kuy, Ta-oi and Ka-tu.

From the center of Stueng Treng to the south of the Central Highlands, there appears to be a relationship between the Khmer and Cham cultural relics, such as those located at Yang Prong in Dak Lak Province, Vietnam, which are considered to be typical of the area, and other such remarkable monuments as Yang Mum in Gia Lai Province, Vietnam, which researchers say may have been located in Upper Champa (Hickey 1982: pp. 78-120).

On the cultural distribution map (figure 5.1), one can see that Cham cultural relics are restricted to within the Central Highlands' area, meaning that the relics found at Yang Prong in Dak Lak Province and Kon Klor (in Kontum Province) represent the western most Cham relics found.

Especially towards the south, an important archaeological site was found in Lam Dong Province some decades ago (around 1985) – at Cat Tien, an historical site abundant in brick or stone monuments, stone sculptures and minor Hindu golden works, all dating from the seventh and eighth centuries onwards (Bui 2004: pp. 79-88). Cat Tien site can be considered to contain the easternmost Khmer cultural relics discovered thus far in the Central Highlands of Vietnam - located as it is at the headwaters of the Dong Nai river in the west of Panduranga, a state of the southern Champa Kingdom. This site is only 80 km from Phan Thiet (alternatively Pantik/Pajai/Phú Hải), an ancient port-city in the south of the Champa Kingdom.

Based on this map, we can see that the Indochinese Peninsula was a space that alternated between the Champa and Khmer cultures; providing us with a distinctive view based on landscape archaeology and highlighting the close relations that existed between the aforementioned archaeological sites. This view also highlights the close economic, political and religious links that existed between these two cultures.

With regard to ethnography, the Chamic groups (Jarai, Êdê and Raglay, among others) those currently living in the southern part of the Central Highlands, took on the role of middlemen between the Khmer and Champa cultures, for which the Jarai people's 'King of Fire' and 'King of Water' provide evidence. Meanwhile, the Bahnaric and Katuic groups in the northern part of the Central Highlands acted in an important linking role between the highlands and the lowlands, as well as the southwest and east of the Indochinese Peninsula, as previously identified by researchers.

Notably, the port-cities of Champa along the central coast were located alongside estuaries such as the Cua Viet estuary in Quang Tri, the Sa Ky estuary in Quang Ngai, the Cua Dai estuary in Quang Nam, and the Thi Nai estuary in Binh Dinh, and these represent the mouths of major rivers, those originating in the hinterlands, and the headwaters of which at that time formed a well known network of periodic markets, which

existed up until the early twentieth century (such as Cam Lo in Quang Tri, Trung Phuoc in Quang Nam, Tra Bong in Quang Ngai and An Khe in Binh Dinh, among others). These big rivers are practical examples of the “riverine exchange networks” that existed, and that need to be considered when learning about the economic model that developed in Southeast Asia over time (William 2011: pp. 102-19, Tran 2010: pp. 207-15).

It should be noted that typical examples of Khmer sculpture have been found among most of the relics in the Cham port-cities, such as Co Thanh in Quang Tri Province, Tra Kieu in Quang Nam Province and Banh It Temple in Binh Dinh Province. Some temple-tower structures were also influenced by Khmer building techniques, such as groups G and H in My Son sanctuary in Quang Nam Province and Duong Long in Binh Dinh Province. These sculptural works are supposed to have been made in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, during the reign of the Khmer King Jayavarman VII.

Suggestions

Future and detailed research on the organic relationship between each pair of relics, from one monument to another, as shown in figure 5.1, will surely create a better insight into the economic, social, political and cultural relationships that existed between the mountainous villages in the hinterlands of the study area, viewed in the context of the landscape archaeology found across the whole region.

The following are some suggested actions in terms of further archeological study of the land-route relationships that existed between the Khmer and Cham empires:

- Survey and GPS map the relics to be found along three major rivers: the Sekong, Se San and Sre Pok
- Excavate some typical relics, in order to learn about the structures and cultural layers that existed, plus the cultural exchanges that took place in the region
- In order to complete an ethnography of the area, in-depth interviews should be conducted with elderly Katuic, Bahnaric and Chamic people regarding the historical trade relations that existed, and
- In-depth interviews should be carried out in order to gain a greater level of understanding of these ethnic groups’ hunting and elephant taming practices, as well as their forging and blacksmith skills, for these skills are believed by historians to have played an important role in the creation of the early Southeast Asian civilizations (Reid 1988: pp. 107-114).

6

Discussion

Based on the preceding evidence, particularly that provided by the Living Angkor Road Project (LARP), we have been able to gain an insight into the connection between Angkor, Phimai and Vat Phu (see Im Sokrithy and Surat Lertlum et al., 'Living Angkor Road Project (LARP): The Study of the East-West Cultural Corridor - An Introduction', a paper given at the *Angkor and Its Global Connections Conference*, held by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) from Singapore, in conjunction with the APSARA Authority, in Siem Reap, Cambodia on 10th/11th June 2011), and also describe the traces of a royal road linking Vat Phu with Angkor - those recently found to the south of Vat Phu (see Thonglith Luongkhot's 'The New Archaeological Findings of Pre-Angkorean and Angkorean Artifacts along the Mekong and Sekong Rivers: On the Khmer Royal Highway in Southern Laos' - as presented in a paper given at the same conference).

In a practical sense, the connection between Vat Phu and Champa (My Son) is not obvious, even though they are at almost the same latitude and the distance between them is only about 260 km. Furthermore, archaeological remains found in Attapue (such as lintels dating from the eighth or ninth centuries in the Prei Khmeng), suggest a close artistic relationship between Vat Phu and Attapue, based on an overland route that existed through the Bolaven Plateau. This report also identifies the watershed connecting Attapue with Stueng Treng. As regards to connections found to the east of Vat Phu (such as to the Kingdom of Champa), a road can be found connecting Attapue with Kontum Province⁵. Kontum is where key Cham remains from the early tenth century have

5. Noting that, on the border between Attapue Province in Laos and Kontum Province in Vietnam, there is a geographical feature called Phu Kuea ('Salt Mountain') which may have formerly been a place at which local products were exchanged between the upland and lowland communities.

been found, at Kon Klor, and also vestiges of the Champa civilization, as highlighted in this report.

The above mountainous villages were possibly places in which periodic markets were held, in order to exchange local goods, luxury products, forest items, salt and other exotic items (such as Chinaware, bronze items and Indian ornaments), and it was this system of periodic markets that helped create friendly relations among ethnic groups in the area. These markets were also centers for the exchange of cultures, techniques, arts and religions, as facilitated by the occurrence of inter-ethnic marriages. Tales of these friendly relations are still transmitted orally through local folk-songs, such as the one in Central Vietnam called *ban hang* or 'fellow traders', which goes as follows:

*Ai về nhẵn với bậu nguồn
Mãng le gửi xuống, cá chuồn gửi lên*

'Whoever goes to see the uplanders, please remind them, if forest products are to be brought down, sea products must be carried up' (Tran 2010: pp. 207-15)

These periodic markets are also locations at which religious and architectural archaeological relics have been found.

In recent years, the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC)⁶ has been constructed based on an overland route connecting Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Central Vietnam. This route begins in Mawlamyine (Myanmar) and runs through several major cities in Thailand and Laos, before ending in Danang - a large port in Vietnam. In general, this route follows the same line as the ancient cultural relics found in the Indochina Peninsula, from east to west, and our study highlights the obvious overlap between the ancient trading centers and the present cities. A part of this project is focused on the by-roads to the south of the EWEC, and how they have contributed to the protection of ethnic groups' cultures in the area, the preservation of remaining archaeological relics, as well as a revival of the area's cultural space - helping to promote and develop tourism. Nowadays, the ease with which one can travel between the provinces of Stung Treng, Attapue and Kontum, has helped to attract many tourists to see the relics. As a result, the carefully planned development of this tourism/economic zone will also help preserve and develop these relics into the future, as well as the ethnic cultures in the area.

6. According to the Asian Development Bank's website: "The East West Economic Corridor (EWEC) was launched a decade ago at the Eighth Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) Ministerial Meeting held in Manila in 1998, as one of the flagship initiatives of the GMS. It has adopted a holistic approach to developing a cost-effective way of instituting an efficient transport system for moving goods and people in the sub-region, while simultaneously developing telecommunications and energy infrastructure, tourism and [has] a policy and regulatory environment that facilitates and encourages private sector development." See: www.adb.org/GMS/Economic-Corridors/EWEC-SAP

References

- Boisselier, Jean. 1963. *La Statuaire du Champa: Recherches sur les cultes et l'iconographie*. Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient [Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient 54].
- Breazeale, Kennon. 2002. 'Laos mapped by treaty and decree, 1895-1907', In *Breaking new ground in Lao history: Essays on the seventeenth to twentieth centuries*. Mayoury Ngaosrivathana and Kennon Breazeale (eds.). Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp. 297-336.
- Bui, Chi Hoang. 2004. 'Khu di tích Cát Tiên tư liệu và nhận thức' [Cat Tien Site: Materials and Perception]. *Review of Social Sciences*, no.5. 2004, pp. 79-88.
- Dournes, Jacques. 1977. *Pötao: une théorie du pouvoir chez les indochinois Jörai*. Paris: Flammarion.
- École française d'Extrême-Orient et Ministère de la culture et des beaux-arts. 2006. *Carte Archéologique du Cambodge Bassin du Mekong, provinces de Stoeng Treng, Krâtie, Ratanak Kiri*. Phnom Penh.
- Jessup, Helen and Thierry Zéphir (eds.). 1997. *Sculpture of Angkor and Ancient Cambodia, Millennium of Glory*. Washington: National Gallery of Art.
- Hickey, Gerald. 1982. *Sons of the Mountains: Ethnohistory of the Vietnamese Central Highlands to 1954*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Huynh, Thi Ai Hoa. 2008. 'Muoi trong trao doi hang hoa o cho phien Cam Lo' [Salt exchanged in Cam Lo periodic market]. *Review of Scientific Information*. Hue: Vietnam Institute for Culture and Art Research, Sub-Institute in Hue, pp. 128-140.

- Ishizawa, Yoshiaki. 2005. *All Royal Roads Lead to Angkor*. New York: Weatherhill.
- Jacques, Claude. 2005. 'The historical development of Khmer culture from the death of Suryavarman II to the 16th century'. In *Bayon: New perspective*. Joyce Clark (ed.). Bangkok : River Books, pp. 30-49.
- Maitre, Henri. 1912. *Les Jungles Moï, Exploration et histoire des hinterlands moï du Cambodge, de la Cochinchine, de l'Annam et du Laos*. Paris: Published by Emile Larose.
- Nguyen, Quoc Manh et al. 2010. 'The Excavation of Bang Kheng architectural site (Krong Nang village, Krong Pa district, Gia Lai province)'. Paper presented at *The Annual Meeting of Vietnamese Archaeologists*, Hanoi, 23-24 September 2010.
- Nguyen Phuoc and Bao Dan. 2009. 'Tu "Con Duong Muoi": nhan dien mang luoi trao doi xuoi nguoc o mien Trung Vietnam trong lich su' ['From the "Salt Road": the perception of the network of upland-lowland exchanges in Central Vietnam in history']. In *The Perception on Central Vietnam: The itinerary of the 10 year approaching*. Nguyen Huu Thong (ed.). Hue: Vietnam Institute for Culture and Art Research, Sub-Institute in Hue, pp. 151-217.
- Reid, Anthony. 1988. *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680, Volume One: The Lands below the Winds*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Southworth, William. 2011. 'River Settlement and Coastal Trade: Towards a Specific Model of Early State Development in Champa'. In *The Cham of Vietnam: History, Society and Art*. Tran Ky Phuong and Bruce Lockhart (eds.). Singapore: NUS Press, pp. 102-119.
- Stern, Ph. 1942. *L'art du Champa et son evolution*. Paris: Publication du Musee Guimet.
- Stuart-Fox, Martin. 2002. 'On the writing of Lao history: continuities and discontinuities'. In *Breaking new ground in Lao history: Essays on the seventeenth to twentieth centuries*. Mayoury Ngaosrivathana and Kennon Breazeale (eds.). Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp.1-24.
- Tranet, Michel. 1983. 'Etude sur la Savatar vatt Sampuk'. In *Seksa Khmer (Etudes Khmeres)*, no. 6. 1983, pp. 75-107. Paris: Cedoreck.
- Tran, Ky Phuong. 2010. 'Interactions between uplands and lowlands through the 'riverine exchange network' of central Vietnam - A case study in the Thu Bon river valley'. In *50 years of Archaeology in Southeast Asia: Essays in honour of Ian Glover*. Bérénice Bellina, Elisabeth A. Bacus, Thomas Oliver Pryce and Jan Wisseman Christie (eds.). Bangkok: River Books, pp. 207-215.
- Tran, Ky Phuong. 2004. 'Buoc dau xac dinh danh hieu cac tieu quoc (?) thuoc mien Bac vuong quoc co Chiem Thanh (Champa) tai mien Trung Viet Nam khoang giua the ky 11 va 15'[Initial identification of the names of the small polities (?) in the northern part of the ancient Champa Kingdom during the 11th -15th centuries].

Vien Khoa hoc Xa hoi Viet Nam-Dai hoc Quoc gia Ha Noi (ed.), *Viet Nam hoc: ky yeu hoi thao quoc te lan thu II* [Proceedings of the Second International Conference of Vietnamese Studies] (Ha Noi: The Gioi Publishers, 2004), vol. IV, pp. 318-324.

Tranet, Michel .1983. 'Etude sur la Savatar vatt Sampuk'. In *Seksa Khmer (Etudes Khmeres)*, no. 6. 1983, pp. 75-107. Paris: Cedoreck.

Vickery, Michael. n.d. 'History of Cambodia' (Summary of lectures given at the Faculty of Archaeology, Royal University of Fine Arts, 2001-2). Phnom Penh: Vidya Series, Pre-Angkor Studies Society.

Wittayarat, Daoruang. 2004/05. 'Les inscription rupestres de Samo (inédites): Un tentative de déchiffrement, de traduction et de datation'. *Lettre de la Société des Amis du Champa Ancien*, no.11. Hiver, pp.14-17.

About the Author

Tran Ky Phuong worked as curator of the Museum of Cham Sculpture in Danang from 1978 to 1998, and is currently a senior researcher with the Vietnam Association of Ethnic Minority Culture and Arts, where he has conducted field research into archaeological and architectural sites in Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. He has also published several books and articles in Vietnamese, English and Japanese, including: 'The Cham of Vietnam: History, Society and Art' (co-editor with Bruce Lockhart, 2011), 'Vestiges of the Champa Civilization' (2008) and 'Champa Iseki/Champa Ruins' (co-author with Shige-eda Yutaka, 1997). His research interests include the Champa civilization, cultural studies in central Vietnam, and cross-border archaeological research in Cambodia, Laos and Central Vietnam.

Crossing Boundaries - Learning from the Past to Build the Future: An Archaeological Collaboration between Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam

Tran Ky Phuong

This working paper investigates the archaeological vestiges of the Champa and Angkorian civilizations that remain in northeast Cambodia, southern Laos and central Vietnam, tracing the interconnections between these two important South-east Asian civilizations. The author proposes that interactions between these two empires greatly affected their development and decline, and that while interest has previously focused on the sea-routes that existed between Champa (on the Vietnamese coast) and Angkor (around Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia), this research explores the little researched overland routes that existed between the two empires.

Previous explorations have disclosed that these civilizations were connected by an infrastructure that included rivers, portages, paths, and towns and villages, all located at important transportation nodes. Even though these routes wound over and through the mountains of the Annam Cordillera in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, they were navigable throughout the year. The research described here tracks, both archaeologically and ethnographically, the remains of these routes.

The aim of this research work is to make a practical contribution to the promotion of cultural and tourist exchange, as well as help preserve and develop the archaeological relics described here plus the ethnic minority cultures to be found in the study area - all within the current context of the implementation of the East West Economic Corridor Project (EWECC), as sponsored by the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Published by:



With financial support from:

