THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PENINSULAR SIAM IN THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN MARITIME WORLD DURING 500 BC TO AD 1000

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Chapter 1
Introduction

This thesis examines the significance of Peninsular Siam in the Southeast Asian maritime world during the fifth century BC to the tenth century AD. The topic aims to enhance our knowledge of the protohistory and early history of the isthmus and Southeast Asia in general. Despite the richness of the historical documents referring to Peninsular Siam as an important area in the cultural interaction between several regions in Southeast Asia (Coedès 1968; Wheatley 1966), few archaeological projects have been conducted in this peninsula that explore archaeological site distribution and provide empirical data of cultural characteristics and development during 500 BC to AD 500. By investigating archaeological features in relation to extant historical records, we may attain a better understanding of the characteristics of cultural development in Peninsular Siam and interaction in the Southeast Asian maritime world. Such information will also have implications on the relationships among the early polities in this region.

Peninsular Siam or the isthmus of Siam, occupying a strategic geographical position between the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, has long been considered an important area in the social interaction between the Western civilizations and the eastern world (Figure 1) (e.g. Bellina 2003; Bellina and Glover 2004; Glover 1996; Manguin 2004). Since the protohistoric period (c. 500 BC to 500 AD), this region is mentioned in the foreign documents as the gateway to the eastern part of Southeast Asia and China for Western and Indian merchants, diplomats and travelers, as well as acting as the threshold to the Indian subcontinent, Middle East, and Mediterranean world for Chinese traders and
monks (Ray 1989; Wheatley 1966). Being a prominent interaction sphere, the isthmian region housed a variety of cultures and groups of people that interacted with each other and shaped a distinctive historical trajectory for the region (O’Connor 1972).

During 500 BC to AD 500, societies in Peninsular Siam underwent relatively progressive changes in socio-political development that is believed to be associated to long-distance contacts (Manguin 2004). Urban genesis and institutionalized political structures are one of the most outstanding elements emerging during this period (Wheatley 1983). Therefore, besides its significance in the international trade, the isthmian culture had other aspects related to its socio-political development that deserve further investigation.

It seems that the isthmian polities adopted Indic religions in the mid-first millennium AD through the process of localization (Wolters 1999). A large number of Buddhist and Brahmanical temples and statues is further evidence of their coexistence in the peninsula (O’Connor 1986d; Wales 1976). Indic religions and ideologies not only changed the belief systems of local people but also strongly influenced the socio-political structure of the peninsular polities (P. Noonsuk 2001b). The period between the fifth and tenth centuries AD, therefore, observed the organizational changes in this area in which the preexisting coastal polities transformed into the early mandalas. This thesis uses the term Brahmanism instead of Hinduism because the former term had always been mentioned in the historical documents and local inscriptions in Peninsular Siam during 500 BC to AD 500, while none of the records refers to the latter term.

Not only were the early polities in the isthmus interacting with each other, but also interconnecting to other contemporary polities in several parts of Southeast Asia.
maritime world (Bellina and Glover 2004; Manguin 2004). This "peer polity interaction" (Renfrew 1986) stimulated the development of state formation and political reorganization in this region. Although the interaction occurred in a competitive environment, it also caused organizational similarities among interacting polities witnessed in the archaeological and historical record. Therefore, the examination of the socio-political and economic development of societies in the peninsula, which acted as a gateway to the western world for Southeast Asian polities, will offer us a better understanding of the nature of state formation in this region in general.

This research will also examine Tambralinga's role as one of the early historical polities on Peninsular Siam. It was mentioned in Indian literature in the second century AD (Wheatley 1966: 183) where its name was inscribed on a stone stele in the fifth century AD (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 183). It is now believed that the polity was prosperous in the area of present-day Nakhon Si Thammarat in South Thailand. Tambralinga was important not only to other first millennium polities but also to the classical states in the second millennium AD in Southeast Asia.

I. Problem to be investigated

Since the thesis purports to explore the significance of Peninsular Siam during 500 BC to AD 500, it examines three important questions. (1) When did these isthmian polities first emerge, and what factors lay behind their emergence? (2) How were the isthmian polities organized and developed? (3) How did the socio-political and economic development in the isthmian societies influence the development of other polities in other parts of the Southeast Asian maritime world and vice versa? This thesis will draw
together various strands of information – archaeological, art historical, historical, epigraphic, and geographical – to begin to answer these questions.

II. Methodology

This research entails both documentary and archaeological studies. Historical record and literature written by antecedent scholars involved in this topic are discussed and scrutinized against archaeological data. The archaeological evidence has been gathered from fieldwork and previous reports and publications. It is also examined using a range of techniques including computer mapping via Geographical Information Systems (GIS), stylistic comparison, and contextual analysis.

III. Thesis Organization

The structure of this thesis includes four further chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the historiography of Peninsular Siam during 500 BC to AD 500. It examines previous historical, art historical, and archaeological research on the isthmus in the period in question. The discussions on political, economic, religious, and subsistence aspects of the isthmian societies according to previous scholars are provided. This literature review outlines general trends that the previous research has provided for the region being studied.

Chapter 3 explores the archaeology of Peninsular Siam in the context of Southeast Asian maritime interaction between 500 BC to AD 500. Several types of archaeological evidence are provided: (1) distribution of key sites, (2) features of each site, and (3) diagnostic artifacts. Using this evidence and the extant historical records, the general
trend of cultural development in the isthmus and the nature of maritime interaction can be further appreciated.

Chapter 4 provides background and archaeological evidence for the polity of Tambralinga in Nakhon Si Thammarat province. GIS data of the distribution of the archaeological sites in the realm of this polity is presented as well. Chapter 4 also discusses the development of Tambralinga and the pattern of site distribution. Socio-political structure, religious institutions, and the economic life of the polity will be examined along with their roles in the interaction among Southeast Asia maritime polities in the first millennium AD. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes and concludes the thesis and suggestions for future research.

IV. Major Contributions of the Thesis

The major contributions of this thesis to the literature will be as follows. First, it proposes a chronology for the socio-political development of the isthmian polities during the period 500 BC to AD 1000. Second, it offers an alternative model for the political organization of the polities, using dual-processual theory which emphasizes the coexistence of and the interaction between exclusionary and corporate patterns of state formation rather than the absolute political centralization of the rule. Third, it clarifies the relationships between the organizational development and the peer polity interactions in the region utilizing the concept of peer polity interaction. Fourth, it explains the development of Tambralinga, an important maritime polity that has been relatively neglected, using historical, epigraphic, and archaeological data.
Chapter 2
Historiography of Peninsular Siam
during 500 BC to AD 1000

As the historiography component of the thesis, this chapter aims to succinctly outline various approaches and perspectives of different scholars who have written about and tried to reconstruct the development of societies in peninsular Siam during 500 BC to AD 1000, to present the general trends of previous research in this area. Models of socio-political development, maritime trade and social interaction, religions, subsistence patterns, and the historiography of Tambralinga are discussed in this chapter. The purpose of this chapter is neither to provide detailed information of each archaeological sites in the peninsula, nor to discuss any specific model in detail, since that will be discussed and elaborated in greater detail in the following chapters of the thesis. At the end of the chapter, the discussion regarding the redefinition of Tambralinga will be provided.

I. Models of Socio-Political Development and Organization

A. Indianization versus Localization

Several scholars have attempted to explain the nature of socio-political development in peninsular Siam and Southeast Asia in general (e.g. Coedès 1968; Tambiah 1977; Wheatley 1983; Wolters 1999). The most famous debate on this subject is Indianization versus Localization. Coedès (1968: 15) proposed the concept of Indianization. It perceives the process of state formation of Southeast Asia as a
consequence of the expansion of the Indian organized culture and conception of royalty
and religions by means of migration of Indian people to this region. This concept was
elaborated by Wolters (1999) who suggested that Indic elements tended to be fractured
and restated, and were adopted by indigenous people through the process of local
selection. He coins the term “Localization” for such process.

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

B. The Concepts of Mandala and Galactic Polity

Wolters (1999) posited the concept of Mandala, which is a framework to support
the cultural matrix that he proposes for the pre-modern Southeast Asian polities, such as
cognatic kinship, present-mindedness, and “men of prowess.” This concept refers to
circles of kings in that the king in each Mandala with unfixed boundaries would identify
himself with divine and universal authority, and claim personal hegemony over the other
rulers (Wolters 1999: 126-154). Wolters’ concept of Mandala can be studied along with
Tambiah’s concept of galactic polity, which was developed from the fifteenth-century
Ayutthayan polity in Thailand (Tambiah 1977). This concept has been described as a set
of concentric circles originating from an exemplary center based on the centripetal force
of kings. The mandala model represents a system that is maintained by the dialectic
tension between the core and the surrounding peripheries and flow of social affiliations. Tambiah finds that the system is embedded in "archaic cosmological mentality," and represented not only in kingdoms of polities but also in local villages and small-scale segmentary societies (1977: 69). The mandala model has cosmological manifestations best suited to the Southeast Asian experience, since this Indic system elucidates certain key components of indigenous cosmological concepts (Tambiah 1977: 73).

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

C. The Concept of the City-State

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

By urban generation, in contrast, Wheatley (1979) meant the process of urbanization that was motivated by internal forces of a society. Urbanization occurred because the egalitarian solidarity of tribal society was incapable of extending authority to validate the power required for the institutionalization of supra-village rule in western mainland Southeast Asia, including peninsular Siam, and parts of insular Southeast Asia (Wheatley 1979: 295, 1983: 263). Urban genesis in this region, however, was perceived as a secondary process that was affected by external cultures (Wheatley 1979: 289). Wheatley noted that when societies became more complex and stratified, an indigenous chieftain in this region may seek to validate his newly acquired power on the only pattern of adequate flexibility and authority known to him, namely Indic religio-political structure connected to the institution of divine kingship (Wheatley 1979: 296). This process led to the development of city-states or nagaras whereby the old tribal principles were replaced by Brahmanical concepts of the state.

Wheatley’s concept of the city-state was adopted by Jacq-Hergoualc’h (2002) to explain the nature of the polities in the Malay Peninsular in the late centuries BC to the early centuries AD. He examines several early polities in this region such as Pan-pan and
Langkasuka, and believed that their centers were prosperous in the maritime trade and controlled numbers of vassals around them (2002: 165).

II. Maritime Trade and Social Interaction

A. Maritime Trade and Political Development

Maritime trade is perhaps the most popular topic in scholarly discussions about Peninsular Siam during 500 BC to AD 500 (e.g., Bellina 2003; Bellina and Glover 2004; Francis 2002; Glover 1996; Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002; Manguin 2004; P. Noonsuk 2001; Ray 1996; Veraprasert 1992; Wheatley 1966, 1975; Wicks 1992). Wheatley (1975) explained that the political development in maritime Southeast Asia in the late centuries BC was closely related to the maritime trade between the West and China in which the rulers of local chiefdoms who controlled the trade activities between their local communities and foreign merchants developed their new perceptions of the world, set their new life goals, and acquired organizational skills from the foreign countries. In the early centuries AD, they adopted Indic ideologies to extend their power by institutionalizing their god-king statuses and dynastic traditions (Wheatley 1975: 238-240).

This idea was taken by Hall (1982: xiii) who states that the selected items of Indian statecraft acquired through maritime contacts were used to consolidate the rule of the leaders locally as well as control the hinterland.

B. Timing and Intensity of the Maritime Contacts
The questions surrounding the timing and intensity of the maritime contacts between India and Southeast Asia have been addressed by several scholars (Bellina 2003; Bellina and Glover 2004; Glover 1989, 1996; Smith 1999; Ray 1996). Glover employs both Indian historical documents and trading items found in Southeast Asia such as Roman coins, Indo-Roman Rouletted Wares, Indian ivory comb, and etched beads to support his hypothesis that the well-organized structure of trade between the India and Southeast Asia existed since the last few centuries BC (Glover 1989: 12). The result of the excavation at Ban Don Ta Phet conducted by him supports this hypothesis since many glass, semi-precious stone, and etched beads uncovered at the site date to c. 500 BC to 200AD, which suggests not only some sort of social stratification in the society itself but also the relationship between the site and Indian subcontinent (Glover 1996). Glover’s hypothesis was followed by Bellina (2003) who believes that there is evidence of the transfer of semi-precious stone bead making technology from India to Southeast Asia since the late centuries BC. Bellina and Glover, in a recent article (2004), divide early maritime commercial contacts in Southeast Asia into two phases. Phase I refers to regular but less intense and archaeologically less-visible contacts that preceded Indianization and dates between the fourth century BC and the second century AD, while phase II, dates between the second and the fourth century AD. Their thesis demonstrates intra- and inter-regional exchange intensification that is shortly followed by the development of fully Indianized kingdoms in the mid-fifth century AD.

This early date of a well-organized relationship between India and Southeast Asia, however, is questioned by Monica Smith who follows Kulke’s convergence hypothesis and believes that systematic contact between the two regions was not established until the
fourth century AD after the emergence of the strong state and administration of the Gupta dynasty (Smith 1999: 11). According to her, prior to the fourth century AD, India lacked sustained large-scale political and economic organization (Smith 1999: 3). Although the empire of the Maurya dynasty was prosperous in the third century BC, it had a relatively short life. These unstable polities can produce only minimal surplus inadequate to support strong administration and economic investment by central agencies (Smith 1999: 4). The economic enterprises of these polities were run by merchant groups who traded across political boundaries through an alliance system. Smith also notes that Indian and Southeast Asian populations can find every major good and product in their own lands, hence there was no incentive to conduct long-distance trade between the two regions (Smith 1999: 5). Therefore, the maritime contact across the Bay of Bengal prior to the fourth century AD was irregular and not well-established. She, however, suggests that the intra-regional seafaring and maritime contact in Southeast Asia was active and preceded the maritime contact of Indian Gupta Dynasty in the fourth century AD (Smith 1999: 6).

C. Maritime Trade and Diffusion of Indic Religions

Wheatley (1975: 234) postulates that at about the beginning the first millennium AD, the development of long-distance trade to and through Southeast Asia was encouraged by the expansion of Buddhism, which rejected Brahmanical ideas of racial purity and allowed the greater freedom of movement of people. His concept was adopted by Ray (1996: 45) who proposes that Buddhism stimulated trade between regions because it not only rejected the Brahmanist racial purity and castes but also developed the
monastic system in the early historical period. The establishment of Buddhist monasteries led to the accumulation of donations and allowed monks to remain close to communities. Buddhism allowed people to elevate themselves to higher status by committing themselves in agriculture, trade and cattle-keeping (1996: 45). Monks offered spiritual guidance to lay devotees in return for donations. The change in Buddhist concepts in the early centuries AD, which encouraged people to amass wealth for merit making through trading activities, supported the emergence of trading groups and guilds and the growing trade network between India and Southeast Asia (Ray 1996: 46). The hypothesis of intensified and Buddhist-linked trade networks between India and Southeast Asia in the early first millennium AD is reinforced by Buddhist items found in peninsular Siam as shown by Glover (1989) and P. Noonsuk (2000).

Although Manguin (2004: 283-285) agrees that the emergence of maritime complex polities along the shores of western Southeast Asia that includes peninsular Siam during the early first millennium AD is associated with regional and long-distance maritime trade networks, however, he believes that there is no sufficient evidence yet to assume the adoption of imported religious or political practices in this region during such an early period.

The diffusion of Brahmanism is also closely related to these maritime contacts. O'Connor (1972) notes that the presence of the Vishnu images in the several places in Southeast Asia suggests the maritime contacts between these communities and the Indian subcontinent in the first millennium AD. Dalsheimer and Manguin (1998: 110) concur with his idea and add that the production of the family of the earliest Vishnu statues is associated with a trade network regrouping a number of archaeological sites on the
Western maritime façade of Southeast Asia. Additionally, Stargardt elaborates on the concept of "cultural cargos", which refers to immaterial elements that are profoundly influential aspects of trade, including new religious ideas, ritual practices, and architecture and art styles that traveled with trade goods (2003: 103). O'Connor (1986a: 8-9), Manguin (2004: 296) and Stargardt (2003: 107) agree that the peninsular city-states played a significant role in providing the first impulse for the diffusion of those earliest Indian artistic forms, Vaishnavist and Buddhist, dates between the fourth and the fifth centuries AD based on stylistic grounds, which rapidly spread to other areas, both mainland and insular, of Southeast Asia.

D. The Roles of Indigenous People in the Maritime Trade

The studies of the role of indigenous elites in maritime trade and sociopolitical development in peninsular Siam are elaborated by Bellina (2003). She examines the cultural exchange between India and Southeast Asia, and the rule of indigenous elites in such exchange from the last centuries BC to the early first millennium AD using formal and technological studies of beads.

Not only does Bellina study the exchange network between India and Southeast Asia, but she also emphasizes the active role of indigenous elites in prestige-goods economy in peninsular Siam and Southeast Asia in general. Indigenous elites have power to demand prestige goods from producers in India. They also dominate the prestige-goods economy of their societies that supports the increasing social stratification as well as the establishment of alliance network in the isthmian societies themselves since the last centuries BC (Bellina 2003: 293-294).
III. Religions

A. Indic-Local Religious Integration

Paul Mus has long examined the relationships between the indigenous belief of the earth-god and Hinduism imported from India in Southeast Asia, especially in Cham territories (1975). Mus (1975) suggested that there was a strong indigenous religion of the soil-god prior to the first introduction of Hinduism in Southeast Asia. However, his hypothesis is not yet supported by empirical data. According to him, the belief of Hinduism's Siva linga was nicely integrated into the earth-god concept of Southeast Asian people through the process of local selection and adaptation. Therefore, the belief of Siva linga was well-established in this region (Mus 1975). However, the indigenous beliefs surviving beneath the mantle of imported Indian religions can still be seen in some contexts as proposed by de Casparis and Mabbett (1992: 282-283) who explore historical, ethnographic, and archaeological records involving the native beliefs of Southeast Asian people such as the god of the stone pond in Cambodia, and tree spirits Burma.

The syncretism of Indic and local religions seems to support the widespread and popularity of Indic religious arts in Peninsular Siam since local people had already merged Indic ideology and their local preexisting beliefs into one single whole (Mus 1975). Several scholars have examined religious sculptures and architectures in the peninsula (e.g. Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998; Diskul 1979; Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002; Krairiksh 1980; O’Connor 1972; P. Noonsuk 2001b). Some Brahmanical-Buddhist settlements and sculptures in peninsular Siam were examined by Bourke (1986: 11-24) since at least 1905 and Lajonquière in 1909 and 1912 (cited in O’Connor 1986b: 104).
Surveying in some ancient settlements and studying artifacts, Bourke suggests that ancient people in this region may have practiced mining and agriculture (1986: 12-13). Brahmanical items appear to him as Indian remains in the peninsula. Lajonquière visited peninsular Siam in 1909 and 1912, and mentioned some religious structures, sculptures, and Siva Lingas found in the region (cited in O’Connor 1986b: 104, 1986f: 160).

O’Connor notes that, from an art historian’s perspective, Brahmanism and Buddhism thrived in Peninsular Siam since the first half of the first millennium AD (1972, 1986a: 1). This region also possesses the most ancient Vishnu image stylistically dated no later than 400 AD (O’Connor 1972: 39). He suggests that maritime contact is also related to the introduction of Brahmanism and Buddhism in the peninsular societies which selectively adopted these Indic religions with their own traditions and memories and developed their local religious art styles that are distinct from those in India (O’Connor 1986a: 4, 1986d: 124).

The Indic-local integrated religions influenced not only the creation of religious arts of Peninsular Siam but also the political ideology and organization of the polities in this area. Coedès (1968), Wheatley (1975) and Wolters (1999) suggest that the rulers of Southeast Asian polities tended to identified themselves with Siva, the supreme god of Saivism, and established the institution of god-king using the sacred ceremony to declare their universal power over wide geographic spaces. This idea of a god-king and Saivist political institutions was adopted by P. Noonsuk (2001b) to apply to the isthmian context in which he observes the existence of the god-king and the Saivite mandala structure in the political organization.
Vaishanavism also influenced the socio-political formations of maritime Southeast Asia (Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998; Manguin 2004; and Lavy 2003). Dalsheimer and Manguin (1998: 110) draw the relationships between Vaishanavism and the ideologies of royalty and statecraft in India and Southeast Asia. Lavy (2003: 21) follows this idea and insists that the popularity of Vishnu and Siva was connected to patterns of political authority in that Southeast Asian rulers utilized the images and the political conceptions of these gods to consolidate their power according to their styles of rule. He studies the distributions and dates of the Preangkorian Vishnu images, Siva lingas, and Harihara, and concludes that, during the seventh century, attempts to consolidate political authority by Khmer rulers led to the deployment of Harihara, a god that embodied multiple conceptions of power, including both those of Siva and Vishnu, and could serve as an instant statement of political and religious unification as well (Lavy 2003: 21).

IV. Subsistence Patterns

Besides fishing and collecting marine products, people in peninsular Siam also practiced agriculture. The most famous and controversial case study of agricultural practices in the peninsula is the Satingpra complex, on Satingpra peninsula in Songkhla. There are two models to be discussed in this case.

A. Irrigated Agriculture versus Upland Farming

The area of Satingpra peninsula has been intensively studied by Janice Stargardt in her long-term project (Stargardt 1976; 1977; 1998). Stargardt proposes that this area
was characterized after the fifth century BC by extensive rice lands, which were irrigated and drained by a canal and tank network, produced considerable rice surpluses that stimulated trade and, by AD 500, urbanism (Stargardt 1983: 7-20). She proposes that this area housed one of the early isthmian civilizations which she called “the Satingpra Civilization” (Stargardt 1998: 127). From c. the second-fourth centuries AD, the inhabitants of this area is intermittently involved in long-distance maritime trade witnessed by semi-precious stone beads of Indian origin, and from c. the fourth to sixth centuries, the communities developed from subsistence villages to an urban economy and culture in which the technology of water controls for agriculture was established (Stargardt 1998: 136, 139). During the sixth to thirteenth centuries AD, Satingpra engaged in intensive agriculture supported by irrigation system of complex fields, tanks, as well as canals, and this enhanced its position in the trade network (Stargardt 1998: 139, 158).

However, Allen (1990; 2000), using the result of her geo-archaeological research at the site, argues that people in Satingpra did not practice intensive wet-rice agriculture until substantially later in time, perhaps the second millennium AD. Instead, according to Allen, the urban settlement was supported with foodstuffs by communities located in the upland productive areas a short distance inland, since the coastal plain did not exist at that time (2000: 73). Rather, the coastal plain was formed after AD 1200 or 1300 by soil erosion created by the overuse of upland rice fields (2000: 62). Satingpra was prosperous because of its maritime and inland-coastal trade and was fed by inland communities (2000: 66).
Both Stargardt and Allen use an ecological approach in studying subsistence patterns during 500 BC to AD 1000 in peninsular Siam. However, questions surrounding the nature of the relationship between coastal and highland societies are still largely unanswered. Was it a mutual relationship on an equal basis or did coastal polities control hinterland communities and exploit their resources? Also, other subsistence strategies, besides farming, need to be examined in order to gain a holistic view of subsistence patterns of the peninsular societies.

V. Redefining Tambralinga

The place-name of Tambralinga may first appear in Mahaniddesa of the second or third century AD in its Pali form, Tambalinga, as recognized by Sylvain Levi (cited in Wheatley 1983: 237). It was a destination of Indian merchants who came to Southeast Asia in search of wealth (Wheatley 1966: 184). Previous scholars assume that Tambralinga was situated near modern Nakhon Si Thammarat or Ligor (i.e. Coedès 1968: 39, Wheatley 1966: 67, Wolters 1958: 587). Their assumptions of the location of Tambralinga seem valid since it is the only place-name mentioned in the Indian and Chinese sources in the first millennium AD which has its own inscriptions at the site. One of them is inscription No. 28 found at the deserted Phra Derm shrine in the area of Phra Maha Dhat temple at the center of modern Nakhon Si Thammarat, engraved with Palava scripts in Sanskrit language dated to c. the fifth century AD. It states “Tambralingshvara” meaning “the Siva of Tambralinga” or “the Lord of Tambralinga” (Figure 50) (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 264). This inscription and the inscription of Hup Khao Chong Koy (Figure 49) indicate the existence of a polity that was prosperous and
complex, sufficiently to require the commemoration of its affairs on stones in c. the fifth century AD (O'Connor 1986d: 134). The other inscription that contains the name Tambralinga is rather later. It is inscription No. 24 found at Hua Vian temple in Chaiya, Surat Thani, inscribed in the Sanskrit language dated to AD 1230 (P. Noonsuk 1982: 162; Wolters 1958: 588). This inscription mentions the king named Candrabhanu Sri Dharmaraja who is the Siva of Tambralinga. On the basis of Indian record and local inscriptions, it can be, therefore, assumed that Tambralinga existed in the isthmian region since the second or third century AD, and continued into the early centuries of the second millennium AD. It is also possible that Tambralinga was transformed into Nakhon Si Thammarat as the name of the king, Candrabhanu Sri Dharmaraja, suggests and in AD 1292, sixty-two years after inscription No. 24, the name Nagara Sri Dharmaraja or Nakhon Si Thammarat was mentioned again in the inscription of Rama Kamheng found at Sukhothai, lower northern Thailand (Wolters 1958). It seems likely that Nakhon Si Thammarat is the subsequent stage of the development of Tambralinga and both of them centered at the modern town of Nakhon Si Thammarat (P. Noonsuk 2001b).

Wheatley (1966: 295), Wales (1976: 49), and Jacq-Hergoualc’h (2002: 114, 340), however, are inclined to believe that the beginning of Tambralinga as an autonomous polity dates to the tenth or eleventh century instead, and before that date it was overshadowed by Pan-pan centered at the area around the Bay of Bandon. They seem to place much emphasis on the Chinese records without considering the importance of local inscriptions of Tambralinga in the mid-first millennium AD. In fact, we cannot even propose the location of Pan-pan with precision, while we are relatively certain with the location of Tambralinga. The polity of Pan-pan existed only in Chinese accounts with no
local inscription. However, if we believe that Pan-pan was on the peninsula, it seems that this polity was a neighbor of and contemporaneous with Tambralinga from the first half of the first millennium AD. Tambralinga also seems to have emerged earlier than Pan-pan in the historical record since Mahaniddesa of the second or third century AD mentions the former, while the latter is referred in the Liang-shu which is believed to preserve the information from the end of the fourth century AD (Jacq-Hergoualch 2002: 104). Why was Tambralinga not mentioned in the Chinese records in the first millennium AD? This answer is still unknown but one possibility is because this polity emphasized Brahmanism much more than Buddhism in the early period. Wheatley suggests that, in some cases, the Chinese tended to ignore countries where Buddhism was not in favor since they themselves were Buddhists (1966: 2).

The questions surrounding the relationships between Tambralinga and Srivijaya are also still unsolved. Some scholars believed that Tambralinga is Tan-ma-ling in the Chu-fan-chih complied in AD 1226 by Chao Ju-kua that it is listed under the control of San-fo-chi (Srivijaya) (Coedes 1968: 179; Wheatley 1966: 67). This assumption of Tambralinga’s long-term dependency to Srivijaya is also based on inscription No. 23, also known as the Ligor inscription to foreign scholars, found at Sema Muang temple in the modern city of Nakhon Si Thammarat. Dated to AD 775, it mentions the greatness of the king of Srivijaya who ordered the creations of three stupas (P. Noonsuk 1982: 157). Another inscription that relates Tambralinga to Srivijaya is the Tanjore inscription of AD 1030-1031 referring to the great raid of the Colas in AD 1025 of Srivijaya and other areas believed to be Srivijaya’s dependencies including Madamalingam which is considered to be Tambralinga (Coedes 1968: 143; Wheatley 1966: 67).
Wolters, on the contrary, suggests that although the Ligor inscription denotes the political influence of Srivijaya in AD 775, there is the absence of conclusive evidence of long-term Srivijaya’s control of Tambralinga (1958: 590). He demonstrates, using several lines of historical evidence, that Tambralinga is largely an independent polity which had close relationships to Angkor (1958: 591).

Wolters refers to the Pali Chronicle, at the end of the tenth century, which mentions the King Sujita of Siridhammanagara (probably Tambralinga), the father of Kambojaraja (probably Suryavarman I of Angkor), who attacked and conquered Lavo (Lopburi in Central Thailand) (1958: 591). This suggests that whatever may have been the nature of Srivijaya-Tambralinga connections, it did not prohibit Tambralinga from exercising its military and naval power with its own name (Wolters 1958: 591).

According to him, Tambralinga was possibly the homeland of the king, Suryavarman I, who conquered Angkor at the end of the tenth century (Wolters 1958: 591). Therefore, Wolters (1958: 597) argues that the attack of the Colas of Tambralinga in AD 1025 was an attempt to weaken Srivijaya’s commercial power and its alliance system which is Srivijaya-Tambralinga-Cambodia coalition.

Wolters also equates Tambralinga with Tan-liu-mei, Teng-liu-mei, and Tan-mei-liu in which he saw the last one as a copying mistake (Wolters 1958: 593). The Chinese records mention trade and embassies from the polity in AD 971, 1014, 1016, and 1070 (Wolters 1958: 595). Since the Chinese records had never referred to Tambralinga as a dependency of Srivijaya and, in fact, because Tambralinga sent embassies to the Chinese court on its own account, it can be assumed that Tambralinga was an independent polity at least after AD 971 (Wolters 1958: 591-594).
Wolters' idea of the father-son relationships between Sujita and Suryavarman I concurred with that of Coedès, but after an analysis of the contents of the stele of Prasat Ben, Coedès revised his interpretation by suggesting that Sujita who was the prince of Tambralinga was, in fact, Jayaviravarman, the king of Angkor between 1003-1006 who won over Udayadityavarman I (or Ucchittha) the previous king of Angkor, so that Suryavarman I instead was a Khmer opponent who evicted Jayaviravarman out of Angkor after 1006 (cited in Jacq-Hergoualc‘h 2002: 349). Jacq-Hergoualc‘h then proposes that political power at the end of the tenth century on the east coast of the isthmus was centered in the region of Nakhon Si Thammarat (Jacq-Hergoualc‘h 2002: 350). According to the historical records, in this period, Tambralinga was very strong politically and economically since it sent several missions to the Chinese court and even supported the troops to conquer Angkor which is one of the great mandalas in that period.

Therefore, it can be conceived that despite the possibility of Srivijaya’s control of Tambralinga for a short period of time, these two polities were generally allies rather than conqueror and vassal. As we shall see in the following sections, the archaeological evidence in Nakhon Si Thammarat does not support the assumptions regarding Srivijaya’s domination of Tambralinga, which emphasized Mahayana Buddhist cultures, in this area. Leonard Andaya suggests that the distribution of the Srivijaya’s inscriptions in maritime Southeast Asia might demonstrate its attempts to control the important trade routes in this region and the Ligor inscription may represent the one on the transpeninsular route; however, the attempts could also be achieved by the creation of an alliance network (personal communication). The previous perception of Srivijaya as the dominant empire of maritime Southeast Asia perhaps can now be refined.
Chapter 3

Archaeology of Peninsular Siam and Southeast Asian Maritime Interaction during 500 BC to AD 1000

This chapter examines the geography, history, and archaeology of Peninsular Siam using data acquired from fieldwork and previous literature. Information from various sources will be compared and discussed in order to propose the general trend of socio-political development of polities in this region, and the importance of this region and its societies in the maritime interaction between 500 BC and AD 1000.

I. Geographic Overview

Most scholars who study cultures and societies in Peninsular Siam emphasize that the unique characteristics of its geography have fundamentally influenced the nature and trajectory of socio-political development in this region (e.g., Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002; O’Connor 1986a; Wheatley 1966).

Peninsular Siam or peninsular Thailand is located in the northern part of the Malay Peninsula (Figure 2). This region forms the southern portion of Thailand that includes fourteen provinces. These fourteen provinces comprise eight provinces on the east coast and six provinces on the west coast. The east coast comprises, from north to south respectively, Chumporn, Surat Thani, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Patthalung, Songkhla, Patani, Yala, and Narathiwat. The west coast contains, also from north to south respectively, Ranong, Phunga, Phuket, Krabi, Trang, and Satun. The total land area
of the peninsula is 70,715.20 km². The length of the east coast along the sea is 943 km., and the west coast is 709 km. (P. Noonsuk 2001a: 25).

Peninsular Siam is part of the Asian mainland mass and runs from the flat plain of Chao Phraya Basin in central Thailand in the north. It is separated from the lower peninsular by vast and heavily forested areas that are located near the present border with Western Malaysia. It is delimited by large bodies of water, including the Indian Ocean in the west and the South China Sea in the east. Mountains and hills divide much of the length of the peninsula and rivers generally run in an east-west direction and provide passageways across the low watershed linking with the river valleys that flow down to the opposite coast (O’Connor 1986: 1).

Three major mountain ranges in the peninsula embrace the Phuket range, the Nakhon Si Thammarat range, and the Sankala Khiri range. First, the Phuket range continues from the Tenasserim range in the north, which borders Thailand and Burma. This range begins at Chumporn passing Phunga and ending at Phuket (Figure 3). The Phuket range is also constituted by many small mountains that contain limestone massifs, sandstone, metamorphic and granitic rock, and tin (among other minerals). The western slope of the range drops abruptly to the sea through the effect of submergence. The coastal plain in this area, therefore, extends not very far and the banks are adjoined with many islands and islets. However, with the irregular and wavy shoreline, the coast has provided many opportunities for shelters to ships since the distant past (Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002: 9).

Second, the Nakhon Si Thammarat range begins at Phangan and Samui islands passing Surat Thani, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Patthalung, Trang, and Songkhla, and ends
at Satun. Since it is situated at the center of the peninsula and runs in a north-south direction, this range divides the peninsula into east and west coasts. Appearing on all the ranges of the peninsula, this range has a mixture of granite and coarse limestone with karst forms. It 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 Nakhon Si Thammarat range is mainly created by the river alluvium system. This system along with coastal currents forms the smooth and relatively large eastern coastal plain or an emergence coast, as opposite to a submergence coast in the west. However, a substantial portion of the plain in the southern part is occupied by a series of grand lakes, including Thale Noi, Thale Luang, and Thale Sap Songkhla, from north to south (fig) (Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002: 10; P. Noonsuk 2001a: 26).

Third, the Sankala Khiri range stretches southeastward along the borders between Thailand and Malaysia from the Andaman coast in Satun, to the east coast of Narathiwat. The highest peak is Hulutiti Pasa, with the height of 1,535 meters (Chulalongkorn University 1991: 121).

The peninsula has plentiful forests due to the high annual rainfall brought to the area by the monsoons. The east coast has an average rainfall estimated at between 1,500 to 3,000 millimeters annually, while in the west coast, it is estimated at between 1,950 to 3,800 millimeters. The west coast of the peninsula has the healthiest mangrove forests in Thailand (P. Noonsuk 2001a: 28).

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 in the peninsula as well as on maritime trade. 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 support 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, while April is the month of transition between the two monsoons, and in this month the circle will begin anew (Hergoualc’h 2002: 18; P. Noonsuk 2001a: 11; Wheatley 1966: xix).

In sum, the geography of the peninsula has 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 acts as the major gateway for sailing ships trading between China, Southeast Asia, and India. Therefore, since the remote past, the maritime communication between the eastern and western world can be possible only via this region. Trans-peninsular routes have been established in several places throughout the area in order to transport goods and people from one ocean to the other.

The isthmus not only occupies a strategic position but also possesses important resources for trade. It holds forest, marine products, and minerals that were of value to traders and people all over the world since, at least, the late centuries of the Christian era. The most important metals found in the peninsula which were of great attraction to merchants from Indian and the west are 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 merchandise than today and it proved profitable for the craftsmen in the peninsula
who were using them in their products (Wheatley 1966: xxi). The 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 is, therefore, necessary for peninsular societies to develop entrepots where goods could be stored from one season to the next (Wheatley 1966: xix). This assumption is probably true because some archaeologists, thus far, has already identified several entrepots in this region (see Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002). However, the processes and reasons behind the emergence of these entrepots are complex involving many factors that deserve more investigation in particular case.

II. Historical Context

Peninsular Siam has been mentioned in several historical documents from different countries as different times. Chinese, Indian, and Greek records refer to place-names on the peninsula that have already been discussed by Coedès (1968), Wheatley (1966), and Jacq-Hergoualc’h (2002) (Table 1). This section will, therefore, offer an overview of the nature of the sociopolitical development of the isthmian polities reflected in the foreign records rather than providing details of each document.
Table 1: Selected Peninsular Polities Referred in the Chinese Documents

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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Chih-tu</td>
<td>Chih-tu Kuo Chi, Sui-shu, Pei-shih, Tai-ping Yu Lan, Wen-hsien Tung-kao</td>
<td>Coedès 1968: 74; Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002: 229; Wheatley 1966: 26</td>
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</table>
The historical evidence from Chinese, Indian, and Mediterranean sources offers valuable information in the study of the socio-political development of the peninsular polities between the late centuries BC and the first millennium AD (Figure 4). The earliest Indian literature that mentions this isthmian region is perhaps the Ramayana assumed to be composed by Valmiki in the third or fourth century BC, despite revisions to the text in subsequent periods (Wheatley 1966: 204). It mentions the place-name Suvarnadvipa, the Golden Island or Peninsula. In addition, the Jataka literature that has been dated to the late centuries BC, describes trade between India and Suvarnabhumi or the Land or Gold. Wheatley suggests that both Suvarnadvipa and Suvarnabhumi can be assigned to the whole of the archipelago and the Siamese-Malay Peninsula (1966: 182).

The Chinese documents, the most detailed of these accounts, mention the existence of some polities in Peninsular Siam and the transpeninsular routes since the end of the last century BC in the Chien Han Shu (Wheatley 1966: 8), although the precise figure of these polities cannot be constructed in this very early period. It is also worth noting that the Chinese records have some limitations regarding their reliability that concerns historians, for example, sometimes the Chinese wrote about the countries of the South Seas that they knew perhaps only by hearsay (Wheatley 1966: 2).

By the early centuries of the Christian era, foreign historical evidence began to provide more information of the peninsular polities. It may be assumed based on the Chinese records, that these polities were generally similar to some extent, especially in terms of political organizations, beliefs, cultural characters, and even local products. These polities were active in maritime trading activities since they occupied the strategic locations on the trade routes between east and west. The local products they produced
were valued by overseas merchants and the Chinese upper classes. Not only did the rare products from these isthmian polities attract the Chinese, but the Buddhist paraphernalia from them satisfied the Chinese court as well.

Brahmanism and Buddhism along with other Indian cultural influences seemed to coexist in every polity. Isthmian people honored both Brahmanism and Buddhism. According to historical records, the roles of Brahmanism were not limited to religious activities. Brahmins can work as diplomatic and administrative officials as well. The royal customs of the isthmian polities were clearly modeled on Indian culture. The use of Indian royal insignias, such as conch-shell trumpets, drums, flags, and other ornaments appeared in royal courts and rituals of every peninsular polity under study. However, these polities may have adopted Indian cultures through the process of local selections (Wolters 1999: 55-57).

Similarities in terms of administrative organization among the peninsular polities were depicted in the Chinese records. They seem to have relatively advanced and complex socio-political hierarchy in which the authority of the king was delegated to subsidiary officials who occupied different ranks, worked different duties, and operated in different regional levels: There were chief ministers, dispenser of good things, diplomatic guides, and provincial officials. This structural similarity in political organizations of the peninsular polities may be the result of peer polity interaction that encouraged polities in the same interaction sphere to structurally develop in somewhat the same path (following Renfrew 1986). This issue will be discussed in greater detail in the following discussion section.
III. Archaeological Database

This section will provide archaeological evidence of Peninsular Siam with an emphasis of the period between 500 BC and AD 1000. In Peninsular Siam, there is evidence of human cultures since Pleistocene times (Anderson 1988). The systematic excavations at the Lang Rongrien Rockshelter in Krabi directed by Douglas D. Anderson have suggested that the earliest human occupation in the peninsula occurred here (Figure 4) (Anderson 1988). The lowest stratigraphic unit of this site is dated in c. 37,000 ± 1780 BP, while the uppermost layer is c. 7580 ± 70 BP based on the C-14 dating (Anderson 1988: 50). Two other Pleistocene sites, the Moh Khiew and Sakai Caves, excavated by Surin Pookajom have also yielded some information on the Paleolithic-Mesolithic cultures in Peninsular Siam (Figure 4) (Pookajom 1991). The Sakai Cave was, and is occupied by the Sakai or the Mani, surviving hunter-gatherers in the peninsula, at least in the rainy season (Pookajom 1991: 208; Higham 2002: 42). The way of life of the prehistoric people of this site dating to 10,000 BP, that has been reconstructed by archaeologists somewhat resembles that of the Sakai living in the present day.

The development of agriculture in Peninsular Siam possibly began in c. 6500 BP. based on archaeobotanical research in the Lake Thalee Song Hong near the Lang Rongrien Rockshelter Lisa Kealhofer has suggested that early agriculture in the form of arboriculture may have been practiced by c. 6,500 BP or perhaps earlier (Kealhofer 2003: 87). The Neolithic period of 5,000 – 4,000 BP in Peninsular Siam is characterized by the appearance of pottery (P. Noonsuk 1996: 49). The prehistoric communities in this period seem to be coastal-oriented, since there is a good number of both deep and shallow water shellfish found in the sites, although land mammals were consumed as well (Anderson
The number of Neolithic archaeological sites in this period surpasses that of the previous ages with relatively more sites on the east than the west coast in this period. The Neolithic period, therefore, saw the expansion of human communities throughout the region and especially the increasing occupations of the eastern coastal plains, perhaps by agricultural communities, which are larger than those on the western shores (O’Connor 1986: 1; P. Noonsuk 1996: 147).

Some archaeological settlements in the Neolithic period show evidence of Bronze Age Culture (4,000 – 2,500 BP or 2,000 – 500 BC) (P. Noonsuk 1996: 147). There is evidence of metal production in this site including molds which suggests that the peninsular community had relatively advanced knowledge of metallurgy (P. Noonsuk 1996: 148). Towards the end of the Bronze Age, there is evidence of increase of intra-regional maritime interaction. The site of Khao Sam Keao in Chumporn province provides three Dong Son bronze drums. These drums can be dated in c. 700 BC to AD 1 based on stylistic comparison (Figures 5-6) (Fine Arts Department 2003: 171-179). The bronze drums are an indicator of early intra-regional exchange networks in Southeast Asia that transported this exotic artifact originally produced in Northern Vietnam to Peninsular Siam. The involvement of the isthmian community in the maritime intra-regional exchange networks of Southeast Asia at the end of this period also suggests the early development of maritime trade communities in the peninsula that notably thrived in the subsequent period of Iron Age or protohistoric period that will be described in the following sections.

To ease the presentation of archaeological evidence of the period between 500 BC to AD 500, two constructive chronological phases will be presented, including (1) the
protohistoric period from 500 BC to AD 500, and (3) the early historic period from AD 500 to 1000. The first phase demonstrates the period of early contact between this region and overseas polities. Intra- and inter-regional trade activities were intensified in this period. Key protohistoric sites in four major geographic areas in Peninsular Siam will be presented, except the area of Nakhon Si Thammarat that will be examined individually in the next chapter. The protohistoric phase is characterized by the emergence of written evidence, Indic religious shrines, and perhaps religio-political structures. Five major groups of ancient settlements and their key archaeological sites will be described along with some important artifacts of the regions.

A. The Protohistoric Period (c. 500 BC to AD 500)

This period lies between the late prehistoric and the early historic period dating from 500 BC to AD 500. It coincides with the Iron Age (Higham 2002: 169; Stark 2000: 160) and has been called "General Period C" and "General Period D" (after AD 200) by Higham (1989: xv). This thesis uses the definition of the term "Protohistoric Period" proposed by Bronson and White (1992). They define the protohistoric period as the period that embraces several centuries separating the earliest evidence of close contacts with India and China from the first indigenous inscriptions produced locally (1992: 499). However, these inscriptions are not necessarily in indigenous scripts or language and, in fact, most of them in the initial period are engraved in Indian scripts. The protohistoric period in Southeast Asia is also the time when foreign historical documents first referred to the region.
In addition to the historical record as previously mentioned, the archaeological evidence from Peninsular Siam suggests regular contacts with overseas polities, especially India, in this period as well. For example, the site of Ban Don Ta Phet at the very head of Peninsular Siam provides some important artifacts of India origin in the stratigraphic layer that have already shown dates of 350-396 cal. BC from the C-14 dating technique on organic temper in pottery (Glover 1996: 69).

In combination these data assures us that the protohistoric period of Peninsular Siam is indeed able to the period dates c. 500 BC to AD 500. The characteristics of the protohistoric period in Peninsular Siam do not only involve the increasing interactions with neighboring regions but also the internal socio-political and technological changes reflected in the historical and archaeological record. In this period, there is evidence of the transition from autonomous to nucleated communities, iron production, the development of economic intensification which involved agriculture and specialized craft manufacture (probably for exchange), and, at the end of this period, the initial local adoption of Indic religious and political ideology through the process of indigenous selections.

However, before discussing the socio-political development in this period, this thesis will offer archaeological features of key archaeological sites in four major areas as follows (Table 2).
Table 2: Archaeological Sites in the Protohistoric Period (c. 500 BC - AD 500) Referred in the Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area and Site Name</th>
<th>Different Names or Spellings</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Selected Diagnostic Artifacts*</th>
<th>Excavators (Year)</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<td><strong>Chumporn Delta</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Ranong</strong></td>
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<td>Phukhao Thong</td>
<td>Phu Khao Thong</td>
<td>Ranong</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>P. Noonsuk 1996: 188; Srisuchat 1996: 216</td>
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<td><strong>Bay of Bandon</strong></td>
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<td>Tha Chana</td>
<td>Ao Bandon</td>
<td>Surat Thani</td>
<td>F, L</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002: 127; P. Noonsuk 2001a: 161</td>
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<td>Wat Kilek</td>
<td>Wat Khi Lek</td>
<td>Surat Thani</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>FAD 2003: 189; P. Noonsuk 1996: 162</td>
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<td>Wat Talingpung</td>
<td>Wat Taling Phang</td>
<td>Surat Thani</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>FAD 2003: 186; P. Noonsuk 1996: 165</td>
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<td>Chaiya</td>
<td>Jaiya, Xava, Ch’aiya</td>
<td>Surat Thani</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td>FAD 2003: 183; Lajonquière 1909: 44; O’Connor 1972: 19; P. Noonsuk 1996: 166; Wales 1976:</td>
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<th><strong>Khlong Thom</strong></th>
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<tr>
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<td>Khlong Thom</td>
<td>Krabi</td>
<td>F, B</td>
<td>Veraprasert (1983)</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Nakhon Si Thammarat</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Kud Duan</td>
<td>Kut Dan</td>
<td>Nakhon Si Thammarat</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>FAD 2003: 217; P. Noonsuk 1996: 155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sra Keao</td>
<td>Sa Keao</td>
<td>Nakhon Si Thammarat</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>FAD 2003: 202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Yuan Tao</td>
<td>Nakhon Si Thammarat</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>P. Noonsuk 1996: 158</td>
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*Selected Diagnostic Artifacts: F = Feline Pendant; B = Bronze Drum; L = Lingling-o earring

**FAD = Fine Arts Department

1. **Chumporn Delta**

   This area is on the mouth of the Chumporn River, which has several tributaries such as the Tha Thapao, Tha She, and Rub Ro Rivers. These rivers originate from the Tenasserim Range and flow to the Gulf of Siam in the east. These rivers also provide
channels for communication among the sites in this area and between these sites and the hinterland groups in the mountain area. The most important site in this area is Khao Sam Keao that will be described as follow.

**Khao Sam Keao:** this site is situated in Amphoe Muang, Chumporn Province on the east coast of Peninsular Siam (10°30' north latitude and 90°11' east longitude) (Fine Arts Department 1988: 97; Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 82; P. Noonsuk 1996: 149) (Figure 4). It is a large archaeological site which includes four low hills called “Sam Keao Hills” by villagers. These hills are 20-30 meters high above sea level. There are small plains between each hill. The area of the hills and plains that constitute the site altogether is approximately 3 km². 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 provide the ancient communities at the site the passage way to the backbone of the peninsula where they can find forest products and also to the opposite shorelines on the west coast through the river network that constitute the transpeninsular routes (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: Pl.8). The site of Khao Sam Keao is located on the Isthmus of Kra which has the estuary of the Kraburi River on the opposite coast. It is the shortest point to cross the peninsula.

The Fine Arts Department had been conducting excavations at this site since 1981 after receiving reports of heavy looting. The excavation pits are located on the first, second, and third hills, and in the flat plains between the second and the third hills (P. Noonsuk 1996: 150). The results of the excavations suggest two cultural levels in the site. The upper stratigraphic layer contains ceramic ware of the Bangkok period (not earlier than 250 BP). The lower layer provides several types of artifacts including
earthen wares, shoulder ceramics with cord-marked designs, earthen objects, fragments of bronze bracelets, glass and semi-precious stone beads, glass slag, bronze and iron implements (P. Noonsuk 1996: 151). However, no reliable date of this site can be proposed at the present time.

Some important artifacts that have been found and kept by the Fine Arts Department and villagers can be reported here as follows. First, three Dong Son bronze drums were found in this site (Figure 5-6). Two of them are in relatively almost perfect condition and stylistically dated to 700 BC- AD 1 as previously mentioned, while the other one is very fragmented and cannot be dated (Fine Arts Department 2003: 171-179). Second, a lingling-o earring that is the diagnostic artifact of the Iron Age in Sa Hyunh culture of Southern Vietnam can be dated in 600 to 0 BC (Figure 9) (Bellwood 1997: 271). Third, the square Carnelian bead (0.85 x 0.45 cm.) that was inscribed with Brahmi scripts in the Sanskrit language is dated to around the first century BC to the sixth century AD (P. Noonsuk 1996: 151). Fourth, bronze and earthen anthropomorphic and animal figurines in different configurations have been found at this site (P. Noonsuk 1996: 150). Fifth, etched agate and carnelian beads have also been found at this site and other sites in Southeast Asia, believed to be produced by Indian craft technology originating in Harappan Culture around 4,500 BP. These prestige beads were widely manufactured in India from 600 BC onward and they are found in several sites in Southeast Asia and Peninsular Siam since, at least, the late centuries BC through international trade network (Bellina and Glover 2004: 73). Sixth, a feline pendant was found at this site (Figure 10).

P. Noonsuk notes that there are some other types of artifacts in this site and in all the four key peninsular sites in this period that denote Buddhist symbols (P. Noonsuk
2001a: 163-187). Some semi-stone beads may represent Triratana or the Three Jewels in Buddhism which are the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha like those found at Phukhao Thong (Figure 19). The identified Triratana beads have also been found in an identical configuration, in material, and in size (around a half inch) inside the stupa B6 in the Dharmarajika stupa area in Taxila, an active Buddhist center in India from the late centuries BC (Figure 20) (Marshall 1975: 243, Plate 51). Some animal figurines may signify sacred animals in this religion as they also had been worshipped in India, especially Taxila (Figure 21) (Marshall 1975: 748; P. Noonsuk 2001a:163-187). In addition, there are stone mortars that were engraved with the images of a stupa and a Dharmachakkra that ostensibly are Buddhist symbols (Fine Arts Department 1988: 100). But as these artifacts were discovered without an archaeological context, they do not provide any reliable dates.

In addition to the remarkable items mentioned above, the Khao Sam Keao Site also provides a variety of metal and gold, glass, and stone artifacts of various origins. There is evidence of glass and semi-precious stone bead manufacture found in this site such as a number of glass slag, unfinished fragments, and grinding stones that may be used as manufacturing implements. This suggests that this site is not merely an exchange station or collective center but also a production site that manufactured goods, especially beads, for the maritime trade markets. The trading activities in this site are also supported by seals engraved with Palava scripts found in the site that can be dated towards the end of the protohistoric period around the fifth to sixth centuries AD (P. Noonsuk 1996: 221). These seals are believed to be markers in the trade system or symbols of ownership (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 85).
2. Ranong Area

This area is located in Ranong Province on the west coast of the Isthmus of Kra. The most important site in this area is Phukhao Thong described as follow.

**Phukhao Thong:** This site is situated in Thambon Kampouan, Suk Samran Sub-district, Ranong Province and is located on the west coast of Peninsular Siam (approximately at 9° 20' north latitude and 98° 20' east longtitude) (Figure 4). It has one small hill and surrounding plains on a bay with several small islands. There are rivers which originate in the Phuket Range that pass this site which may provide a waterway for people at the site in the ancient period to communicate with and travel to the hinterland communities of the peninsula. The Phuket Range is also the watershed for many rivers flowing easterly to the Gulf of Siam, especially into the Bay of Bandon (P. Noonsuk 1996: 188), near which we found another protohistoric site of Tha Chana that will be subsequently discussed. Since this site is located near the mouth of the Kraburi river, the coastal sailors may set journeys from it along the coast into the Kraburi river and cross the thin mountain range using tributary waterways or land paths to the area of the Khao Sam Keao site on the Gulf of Siam. This network of rivers and land paths, therefore, formed the transpeninsular routes and supported the communications and exchanges among protohistoric communities in this region.

In the south of the Phukhao Thong site around 30 kilometers, there are a group of early historic settlements, for example, the site of Koh Ko Khao, Khao Phra Ner, and Khao Phra Narai in Phunga province (Figure 4). Whether these settlements had cultural connections with the preexisting site of the protohistoric period require more archaeological research.
The Phukhao Thong site has been dramatically disturbed by looters and the occupation of present villages. During 1996 and 1997, P. Noonsuk and I had surveyed the site several times. The artifact assemblage of this site is similar to that of the Khao Sam Keao site mentioned earlier. The important finds include the following.

First, a small amphora inscribed with Brahmi scripts in the Sanskrit language was found by a villager (Figure 22) (P. Noonsuk 1996: 189). This green glass amphora is only 7 centimeters high and may have been used as a perfume container. The inscription on it, paleographically dated to the first century AD, was preliminarily read by P. Noonsuk and translated by Prayad Kasem as “The journey of the respectful (or Mauriyan) person” (P. Noonsuk 1996: 189).

Amphorae are a type of containers that were widely used in the Greco-Roman world. Its primary function is to carry liquid, especially wine. Many amphorae were discovered in Arikamedu, a port on the Coromandel Coast of Southern India, which reached its peak period between 50 BC to AD 50 (Begley 1996: 2). They are also believed to have been derived from the Mediterranean world for the use of Roman merchants in this port (Begley 1996: 22).

Second, a small gold relief shows two royal persons or gods, one man and one woman (Figure 23). The woman in the scene seems to be bowing to the man. They both wear dhotis and headdresses. The design of this art work resembles that of the Shunga Art of India that can be dated to the period between the first century BC and the first century AD (P. Noonsuk 1996: 191).

Third, a feline and a makara pendant were uncovered from the site (Figure 11 and 24). The Makara is a sacred creature in Indian culture involving water and fertility.
beliefs. It usually represents a combination between a fish and a crocodile with an elephant head. It is sometimes linked to Buddhism since it has been found in many Buddhist places in India and Southeast Asia (P. Noonsuk 2001a: 181). In addition to these two beads, several types of semi-precious stone items found in the site are also believed to be Buddhist symbols such as Triratana and sacred animals in Buddhism.

There are also many other types of artifacts discovered at this site including several configurations of beads made of different kinds of semi-precious stones and gold (Figure 25-27). Jewelry such as rings, earrings, and bracelets are found. Pottery and stone and metal tools represent mundane activities of the community.

This site was probably an entrepot in the maritime trade network in the protohistoric period. It also operated as a production site like the site of Khao Sam Keao since there are a number of lumps of raw glass, glass slag, and unfinished beads and ornaments. The date and detailed information of human activities of the site will be more elucidated, if systematic excavations are conducted.

3. Bay of Bandon (or Ao Bandon)

This area includes not only the area of the Bay of Bandon but also that of Tha Chana valley north of the bay and Samui Island immediately east of the eastern shore of the bay where we found two bronze drums (Figure 4). The most significant site in this area in the protohistoric period is Tha Chana described below.

**Tha Chana:** this site is located in Tha Chana district, Surat Thani province on the Gulf of Siam close to the Bay of Bandon (Figure 4). 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.

Unfortunately, the Tha Chana site has been looted since 1977 and this almost totally destroyed the archaeological context of the site. There are only a small number of artifacts left on the site 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 (Figure 12), pottery sherds, grinding stones, lumps of raw glass, and glass slag and unfinished semi-precious stone beads and ornaments (Figure 28).

There are also some artifacts that are believed to be representative of sacred animals in Buddhism. A goose crystal figurine and a feline pendant that appear in similar configurations to those found in the Buddhist contexts in Taxila are discovered in the site (Figure 21) (Marshall 1975: plate 51; P. Noonsuk 2001a: 161). From archaeological evidence, it is possible to assume that the Tha Chana site was an active entrepot and manufacturing site in the maritime trade network during the protohistoric period.

The Tha Chana site had also developed into the early historic period (AD 500-1000) as suggested by several religious images 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.

4. Khlong Thom Area

This area is situated in Khlong Thom district, Krabi province on the west coast of Peninsular Siam immediately south of the Bay of Phung a (Figure 4). The Khlong Thom River and its tributaries are the major river systems of this area. The most remarkable protohistoric site in this area is Khuan Luk Pat.

Khuan Luk Pat: This site, which means ‘the Bead Mound’ is also known as the Khlong Thom site (7° 55’ north latitude and 99° 9’ east longitude) (P. Noonsuk 1997: 182) (Figure 4). 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 AD, it became an important trading and manufacturing center in the maritime trade network that involved the Roman Empire, India, Southeast Asia, and

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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.

There are also some other types of artifacts that have been reported and collected in the temple museum including a bronze mirror of the Han Dynasty, Indian and Roman gold and bronze coins, Indian seals, Roman intaglios and seals (Figure 29), 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).

The agate and carnelian beads found in Southeast Asia have long been believed to be imported artifacts and indicators of Indianization. Recent research on the sources of these semi-precious stones, however, suggests a complex multi-source origin, involving some local Southeast Asian and Sri Lankan manufacture (Theunissen et al. 2000: 84). Theunissen et al. 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 (Theunissen et al. 2000: 90). The result of this research demonstrates that the agate and carnelian sources of beads in Thai sites may come from Southeast Asia, possibly from the Thai sources themselves, rather than from India, through an intraregional exchange network (Theunissen et al. 2000: 102). It is important, nevertheless, to note that although the communities of Thai sites may have
employed local sources for agate and carnelian bead productions, the knowledge of manufacturing them seems to have been transferred from India (see Bellina 2003). The questions surrounded the sources of semi-precious stone beads found in the peninsular sites also deserved more scientific research.

On the basis of the evidence presented above, it is possible to say that these four key protohistoric archeological sites in Peninsular Siam were culturally similar. They were involved in the international maritime trading network embracing the Mediterranean world, the Middle East, Indian Subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and China. The communities of these sites operated not only as entrepots but also as production sites of some items such as glass and semi-precious stone beads for the maritime markets. The manufacturing activities in these sites are well demonstrated by unfinished beads, lumps of raw glass, glass slag, and perhaps production tools such as a variety of grinding stones. This glass evidence suggests that the isthmian sites may have been importing and manufacturing, from local sand resource, both glass material and beads (Bronson 1990). The unfinished beads may indicate the processes and methods of bead production. It seems that the mass of semi-precious stones had been shaped into various configurations according to the designs of the ornaments that the manufacturers were willing to make. After the beads were shaped, they would be perforated to be hanged by metal wires or cords on the consumers’ body. This process is witnessed by some beads that are not yet perforated found at these sites.

The similarities of these sites are not only limited to cultural materials and economic activities, but also belief systems if we accept that some artifacts, such as triratana pendants, Indic religious symbols, and animal figures, found at the sites imply
the early development of selectively local adoptions of Indic religions. These similarities among the isthmian sites may be the result of close interactions between the communities experiencing similar economic and socio-political atmospheres which will be scrutinized subsequently. All these sites have waterways used as communication routes among the communities situated inland and the opposite coasts. The sites on the same shorelines can also connect to one another by coastal navigation. These routes, therefore, formed a network which allowed the circulations of goods and resources in the peninsula, and also support the establishment of social relationships among them.

5. The Distribution of Selected Diagnostic Artifacts

The diagnostic artifacts of the protohistoric period of Peninsular Siam include, but are not limited to, bronze drums, lingling-o earrings, and feline pendants. These artifacts have been found in several sites in Southeast Asia and suggest the relationships between communities that were involved in the Southeast Asian maritime interaction sphere in the protohistoric period. They are described as follows.

a. The Distribution of Bronze Drums in Peninsular Siam

As previously mentioned, the bronze drums in Dong Son culture of Vietnam have been discovered in protohistoric sites in Peninsular Siam. Besides those found in the site of Khao Sam Keao described earlier, they can be listed as follow: in the Nakhon Si Thammarat sites, (1) one from Ket Kay dated to 500 to 100 BC (Figure 7), (2) two from Kud Duan dated to 400 BC to AD 100, (3) two from Sra Keao dated to 500 to 100 BC (Figure 8), and (4) one from Ban Yuan Tao dated to the last centuries BC; in the
Songkhla site, (1) one from Jana dated to 500 to 100 BC; in the Surat Thani sites, (1) two from Wat Kilek dated to 500 to 100 BC, (2) two from Wat Talingpung, Koh Samui, dated to 700 to 300 BC, and (3) one from Chaiya dated to the first century AD (Fine Arts Department 2003: 171-219; P. Noonsuk 1996: 153-167). These are preliminary dates based on stylistic appearances of the drums.

The bronze drums in the Dong Son Culture (800-43 BC) were created in several sites in North Vietnam and distributed to many places in both continental and insular Southeast Asia (Huyen 2004: 201). The distribution of the Dong Son bronze drums may suggest the existence of intraregional exchange network over a long distance from the production sites in North Vietnam to other areas in Southeast Asia since there is no evidence, thus far, indicating the drum production sites outside that area (Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002: 76). Bronze drums were also produced in the Lake Dian Culture (from c. midfirst millennium BC to the first century AD) in Yunnan Province, Southern China and this culture may be related to the Dong Son Culture of Northern Vietnam (Allard 1998: 337). This intraregional exchange network preceded the interregional trade network, involving the western world, India, and China. It is interesting to note that, in Peninsular Siam, the drums have been found only on the east coast. Therefore, it seems to suggest that the communities in the east coast have participated in the Bronze Drum circulation network, perhaps since 700 BC, connecting several sites in Southeast Asia together. However, other resources, besides the bronze drums, may also have been included in the circulation, such as the lingling-o earrings.

The bronze drums may have been used as musical instruments and a power insignia. In some ethnic groups of South China in the present day, the ownership of the
drums is still an indicator of high status, while in the Dong Son context; these drums suggest the importance of ritual and display (Higham 1989: 201). According to Loofs-Wissowa, nonetheless, the drums were the instruments of authority for chiefs who seek to become kings, and should not be perceived as merely items of exchange (cited in Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002: 77). These bronze drums as instruments of authority are then linked to rituals of power in chiefdom-level society (Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002: 77). However, the functions and the implications of the bronze drums in the peninsular societies cannot be firmly proposed until future discoveries from archaeological contexts provide some answers.

**b. The Distribution of Lingling-o Earrings in Peninsular Siam**

Lingling-o earrings a diagnostic artifact of the Iron Age in the Sa Hyunh culture of Southern Vietnam, dated between 600 to 0 BC and have been found in the Khao Sam Keao and Tha Chana in Peninsular Siam and many sites in mainland and insular Southeast Asia (Bellwood 1997: 271). The distribution of lingling-o earrings in the Southeast Asian maritime world suggests a socio-cultural relationship and exchange network among coastal communities in the protohistoric period or Iron Age that preceded the inter-regional trade between India and Southeast Asia. This type of artifact has been found in several sites in coastal Southeast Asia such as those in Thailand, Vietnam, Palawan, and Sarawak (Figure 9) (Bellwood 1997: 273). Bellwood notes the similarities between jar burial assemblages of the Philippines, northern Borneo, the Sulawesi Sea region of northern Indonesia, and the Sa Huynh culture (Bellwood 1997: 273). The jar burial tradition at Tabon, Palawan, is dated to the first millennium BC, while copper and
bronze objects and lingling-o earrings appear later in about 500 BC in the early Metal phase of this tradition (Bellwood 1997: 303).

e. The Distribution of the Feline Pendants in Peninsular Siam

The feline pendants that were mentioned above were found in all key protohistoric sites in Peninsular Siam (Figure 18). They appear to represent lions which are the symbol of Buddha in ancient Indian Art prior to the creation of showing him in anthropomorphic form, a tradition that developed only from c. the first century AD in Gandharan Civilization (Glover 1989: 28; P. Noonsuk 2001a: 166). However, the Buddhist symbol of lions seems to still exist even after the anthropomorphic art form of Buddha. Glover compares the feline pendant found at Ban Don Ta Phet dated to 400 BC with the lion pendant found at Taxila and suggests that the pendant represents a lion and has a Buddhist connotation (Figure 14-15) (1989: 28).

Marshall has reported on the lion pendants discovered at Taxila, a prosperous Buddhist city from the late centuries BC, and suggested that these are symbolic of the Buddha, the ‘Lion of the Sakyas (Sakyasimha)’, since he was from the royal Sakya clan in northern India (Marshall 1975: 748). These pendants were very popular in Taxila and one of them was found in the stupa N7 of Dharmarajika stupa area (Figure 15) (Marshall 1975: plate 49). The Buddhist people of Taxila did not only worship the lion pendants, but they also used other animal beads as amulets such as frogs and tortoises (Marshall 1975: 749).

The discoveries of a good number of the feline pendants are also recently reported from the site of Halin, a Buddhist Pyu settlement, and several sites in the Samon valley.
such as Binnaka in inland Burma (Figure 17) (Gutman and Hudson 2004: 160, Hudson 2004: 84). Gutman and Hudson believe these to be tiger pendants, and were found by local farmers (Gutman and Hudson 2004: 160). They generally have holes perforated from below the chin to above the tail, a feature similar to that of Ban Don Ta Phet and Tha Chana. This feature demonstrates the excellent technological achievement of bead production since some elongated beads require ten-centimeter drilled holes (Hudson 2004: 84). The feline pendants can be classified morphologically into two types: the elongated pendants found at Halin and the Samon Valley; and the more square ones found at Binnaka and other Samon Valley sites (Hudson 2004: 84) that are comparable to these found in Thailand. Many of them found in Burma seem to have tiger babies in their mouths and one of them also has line decorations on its body as well. It is also important to note that the feline pendants discovered in Peninsular Siam, except that from Tha Chana, do not have holes from below the chin to above the tail, but they have holes at the middle of their bodies from their left to right sides and they are much smaller and thinner.

Hudson proposes in his dissertation that these feline figures have a close morphological relationship with the bronze ‘Tally Tigers’ of the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BC) of China, which were used as symbols to denote military office (Figure 16) (Hudson 2004: 84). The feline pendants found in Burma and Thailand, therefore, may represent tigers with the same social functions as those found in China that were the symbols of status and authority (Hudson 2004: 84). The Tally Tigers were also presented to Burmese princes by Chinese officials in the late Bagan period showing their endurance as a symbol of office in China (Hudson 2004: 84).
For the Burmese contexts, it seems likely that these feline pendants are of Chinese influence, since there is also evidence of early Chinese contacts demonstrated by a variety of Chinese artifacts of the Qin and Han Dynasty (Hudson 2004: 85). Nonetheless, we cannot be very certain whether the feline figures discovered in other parts of Southeast Asia were used in the same manner as they were in China. In order to understand their functions in Southeast Asia societies, we may have to find them in archaeological contexts.

Whether these feline pendants were the insignia of power and authority influenced by the Chinese or the symbols of Buddhism derived from India or just a type of trade item is an interesting question. In the meanwhile, however, it may be seen that most feline pendants found in Thailand are morphologically similar to those in Burma, of which Hudson assumes that the Samon Valley is the production area (Hudson 2004: 84). If we believe that the figures found in Burma were inspired by the Chinese Tally Tigers, then these particular feline pendants discovered from Peninsular Siam, despite some differences in size and the positions of holes, probably are tigers not lions and suggest the relationships with the Chinese culture via the Samon Valley rather than the Indian culture. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to provisionally assume that they may contain some meanings of power and authority as their prototypes do.

Importantly, there is one distinctive feline pendant found at Tha Chana that is not morphologically similar to any of the Burmese and Thai figures. This tiny artifact is instead identical, in terms of configuration, size (around 0.5 inch), and type of semi-precious stone (glazed quartz), to a lion pendant of Taxila discovered inside the stupa B6 in the Dharmarajika stupa area (Figure 12-13) (Marshall 1975: Plate 51(n-3)).
Consequently, this pendant can be perceived as a figure of a lion that may also have Buddhist connotation as sakyasimha. This is supported by the evidence of Indian contacts in this region in the protohistoric period such as etched beads and some forms of beads as well as Indian technology in bead manufacture in the peninsular sites (see Bellina 2003).

It can be preliminarily stated that the feline pendants found in the peninsula can be both lions and tigers depending on whether their configurations were based on Indian or Chinese prototypes both of which are approximately contemporaneous to the late centuries BC. They may also have different connotations: Buddhist or secular power and authority. The assumptions of their social functions, however, are based on those of their prototypes. In the light of new archaeological excavations, we may gain more understandings of these intriguing figures in indigenous contexts. In the regional view, the similarities between the tiger pendants from the Samon Valley and Halin and those from Ban Don Ta Phet and Peninsular Siam indicate socio-cultural interactions between communities in the two areas. This may be another important interaction sphere involving the isthmian societies on which previous scholars have placed relatively less emphasis.

B. The Early Historic Period (c. AD 500 to 1000)

This period is determined by the presence of inscriptions that were created locally in Peninsular Siam. We have to be certain that these inscriptions were not carried by itinerant persons who came to this area from foreign lands. Some inscriptions on rather small items found in the protohistoric sites mentioned earlier cannot be considered as
indicators of the emergence of historic period, since they are small and can be carried across the Indian Ocean.

This period in Peninsular Siam saw the considerably increasing numbers of local inscriptions on relatively big stones. They are mostly engraved with Indian scripts. This thesis uses the Inscription of Hup Khao Chong Koy in Nakhon Si Thammarat as the milestone of the early historic period since it is the earliest inscription on hard-to-be-moved rock found in Peninsular Siam. This Saivaite inscription is engraved on a massive boulder with Pallava scripts in the Sanskrit language, paleographically dated to c. mid-fifth to mid sixth centuries AD (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 170).

The early historic period in this region witnessed important socio-political transformations. It seems that religious institutions influenced by Indic ideology began to play very significant roles in the socio-political organizations of the peninsular societies. The Chinese records and local inscriptions mention the emergence of divine kingship and institutionalized hierarchy in socio-political structures. Brahmanism seems to be the indispensable part of royal courts and their rituals. We can see the increasing numbers of Brahmanical temples and images throughout the region in this period. Brahmanical ideology, such as kingship and cosmological ideologies, influenced the organization of the peninsular polities into a mandala structure. This will be discussed in greater details in the successive section. Although Buddhism coexisted with Brahmanism in this region, the former one seems to play a relatively smaller role in the political structures and ideologies of the isthmian polities.

In this period, there is evidence of increasing interactions not only between the peninsular polities and other Southeast Asian maritime polities, but also between them
and China. A number of Chinese ceramics have been found in the peninsular entrepots in
this period. Peninsular Siam, therefore, can be perceived as one of the significant
localities in the Southeast Asian maritime interaction spheres in this period.

There are increasing numbers of settlements throughout the peninsula in the early
historic period (Table 3). However, six major groups of communities in Peninsular Siam
can be identified from north to south: around the Bay of Bandon; in Wiang Sra; in
Takuapa; in Nakhon Si Thammarat; in the Satingpra Peninsula; and in Patani. The area
of Nakhon Si Thammarat will be discussed in the subsequent chapter of the thesis. In
this section, the key archaeological sites and artifacts of the four major groups will be
adduced as follows.

Table 3: Archaeological Sites in the Early Historic Period (c. AD 500 - 1000) Referred in
the Text (excluding Nakhon Si Thammarat)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area and Site Name</th>
<th>Different Names or Spellings</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Excavators (Year)</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bay of Bandon</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Sala Tung</td>
<td></td>
<td>Surat Thani</td>
<td></td>
<td>O’Connor 1972: 20; P. Noonsuk 1996: 210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khao Srivijaya</td>
<td>Khao Si Vichai, Hua</td>
<td>Surat Thani</td>
<td>FAD (late 1990s)</td>
<td>Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002: 114; O’Connor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

56
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tha Chana</strong></td>
<td>Kao, Hua Khao Bon, Srivijaya Hill</td>
<td>1972: 46; P. Noonsuk 1996: 295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wiang Sra</strong></td>
<td>Wiang Sra, Vieng Sra</td>
<td>Surat Thani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jacq-Hergoualc'h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2002: 127; P. Noonsuk 2004a: 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Takuapa</strong></td>
<td>Khao Phra Ner Phra No, Phra Nur</td>
<td>Phunga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wales (1930s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khao Phra Narai Khao Pra Narai</td>
<td>Phunga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>O’Connor 1972: 52; P. Noonsuk 1996: 373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Koh Ko Khao Ko Kho Khao</td>
<td>Phunga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FAD and Bronson (late 1980s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satingpra Peninsula</strong></td>
<td>Khao Kuha</td>
<td>Songkhla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P. Noonsuk 1996: 272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satingpra Sating Pra</td>
<td>Songkhla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stargardt (1970s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patani</strong></td>
<td>Ban Wat</td>
<td>Patani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prince of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jacq-Hergoualc’h</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. The Area around the Bay of Bandon (or Ao Bandon)

The Bay of Bandon is situated on the Gulf of Siam on the east coast of the peninsula in Surat Thani province (Figure 31). There are several rivers flowing into the gulf in this area but the most important one is the Tapi River believed to have been one of the major parts of a transpeninsular route. This area was thought the location of an early kingdom in the peninsula, Pan-pan, from the end of fourth century AD, as suggested previously. This kingdom sent embassies to the Chinese courts between AD 424 and 616 and was a center of diffusion of Buddhist emblems. However, we cannot be certain yet whether Pan-pan in the Chinese record was located in this area, since there is no inscription found in this area that mentions the name. This area around the bay houses
many protohistoric and early historic settlements that provide a number of artifacts. However, the artifacts in the early historic period that have been hitherto studied by previous scholars mostly are religious items and monuments (Table 4).

Table 4: Selected Brahmanical Images in the Area of the Bay of Bandon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Number of Lingas (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Yonis (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Vishnu Images (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Other Gods’ Images (Reference)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wat Sala Tung</td>
<td>1 (c. 7th - 9th cent. AD)</td>
<td>1 (no later than 400 AD)</td>
<td>1 (Ganesa) (c. 9th cent. AD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaiya</td>
<td>1 (c. late 5th cent. AD)</td>
<td>1 (c. 6th - 8th cent. AD)</td>
<td>4 (c. 6th - 8th cent. AD) (O’Connor 1972: 46-47, P. Noonsuk 2004a: 89)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(P. Noonsuk 1996: 288, 396)</td>
<td>(P. Noonsuk 2004a: 89)</td>
<td>(Figure 32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khao Srivijaya</td>
<td>1 (Linga Parvata) (no later than the 6th cent. AD)</td>
<td>1 (c. 6th - 8th cent. AD)</td>
<td>(Figure 38-39)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tha Chana</td>
<td>1 (Ekamukha Linga) (c. late 5th - 6th)</td>
<td>1 (c. 7th cent. AD)</td>
<td>1 (Ganesa) (c. 9th cent. AD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In general, the communities in the area around the Bay of Bandon seem to have developed to be important Brahmanical and Buddhist sites since the protohistoric period. They were also one of the most significant intra- and inter-regional trade networks areas in the ninth century AD. The ninth-century site of Leam Pho-Payang provides a large number of Chinese and Middle Eastern ceramics (Figure 40) (Bronson 1996: 183). All sites in this area were connected to one another through the network of rivers (which had the Tapi River as the major waterway) and land paths and perhaps formed a single mandala in the early historic period. This connection was unquestionably extended inland to the site of Wiang Sra, situated approximately in the middle of the peninsula (Figure 4).

2. Wiang Sra Area

The area of Wiang Sra was probably a middle station on transpeninsular routes, since it occupies a strategic location for communication and trade and had access to several rivers flowing to both sides of the peninsula. Besides earthenwares, this site
provides a variety of foreign products such as Tang and Sung porcelains, Vietnamese and Sukhothai ceramics, and an Arab coin dated to 882 AD. It also offers numbers of religious images (Table 5).

Table 5: Selected Brahmanical Images in Wiang Sra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Images</th>
<th>Number of Images</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yoni</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>c. 10\textsuperscript{th} - 11\textsuperscript{th} cent. AD</td>
<td>P. Noonsuk 2004a: 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vishnu images</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>c. late 5\textsuperscript{th} – 7\textsuperscript{th} cent. AD</td>
<td>O’Connor 1972: 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>c. 10\textsuperscript{th} - 11\textsuperscript{th} cent. AD</td>
<td>O’Connor 1972: 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhairava</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>c. 10\textsuperscript{th} - 11\textsuperscript{th} cent. AD</td>
<td>O’Connor 1972: 60, P. Noonsuk 2004a: 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devi carrying a Child</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>c. 10\textsuperscript{th} - 11\textsuperscript{th} cent. AD</td>
<td>P. Noonsuk 1996: 299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Brahmanism and Buddhism coexisted in the area of Wiang Sra and around the Bay of Bandon, it can be stated that the Brahmanical features outnumber those of Buddhism. This is also true in all key groups of communities in Peninsular Siam discussed in this thesis. Brahmanism, therefore, probably was very important for polity formations in the early historic period in this region.

3. The Area of Takuapa

This area is situated around the delta of the Takuapa River in Phunga province on the west coast of Peninsular Siam (Figure 4). Since it houses a variety of archaeological monuments and artifacts, this area has been believed to be the location of Takola, an ancient emporium mentioned in the Geography of Claudius Ptolemy in the middle of the
second century AD (Coedès 1968:39; Wheatley 1966: 268). However, the archeological evidence found in the area to date has not been supported the early date of the Greek record. The Takuapa area has been a favorable site for settlements since it is rich in tin.

The belt of tin runs along the west coast of the peninsula, where the earth has been worked by local miners since the remote past and extensive tracts have been searched and dredged in recent decades (Bourke 1986: 11; O’Connor 1972: 41). Some important sites in this area are presented as follow (Table 6).

Table 6: Selected Brahmanical Images in the Area of Takuapa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Number of Lingas (Date) (Reference) (Figures)</th>
<th>Number of Yonis (Date) (Reference) (Figures)</th>
<th>Number of Vishnu Images (Date) (Reference) (Figures)</th>
<th>Number of Other Gods’ Images (Date) (Reference) (Figures)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khao Phra Ner</td>
<td>1 (Linga Parvata) (no later than the 6th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 98)</td>
<td>1 (c. AD 650-800) (O’Connor 1972: 42) (Figure 42)</td>
<td>1 (c. AD 750-850) (O’Connor 1972: 54; P. Noonsuk 1996: 373)</td>
<td>1 (Mankanteya) (c. AD 750-850) (O’Connor 1972: 54; P. Noonsuk 1996: 373)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khao Phra Narai</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most important art historical find in this area is perhaps the Vishnu image from Khao Phra Ner, also called the Vishnu from Takuapa (Figure 42). This image, well over six feet in height, is said to be the most impressive and monumental sculptures of Siam (Krairiksh 1980: 102; O’Connor 1972: 41). It has been called by the villages as Phra Ner, the name that was derived from the name of the hill. This sculpture expresses influences of Indian art from various places and is stylistically dated by O’Connor to c. AD 650-800 (O’Connor 1972: 48). The process of its creation through stylistic combination of various prototypes, therefore, demonstrates the wisdom of the peninsular artisans who gave birth to the unique isthmian art style (O’Connor 1972: 49). This sculpture may also suggest the peak of achievement of the long development of Vishnu iconography in Peninsular Siam.

In sum, we see the connections among the sites in the Takuapa area, which have the Takuapa River and its tributaries as the major waterways for communication and
trade not only between the coastal communities but also between these communities and the hinterland groups. These communities gained their Vishnu artistic achievement around the seventh to eighth centuries AD and perhaps housed short-term South Indian residents in c. the ninth century AD who came to this area primarily to conduct their trading activities in the Koh Ko Khao entrepot of the international maritime trade network thriving in the same period (Figure 41) (Bronson 1996: 181; O’Connor 1972: 55).

4. The Satingpra Peninsula

The Satingpra Peninsula is situated in the east coast of Peninsular Siam and surrounded by the water body of Thale Sap Songkhla, in the west, and of the Gulf of Siam, in the east (Figure 4). This area has been intensively studied by Janice Stargardt as long-term project (Stargardt 1976, 1977, 1998). She proposes that this area housed one of the early isthmian civilizations which she called “the Satingpra Civilization” (Stargardt 1998: 127). According to her, during the sixth to thirteenth centuries AD, Satingpra engaged in intensive agriculture supported by an irrigation system of complex fields, tanks, as well as canals, and this enhanced its position in the trade network (Stargardt 1998: 139, 158).

Stargardt’s hypothesis of intensive agriculture and irrigation system of the Satingpra peninsula, however, is challenged by Jane Allen (1990, 2000). She proposes that the emergence of Satingpra urbanization was merited by its role as a coastal center in the trade network, rather than its irrigated agriculture, and the subsistence for people in this trading area was supported by hinterland groups who practiced dryland cultivation in
the hills (Allen 2000: 76). It seems that the communities in the Satingpra peninsula engaged in long-distance trade, involving many societies situated in both the overseas and isthmian regions since the protohistoric period. In the early historic period, these communities also show evidence of Brahmanical practices (Table 7).

Table 7: Selected Brahmanical Images in the Satingpra Site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Number of Lingas (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Yonis (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Vishnu Images (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Other Gods’ Images (Reference)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khao Kuha</td>
<td>1 (Linga Parvata) (no later than the 6th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 102)</td>
<td>1 (c. 6th – 8th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 102)</td>
<td>1 (c. 6th cent. AD) (O’Connor 1972: 42; Stargardt 2002: 106) (Figure 43)</td>
<td>1 (Ganesa) (c. late 6th cent. AD) (Krairiksh 1980: Pl. 16; P. Noonsuk 2004a: 105)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satingpra</td>
<td>1 (c. 6th – 8th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 104)</td>
<td>1 (c. 6th cent. AD) (O’Connor 1972: 46, Stargardt 2002: 107)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. The Area of Patani

This area is situated around the Bay of Patani in Patani province in the east coast of Peninsular Siam (Figure 4). The former shorelines in this area were, however, further inland than the present ones since the alluvial soils carried by the Patani and other rivers in this area silted up to build the new coastlines (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: 168). The major rivers in this area comprise the Patani and Yaring rivers, but there are other rivers that are their tributaries and also provide waterways for connections between communities.

This area has been believed to be the location of an ancient kingdom referred in the Chinese records as Lang-ya-hsiu. The Liang-shu compiled in the early seventh century records the ambassadorial missions of this kingdom to the Chinese court in AD 515, 523, 531, and 568, and mentions that it was found four hundreds years ago (Wheatley 1966: 255). If we believe that the location of this state is in the vicinity of Patani, then we should have archaeological evidence in this area that can be dated to the second century AD. However, there is no evidence in the area that can be dated to such an early period, and we have no local inscription referring to the name of the kingdom; neither Lang-ya-hsiu nor Lankasuka. There are, however, several sites in this area with Brahmanical images of the early historic period (Table 8).
Table 8: Selected Brahmanical Images in the Area of Patani

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name (Figure)</th>
<th>Number of Lingas (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Yonis (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Vishnu Images (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Other Gods' Images (Reference)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yarang Complex (including Ban Wat, Ban Jalae, and Ban Prawae) (Figure 44)</td>
<td>1 (c. late 5th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 109) (e. late 6th cent. AD) (Kairiksh 1980: Pl. 15; Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002: Pl. 82)</td>
<td>5 (c. late 6th - 8th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 109-110)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (Surya) (c. late 9th - 10th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Bana</td>
<td>1 (c. late 6th - 8th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 109)</td>
<td>1 (c. late 5th - 6th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004b: 31)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. The Distribution of the Earliest Vishnu and Buddha Images

Around the end of the protohistoric period and the beginning of the early historic period, there was the emergence of the earliest Vishnu and Buddha images. These statues may signify the local adoption of Indic religions and the significance of Peninsular Siam in the diffusion of these religions to the rest of the Southeast Asian maritime world. These images can be described as follows.

a. The Earliest Vishnu Images in Peninsular Siam
In the archaeological sites of the protohistoric period in Peninsular Siam, there is no reliable evidence of religious shrines. However, the end of this period around the fourth to fifth centuries AD saw the emergence of Vishnu images in Peninsular Siam. Their appearance suggests the existence of Brahmanical shrines, since the God images always require the constructions of divinely abodes for them to be installed, although the shrines could be built of various materials. It is the universal rule in both Indian and Southeast Asian contexts.

The style of these Vishnu images is, indeed, of the earliest of Vishnu art in Southeast Asia. O'Connor describes this style of Vishnu as an image with the conch shells on the hips (O'Connor 1972: 19). Thus far, four of them have been discovered in the isthmus, one in Oc-Eo in the Mekong delta (Figure 36), and one in Cibuaya, West Java (Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998; O'Connor 1972). The isthmian images that O'Connor discovered and studied include one from Wat Sala Tung (Figure 32), Chaiya in Surat Thani province, one from Wat Phra Preng (Figure 33), and one from Hor Phra Narai (Figure 34) in Nakhon Si Thammarat province (O'Connor 1972: 19-31). He concludes that the Vishnu image found at Wat Sala Tung is the most ancient statue in Southeast Asia and should be stylistically dated no later than 400 AD (O'Connor 1972: 39).

Recently, P. Noonsuk and W. Noonsuk (2003) found another Vishnu image with the conch shell on the hip at the deserted Wat Tanaen in Tha Sala district, Nakhon Si Thammarat (Figure 35). This statue has the padma in the hand of the anterior right arm and can be stylistically dated to the fifth century AD (P. Noonsuk and W. Noonsuk 2003: 103).
Several authors argue that the evidence of the earliest Vishnu images in Southeast Asia found in Peninsular Siam implies that the isthmian communities were one of the centers for the diffusion of Indian art and culture, especially Vaisnavism, to other areas in this region (Manguin 2004: 296; O'Connor 1972: 40; P. Noonsuk and W. Noonsuk 2003: 104). This distribution of the Vishnu images may be related to the trade network in which the maritime communities that have the images had participated in the same interaction sphere and, therefore, acquired similar cultural cargos (Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998: 110; Stargardt 2003: 103). The presence of an early Vishnu image dated to c. the fifth century AD in Cibuaya allows us to posit that this interaction sphere did not entail merely mainland but also insular Southeast Asia (Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998: 103). The presence of the Vishnu images suggest interaction between the peninsular communities and societies in various locations, including North, West, and Southeast parts, of India as well.

In the sites that we found these Vishnu statues, there are also considerable numbers of other Brahmanical monuments and artifacts in the early historic period. This suggests that the development of Brahmanism in Peninsular Siam had started, at least, at the end of protohistoric period around the ninth to tenth centuries AD, and continued to be a major religious influence in the isthmian societies during the historic period. Brahmanism in this period has been identified by using the Vishnu images, an Vaisnavism, in turn, was closely associated with royalty and statecraft in India. Therefore, it may be assumed that the adoption of Vaisnavism in Southeast Asia may be involved in the process of state formation (Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998: 110).
b. The Earliest Buddha Images in Peninsular Siam

The end of the protohistoric period of Peninsular Siam also witnesses the first appearance of Buddha images which is of the earliest style of Buddha statues in Southeast Asia. These peninsular Buddha images seem to be inspired by Amaravati Art of South India which is one the most ancient arts of Buddha statues in India (see Kairiksh 1980; P. Noonsuk 2001a: 188). The early statues were also believed to be the Buddha who calms the seas (Teepangkorn Buddha) that were widely worshipped by the sailors. The earliest peninsular Buddha image stylistically dated to the fourth century AD was found in Sungai Kolok, Narathiwat province; similar styles have also been discovered in several places in Southeast Asia such as the Celebes island of Indonesia, the Dong Duong site in Vietnam, and Nakhon Rajasima in Northeast Thailand (P. Noonsuk 2001a: 189).

Besides the putative fourth-century image, there are also several initial Buddha images, also stylistically dated to the fifth century AD found in various sites in Peninsular Siam (P. Noonsuk 2001a: 192). The presence of the Buddha statues there demonstrates the early development of Buddhism that also coexisted with Brahmanism in this region in the early historic period. The coexistence of Buddhism and Brahmanism is evidently supported by the Chinese records mentioned earlier in this chapter.

IV. Data Analysis and Interpretation

On the basis of the evidence given, the societies in Peninsular Siam have developed since, at least, the prehistoric period around 37,000 ± 1780 BP. Along the course of cultural development, these societies have produced a variety of material
cultures and demonstrated unique historical trajectories. Around the fifth century BC, they increasingly engaged in long-distance maritime exchange network involving many polities in different regions of the world. Various foreign records had mentioned the significance of the societies in this region as important ports and sources of luxuries and wealth. According to archaeological data, some of them were not only active entrepots but also production sites for certain kinds of goods. Leong Sau Heng (1990) has studied the site functions of the port-polities in the Malaysian part of the Malay Peninsula. Using archaeological record, she proposes categories of trading sites in that area that include feeder points, collecting centers, and entrepots (1990: 23). We, however, do not have sufficient archaeological evidence to determine the site functions in the Siamese part of the peninsula and need more systematic archaeological research to confirm these hypothesized entrepot function in this area in the period 500 BC to 1000 AD.

The Chinese documents often refer to the isthmian place-names as kingdoms or countries. However, this section will use the term “polities” to refer to the political units in the peninsula. These isthmian polities continued into the historic period around the fifth century AD, in which there are numbers of inscriptions and religious artifacts. Two important Indic religions, Brahmanism and Buddhism, seem to introduce to these polities since the protohistoric period and played significant roles in their socio-cultural and political development.

The preceding section has reviewed the cultural chronology of the polities in Peninsular Siam. In this section, we shall examine and interpret both the historical and archaeological record that has previously been presented in this chapter in order to discuss the emergence and development of the isthmian polities, and the interactions
between them and other polities in the Southeast Asian maritime world between the fifth century BC and the tenth century AD.

It has always been very difficult to establish a chronology of socio-political development of the societies in Peninsular Siam since there is only limited data acquired from systematic archaeological research and excavations in the region. Consequently, this thesis is able to propose only a preliminary chronology for the early coastal polities (c. fifth century BC – fifth century AD) and for the early mandalas (c. fifth century – tenth century AD).

A. Phase I: The early coastal polities (c. fifth century BC – fifth century AD)

The term ‘early coastal polities’ is adopted from Manguin’s article, entitled The Archaeology of Early Maritime Polities of Southeast Asia (2004). He suggests that the early coastal polities of Southeast Asia are characterized by their involvement in the intra- and inter-regional exchange systems and their increasingly ranked social organizations in the late centuries AD (2004: 283-284). He perceived that the emergence of these complex polities on the shores of western Southeast Asia, including Peninsular Siam, is associated with regional and long-distance maritime trade networks, which seem to be the major factor behind their emergence (2004: 283). His idea seems valid, at least, tentatively, and since we have only context-less archaeological record from the isthmian sites, Manguin’s description suffices for the present purpose.

Previous scholars who have studied maritime Southeast Asia seem to concur that the development of the coastal complex societies is related to long-distance trade networks (e.g., Bellina 2003; Bellina and Glover 2004; Glover 1996; Manguin 2004; Ray...
Regular trade across the Bay of Bengal has occurred since 400 BC and facilitated the transference of Indian technological knowledge to Southeast Asia (Bellina and Glover 2004: 72-72). The evidence of this early trade can be found in Peninsular Siam, as previously mention, which confirms the participation of the isthmian polities in the maritime trade network. The long-distance, but intra-regional, exchange networks in Southeast Asia, however, had already begun by the sixth to fifth centuries BC, as witnessed in the distribution of the Dong Son drums and Sa-Huynh artifacts. The involvement of the early peninsular polities in this preexisting maritime network is also expressed by several Dong Son and Sa-Huynh items in the region.

While the distributions of trade goods and the artistic and technological relationships between the trading sites have been given attentions by archaeologists and historians (e.g., Bellina 2003; Bellina and Glover 2004; Glover 1996), the socio-political structures of the early coastal polities are relatively less studied. They have hitherto been perceived as big-man societies or chiefdoms in which chiefs or rulers of the polities acted as mediator of commercial transactions between their societies and visiting merchants, organized the collection of forest products, controlled the access to the prestige goods which is status markers acquired from overseas, redistributed them to other members to create debts and alliances, accumulated wealth for their own selves, and suppressed the others to maintain their superior positions (Bellina 2003: 295; Higham 2002: 224; Wheatley 1975: 238). These rulers developed their new perceptions of the world, set their new life goals, and acquired organizational skills from the foreign countries in which later on in the early historic period, they adopted Indic ideology to extend their monolithic power by institutionalizing their god-king statuses and dynastic traditions.
This interpretation of the coastal polities as chiefdoms can be seen as part of a neo-evolutionary theory emphasizing the trend towards socio-political progression and towards centralization. This theory seems to be widely used to explain the social centralization of Southeast Asian chiefdoms in the Iron Age (i.e. Higham 2002: 224; Wheatley 1975: 238). It explains the unilinear socio-political progression under the band-tribe-chiefdom-state scheme. Chiefdoms are described as redistributional societies with a permanent central agency of coordination (Feinman 2000: 208). This central agency, or the chief, monopolizes the social, political, economic and religious powers as well as raw materials or new supplies of prestige goods, and, therefore, he achieved a position of dominance over other members of the society (Higham 2002: 224-225; Feinman 2000: 209). Economic centrality is, thus, connected to political authority and power.

The traditional concept of the chiefdom emphasizes the role of the chiefs in social centralization and, therefore, fails to satisfactorily explain varying strategies used by various political actors to construct and maintain the political system and other socio-cultural institutions of the coastal polities. I shall, therefore, offer a possible alternative explanation for the dynamics and complexity of the isthmian political formations using a dual-processual approach.

1. The Application of a Dual-Processual Theory

This theory was first proposed and used by Blanton et al. (1996) to interpret ancient Mesoamerican society, and later applied to Southwest North America archaeology by Feinman (2000) and Bayman (2002). Dual-processual theory, by focusing
on process instead of stages or social typologies, seeks to explain variation among homologous social formations and their transformations, rather than describe types of social formations and their evolutionary sequence (Blanton et al. 1996: 14). Moreover, it stresses the interactions and contradictions of two main domains of political action, (1) exclusionary or individual-centered, and (2) corporate or group-centered (Blanton et al. 1996: 1; Feinman 2000: 213). These two general political-economic patterns of action are conceptualized as dual strategies of political-economic behavior of social actors who interact with each other and influence the governing institutions of society (Blanton et al. 1996: 2; Feinman 2000: 213).

In the exclusionary or wealth-based network pattern, political actors aim to establish and maintain their monolithic control of sources of power (Blanton et al. 1996: 2). In order to succeed, they develop patrilineal social structures and manipulate prestige-goods systems of exchange. Patrilineal social structures strengthen household, descent, and ethnic social ties that constrain the movement of faction members between competing network strategists (Blanton et al. 1996: 5). Prestige-good systems entail the manipulation of production, exchange, and consumption of valuable goods that are central to gaining control over politically charged exchange relations (Blanton et al. 1996: 5).

Alternatively, corporate political pattern power is shared by different groups and sectors of society in a way that weakens exclusionary strategies (Blanton et al. 1996: 2). Moreover, the corporate pattern is not restricted to nonstratified or hierarchically flat social formations. Thus, a corporate structure is not synonymous with egalitarian organization (Feinman 2000: 215). Corporate hierarchies may be characterized by a
greater degree of power sharing, greater depersonalization of rule, and less accumulation of wealth than is traditionally conceptualized for hierarchical or nonegalitarian societies in the chiefdom model (Feinman 2000: 215). This system is knowledge-based and stresses the maintenance of local-group solidarity more than the acquisition of individual prestige (Blanton et al. 1996: 3). In corporate polities, the distribution of power is structured within limits set by the prevailing corporate cognitive code rooted in a given society (Blanton et al. 1996: 2). The corporate cognitive code highlights solidarity of society as an integrated whole that is based on natural, fixed, and perpetual interdependence among subgroups and between rulers and subjects, in more complex societies. A corporate strategy, therefore, emphasizes collective representation and communal rituals that are based on broad themes such as fertility and renewal in society and cosmos, rather than individualized dominance (Blanton et al. 1996: 6). The power of a corporate group is also commonly materialized in communal architecture, rather than markers of individual prestige (Bayman 2002: 75).

These alternative strategies may coexist to some degree in the political dynamics of all social formations, but one or the other is likely to be dominant in any particular time and place (Blanton et al. 1996: 2). They reflect historical phenomena that will situate a society somewhere along the extreme poles of the corporate/network continuum (Feinman 2000: 221). Therefore, many societies, if not most, are likely to contain element of both exclusionary and corporate system (e.g., Bayman 2002: 75).

Dual-processual theory is therefore relevant to the concept of heterarchy which suggests that power relations within and between polities are ranked and reranked by individuals, groups, and organizations as conditions change (Crumley 1995: 1). White
employs this concept in the studies of Central and Northeastern Thai prehistoric societies and states which yield evidence of localized variation in material culture, flexibility in status definition and political relations, and horizontal differentiation in economic organization (White 1995). Such heterarchical structures parallel the plurality of political action that takes place in societies that are amenable to interpretation using dual-processual theory.

In the isthmian context, we may thus expect to see organization in which both exclusionary and corporate systems coexisted, although the former is more often a topic of interest to many scholars. In fact, the interactions of the two different systems of organization probably shaped the historical trajectory of the isthmian polities. The fluctuation between exclusionary and corporate patterns of socio-political formation is probably characteristic of the isthmian and perhaps other Southeast Asian societies in general (see Wolters 1999).

In maritime Southeast Asia, we see unmistakable archaeological signatures of increasing wealth and inequality in late prehistoric and protohistoric burials (Manguin 2004: 283-293). This pattern may reflect the efforts of elites who employed exclusionary strategies to monopolize economic control and to consolidate their power. Nonetheless, there is also evidence of bronze drums which are believed to have been used in communal rituals (Higham 2002: 201). Notably, these drums have been found in several archaeological sites in the isthmus. It may thus be assumed that corporate strategies also played a role in peninsular socio-political structures. Communal rituals aim may strengthen social solidarity in a community and preclude the dominance of individuals. In other words, the bronze drums were quite likely instruments of the communal power
of an institutionalized corporate office (Bayman 2002: 84), rather than symbols of individualized power.

These communal rituals, according to dual-processual theory, are based on collective cognitive system (Blanton et al. 1996: 6). Communal systems of organization are often important in societies that include a variety of ethnic groups, since they integrate multiple sectors of a society. Archaeological and historical evidence from Peninsular Siam confirm that isthmian polities were of this type. These polities were cosmopolitan markets in a maritime trade network that involved many regions and housed a variety of social groups from different places. It is, therefore, likely that communal rituals and corporate systems of organization were dominant in socio-political structures of the isthmian polities. The emergence of exclusionary strategies may have been restrained by corporate patterns of political structure. It is also apparent that the exclusionary power was less pervasive than corporate power in these societies.

Certain kinds of artifacts found in isthmian sites may have functioned as "insignia of office" (Bayman 2002: 84) by the heads of various political groups in the isthmian polities. Tiger pendants discovered from the sites of Khao Sam Keao, Phokhao Thong, and Khuan Luk Pat resemble those found in Burma. It is assumed that the creation of these tiger pendants was inspired by the "Tally Tigers" in the Qin Chinese Empire, where were used as the symbols of power and authority (Hudson 2004: 84). However, the ideological meanings and the social functions of these tiger pendants, as well as other remarkable artifacts found in Peninsular Siam, cannot yet be suggested with any degree of certainty, since they were not recovered from well-controlled archaeological excavations. Future research may enable us to better evaluate this hypothesis.
Although it is possible that during certain periods there were exclusionary strategists, communal ideologies were probably still practiced. Local rulers would have still obtained their power with the support of their community. This does not mean that isthmian societies were egalitarian, but rather it demonstrates the interdependence of the elite and commoner classes. Social stratification was certainly present in isthmian polities. Although the social and political actors who most influenced the governing institutions were almost certainly from the upper class, commoners may also be agents of social and economic reproduction in these societies (Joyce et al. 2001).

Thus I conclude that isthmian polities were generally based on corporate systems of organization. Chinese records, from the mid-third century AD, describe a polity named Tun-sun that was ruled by five kings (Wheatley 1999: 17). This suggests that power sharing was common in ancient Peninsular Siam. However, a constant shift between exclusionary and corporate systems is also clean in isthmian political formations in light of other Chinese accounts. The Chinese wrote about a king who held supreme authority in the polity of Lankasuka. But when he died, the chief ministers (perhaps the council of chief ministers) selected a new leader for the throne (Wheatley 1966: 253-254). It is therefore evident that when the king who exercised exclusionary power (at least on specific matters) died, the administrative authority of the polity shifted to corporate pattern of organization by a council of chief ministers.

Dual-processual theory offers a valuable perspective for studying socio-political relations in ancient societies. To examine the nature of interactions between polities in the isthmus and the Southeast Asian maritime world, I will employ the concept of peer polity interaction as an interpretive framework.
2. The Application of Peer Polity Interaction

This concept was proposed by Colin Renfrew (1999) for studies of socio-political, change, and development. According to Renfrew (1999: 114), peer polity interaction included imitation and emulation, competition, warfare, and the exchange of material goods and information among autonomous socio-political units within a single geographical region (1999: 114). He uses the term “peer polity” to avoid models which emphasize of core-periphery relations, or secondary state formation. The socio-political and economic development of peer polities cannot be considered in isolation, since they always interacted (Renfrew 1999: 114).

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

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

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

For the peninsular context, we can witness the emergence of various autonomous political units (or polities in Renfrew’s sense) in Peninsular Siam in particular, and in maritime Southeast Asia in general, during the protohistoric period (c. 500 BC – AD 500). These polities were comparable in scale and degree of complexity. They did not developed in isolation. Instead, they actively communicated with one another through a long-distance exchange network that probably began by at least c. 700 BC as suggested
by the use of Dong Son drums. This vast network formed a single interaction sphere across maritime Southeast Asia and it created a new regional identity that was shared by a number of politically independent, groups (Renfrew 1999: 124). This identity was noted in early Chinese accounts that refer to the region as “the kingdoms of the South Seas.”

Although we may observe a single interaction sphere in maritime Southeast Asia, we may also identify several smaller interaction spheres within it (Hall 1985: 20). The isthmian polities were involved in a plurality of interaction spheres during the protohistoric period that connected Southeast Asia with India and China.

One notable interaction sphere is a network across the Bay of Bengal to India (Hall 1985: 20). This interaction sphere was probably established by at least the fourth century BC (Glover and Bellina 2004: 72). It involved the movement and circulation of several kinds of luxuries goods, the transfer of knowledge, and perhaps migrations of people.

The second sphere is a network between the isthmus polities and those of the Samon valley in Burma. This interaction sphere may have operated by using: (1) water routes across the Gulf of Martaban to the Salween River or the Sittaung River and taking short land paths to the Samon River; (2) water route from the peninsula up the Irrawaddy River, then by land east to Samon Valley; (3) long overland routes from the Samon valley traveling down south along the Tenasserim Range to enter the Three Pagodas Pass to Western Thailand and finally into the peninsula. The earliest archaeological indication of interaction between the two areas is the distribution of tiger pendants in c. the late centuries BC (Hudson 2004: 84).
The third sphere is a network across the Gulf of Siam to Central Thailand and the Mekong Delta (Hall 1985: 20) which harbored the important port site of Oc-Eo (Manguin 2004: 291). This interaction sphere seems to be one of the most significant spheres that developed in the late centuries BC and it continued throughout most of Southeast Asian history. It sustained the flow of both trade goods and ideas and artistic styles that were important to the socio-political development of both areas. This sphere can also be extended to include Central and Northern Vietnam as well as Southern China.

The fourth sphere was a network in insular Southeast Asian Seas that developed through time since c. the late centuries BC (Manguin 2004: 283). This network involved various Southeast Asian islands. These interaction spheres overlapped whereby the isthmian polities played a vital role in connecting them. This demonstrates the significance of the isthmian polities in the circulations of resources and probably the transfers of knowledge. As a result of peer polity interaction, we can see cultural similarities not only in material terms but also in organization.

Peninsular Siam contained several polities of comparable scale and organization. Besides the similarities of their material cultures, as shown in the archaeological record, they also had generally similar customs and political structures. Admittedly, the latter similarities are difficult to detect in the archaeological record, but the historical record offers us some clues. As I noted earlier, Chinese records mention cultural similarities among the isthmian polities, as well as other maritime polities in Southeast Asia during the first half of the first millennium AD with minor differences. They wore similar (but not identical) costumes and practiced both local beliefs and Indic religions. Importantly, they also had similar socio-political structures in which there were official ranks and
kings who assumed divine-like status. The divine-like kings do not, nonetheless, imply that the polities had always been political centralized. Rather, they were dynamic and fluctuated between exclusionary and corporate strategies, although one of them seemed to be dominant during particular periods.

These organizational similarities can be interpreted as structural homologies, as suggested by the concept of peer polity interaction (Renfrew 1999: 119). It is important to note that the adoption of Brahmano-Buddhist religions and the organization with institutionalized official ranks and the divine-like kings did not emerge prior to the interactions among the polities. In the other words, there were organizational changes after the interactions. These changes and structural homologies in maritime Southeast Asia seem to be the result of peer polity interaction over a long period of time. In fact, the development of the structural homologies in Southeast Asia emerged almost precisely at the same time as that among polities around the Bay of Bengal, as suggested by Kulke (1990: 29). However, more scientific dates from future excavations in the isthmus will enable us to confirm this hypothesis.

Although no single polity that was actually dominant in the development of structural homologies in the maritime world, the isthmian polities seem to have played relatively important roles in the diffusion of new organizational concepts from India to the rest of maritime Southeast Asia in the earliest period, perhaps because of their strategic location between the two regions. Their roles can be seen in the distribution of Vishnu images stylistically dated no later than 400 AD to the fifth century AD (O’Connor 1972: 35) as previously mentioned. The isthmian polities housed not only the earliest Vishnu image (O’Connor 1972: 35; Manguin 2004: 295), and but also three statues in
this group, while only one was found at Oc-Eo and another in Java. The Vishnu images and their cults are usually associated with ideologies of royalty and statecraft and, thus, state formation as is true in India (Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998: 110). Therefore, it is possible that the isthmian polities may have acted as the center of diffusion of Indic ideology and new organizational concepts that influenced the structural homologies in maritime Southeast Asia in the earliest period.

These structural homologies may be the result of competitive emulation (Renfrew 1999: 126) among peer polities in maritime Southeast Asia. They participated in similar trade networks and competed with one another in order to elevate their power and status. In the competitive atmosphere, each polity tried to develop its organization so that it could succeed in the region. Therefore, if there are more sophisticated organizational concepts or more advanced technological innovations created or adopted by one polity, other polities in the same region will also adopt and improve them, or if there are or more advanced styles of arts and architectures created or adopted by one polity, other polities will also adopt and refine them. The Chinese record also suggests that this process transpired when the Fununese selected a person with sophisticated political knowledge from Pan-pan, namely Kaundinya, to be their king and thus improve their socio-political structure to conform with that in India (Wheatley 1966: 48).

These examples may explain the adoptions of Indic religions, political ideologies, writing systems, and art styles in maritime Southeast Asia during the late protohistoric and early historic periods. It may also be seen as the characteristics of present-mindedness that is one of important features of Southeast Asian cultures (see Wolters 1999: 114-115). It is not the Indianization, but rather it is the adoptions of more
sophisticated cultural and socio-political features that enabled them to compete with other polities in the interaction sphere. It seems that Indic cultures were the most appropriate ones since local people and Indians had close relationships for a long period of time and were familiar with each other.

Although the nature of peer polity interaction in maritime Southeast Asia can be conceptualized as competitive emulation among polities, it also involved peaceful relationships such as symbolic entrainment (Renfrew 1999: 127) and corporate organization. We see the intermarriage between the king of Chih-tu and the daughters of neighboring kings (Wheatley 27-30). This custom, for example, would strengthen the alliances and corporate systems or cooperation between peer polities.

Since the concept of peer polity interaction avoids laying stress upon relations of dominance and subordination between societies (Renfrew 1999: 114), it helps us to refine our understanding of core-periphery relations. It has been conceived that, in maritime Southeast Asia, the coastal centers are the cores of the local trading networks, based on river systems, while the hinterland groups are the peripheries (Bronson 1977). In Peninsular Siam, however, it seems that the relationships between early coastal polities and hinterland groups were not organized into dominance-subordinate relations. These polities relied on forest products as their most valuable goods in exchange with foreign merchants as suggested in the Chinese records. In some cases like Satingpra, it is also possible that the food supply in coastal polities was supplemented by products from upland farming groups. Hinterland groups were not sedentary; they regularly moved from one place to another in the tropical forests or in the remote inlands. They are also the only groups who had knowledge on where collecting forest products could be
gathered (B. Andaya 1993). Therefore, it would be self-destructive and impossible for coastal polities to deploy military forces to control the hinterland groups since their economy depended on them. If the hinterland groups did not wish to be involved in a relationship with a coastal polity, they could have easily moved away, sometimes to other polities that were rivals of the former one (Manguin 2000). Thus, it was important for coastal polities to offer the best options to the hinterland groups in order to maintain their economic system and compete effectively with other polities. It is the hinterland groups that have been seen, hitherto, as “the periphery” when, in fact, their power suggests otherwise.

B. Phase II: The Early Mandalas (c. fifth century – tenth century AD)

The concept of mandalas was proposed by Wolters (1999) as a framework for the study of socio-political organizations of premodern Southeast Asia. The term mandala is defined as circles of kings (Wolters 1999: 25). Structurally, in each mandala, one king who is identified with divine and universal authority would claim personal hegemony over other rulers in his mandala who were his allies or vassals (Wolters 1999: 25). However, in practice, the mandala model often represents an unstable political situation of a vaguely defined geographic area without fixed boundaries. The smaller centers under the god-king could search in all directions for protection from other god-kings and also tend to build up their own network and power to renounce their tributary status. Mandalas would expand and contract from time to time. Yet, only the mandala overlord had the right to receive tribute-bearing envoys and he would also send officials who represented his superior status (Wolters 1999: 28).
In Wolters’ view, two most important skills for the mandala overlord are present-mindedness and diplomacy since all interactions among polities in that period depended on personal ties (Wolters 1999: 30). The sacral power of the overlord was shared by his kinship group in his administration. This political system is based on inherited cultural traits from prehistory which highlight cognatic systems, an indifference towards lineage descent, and therefore the importance attached to personal achievement in particular generations (Wolters 1999: 38). The mandalas structure was multi-centric in nature, so that there was an enduring multiplicity of centers (Wolters 1999: 39).

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

Around the fourth to fifth centuries AD, the early coastal polities developed into the early mandala pattern in the isthmus. There is more archaeological evidence of clusters of settlements with Indic religious temples, mostly Saivaite shrines, which are classified into four major groups including the area of the Bay of Bandon, Takaupa, Satpangpra Peninsula, and Patani. The Indic writing system and Indic art styles locally developed during this period. This archaeological record, therefore, suggests the emergence of mandalas in the early historic period of the peninsula.

The mandala model represents the early historical polities with evidence of Indic writing systems and religious institutions. The mandala structure is characterized by a
cluster of communities tied together by the power of a center in which there was a ruler. These communities, in turn, formed a mandala, and several mandalas formed a supra-mandala, which is structurally similar to the smaller ones (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 265). The supra-mandala entity consisted of a circle of rulers or circle of kings (Wolters 1999: 25). This structure is multi-centric with several rulers and centers, and there were always shifts of power from one center to the next depending on the prowess of the rulers and particular socio-political contexts. The structure was therefore dynamic rather than static. The elements within the structure were ranked and reranked. Although the supra-mandala overlord tended to identify himself with Siva and claim universal sovereignty as god-king of kings, he also had to share his divine authority with his relatives in terms of administration in order to maintain his relationship with powerful kinship groups and the stability of the mandala, since these groups also had their own power and network of relatives and dependants (Wolters 1999: 29).

This system of power sharing reminds us of the corporate pattern of socio-political formations in the dual-processual theory. It suggests the continuity of interactions and interdependence of the two political strategies in isthmian socio-political formation from the protohistoric to the early historic period. The exclusionary pattern was expressed by the establishment of Siva-like king and the royal court, while the corporate pattern is demonstrated by the system of power sharing among royal kinship groups and between the mandala overlord and the rulers of smaller mandalas in his domain. The Chinese record also confirms the latter since it notes the participation of the heads of the families in the administration of the polity of Chih-tu in the early seventh century AD as they appeared in the royal court when the Chinese envoys visited the
polity (Wheatley 1966: 27-30). It reported that these powerful families that can be assumed to be parts of the royal clan were largely independent of central authority and had a good degree of privileges in the polity (Wheatley 1966: 27-30). Therefore, beneath the image of the Siva-like king, there was a corporate pattern which restrained the centralization or monopoly of power.

Another important feature of the corporate pattern in the isthmian socio-political structure that can be seen in archeological record is the distribution of communal architecture. There are many communal shrines situated in the early historical settlements in all four major groups. It seems that each settlement had its own central shrine. These shrines functioned as centers of communal rituals in which individuals were relatively more faceless and anonymous (Blanton et al. 1996: 6). The communal rituals conducted in a communal shrine also created social solidarity of that particular community and inhibited the overemphasis on monolithic power of individuals. Therefore, it seems that while the exclusionary pattern was used in one spatio-temporal context such as in the royal court and royal rituals, the corporate pattern was stressed in another context at the community level. It is also seems that the mandala structure in the early historic period of the isthmus was based on a corporate system, not an exclusionary one. This demonstrates the continuity of corporate-oriented pattern of the isthmian socio-political formations from the protohistoric to early historic period.

The communities in a mandala were connected through the network of rivers and overland routes. This was based on local interaction spheres that facilitated the flow of information and the circulation of resources. The internal interaction sphere of each mandala was also connected to that of other mandalas to form inter-mandala interaction
spheres. For example, the mandala of the Bay of Bandon was connected to and interacted with the mandala of Wiang Sra at the center of the peninsula and the mandala of Takaupa on the west coast via the network of river systems and land paths (Figure 4). These intrapeninsular interactions encouraged structural homologies among the mandalas. As previously mentioned, these mandalas were similar in organization where a center and vassal communities existed.

In theory, the center constantly shifted within a mandala and there could be an emergence of a strong center in any mandala that extended its power to control other mandalas situated in the vicinity as well as far away. Mandalas would expand and contract from time to time, so that they had unfixed boundaries. These similarities in mandala structure did not only appear among the peninsular polities but also other Southeast Asian polities (Higham 1989: 239-318; Wolters 1999: 27-40). These structural similarities may be the result of peer polity interaction or peer mandala interaction in Southeast Asia which involved social, political, and economic, relations since the late protohistoric to the early historic period.

Some of the earliest Saivaite mandalas in maritime Southeast Asia seem to have emerged in Peninsular Siam in the fifth century AD. This is not surprising since this area always played vital roles in the diffusions of political ideologies even in the protohistoric period as previously mention. The distribution of Vishnu images dated to the sixth to ninth centuries AD around the Gulf of Siam, for example, in the sites of U-Thong and Dong Sri Mahapot (Diskul 1981: 9) may be one piece of evidence for the interaction between the mandalas of the Gulf and the peninsular mandalas where the Vaisnavite cults first developed. This thesis will offer an example of a mandala in the isthmus, namely
Tambralinga, and will also elaborate in some detail the characteristics of the isthmian Brahmanism-based mandala structure in the following chapter.
Chapter 4
Tambralinga Case Study

This chapter is focused on an important polity in the isthmus of Siam, namely Tambralinga, about which evidence will be presented to describe its history and socio-political development. This thesis considers Tambralinga a case study of Brahmanical-based mandalas in Peninsular Siam in the early historic period (c. fifth to tenth centuries AD). It will describe and show the distribution of archaeological sites at Nakhon Si Thammarat province, which is the heartland of this mandala, with the assistance of geographical information system (GIS).

I. Geographical Overview

The current city of Nakhon Si Thammarat lies where Tambralinga was thought to have been located. This province is situated on the Gulf of Siam south of the Bay of Bandon (Figure 45). There is the Nakhon Si Thammarat range as the backbone of the province that separated it into two parts, the eastern coastal plain and the western plain (Figure 46). The eastern coastal plain is an “emergence” shoreline in which rivers and ocean currents deposit sediments on the shallow sea floor, thus creating a wide coastal plain and sand dunes covering the areas of Khanom, Sichon, Thasala, and Muang districts (Figure 47). Quaternary sediment covers the area designating that the plain was formed relatively quite recently, similar to the Chao Phraya Plain in Central Thailand (Chulalongkorn University 1991: 121). The shoreline is quite straight and smooth, with shallow water. Sediments deposited along the shoreline also produce the sandbar or spit.
of Talumphuk in Pak Phanang. The western plain is mostly situated on foothills and in
valleys comprising the areas of Phipoon, Thung Yai, Na Bon, Chawang, and Thung Song
districts.

The Nakhon Si Thammarat range contains abundant forests and provides products
to people until today. The ancient communities are mostly found on the coastal plains
and sand dunes along the Gulf of Siam (Figure 48). Sand dunes are suitable for
settlement since they cannot be flooded in the rainy season and are surrounded by fertile
plains for suitable agriculture. They have been occupied until the present day.

Rivers in the eastern coast flow in an east-west direction from the mountains to
the seas. They provide passageways for communication between people on the coasts
and inland areas. The river systems and sand dunes were probably used as connecting
routes by ancient communities in the area since the remote past.

II. Archaeological Database

This section will first present archaeological evidence found at Nakhon Si
Thammarat province prior to the fifth century AD. The early historic period from the
fifth to tenth centuries AD, the period of Tambralinga mandalas, will be treated
separately and in greater detail. The methodology of data collection, the distribution, and
the archaeological features of the sites of this period will be presented at the end of the
section.

A. Archaeological Background prior to the Fifth Century AD
Several areas of Nakhon Si Thammarat have archaeological evidence that can be dated as far as in the Mesolithic cultures. The sites in this period are mostly situated in the mountain areas (Srichai 2001: 11-12). These sites contain pebble tools which are believed to belong to the Hobinhnian culture. However, there is no radiocarbon dating for the sites of this period. The dating of the sites is based on artifact comparison with that of the other sites in neighboring provinces which already has radiocarbon dating. More specifically, the types of tools found in Nakhon Si Thammarat can be compared to those found at the archaeological cave site in Surat Thani dated to 6,500-4,200 BP (Srichai 2001: 13).

The Neolithic sites at Nakhon Si Thammarat saw changes in settlement patterns, particularly an increase in their numbers in the river plains and foothills, although the mountain areas in the middle of the province were not abandoned (Srichai 2001: 18-19). The Fine Arts Department has dated the Neolithic period in Nakhon Si Thammarat to 4,000-2,000 BP (Srichai 2001: 19). However, this period should not be dated as late as 2,000 BP since there is already archaeological evidence of protohistoric cultures in the province as early as 2,500 BP.

In the protohistoric period (c. the fifth century BC to the fifth century AD), we have evidence of long-distance commodity exchanges in Nakhon Si Thammarat. Some sites in this period demonstrate continuity from the Neolithic period. Besides the appearance of mundane metal tools, a number of the Dong Son Drums has also been found in this province as previously mentioned (Fine Arts Department 2003: 171-219; P. Noonsuk 1996: 153-167) (Table 2).
At the end of this period around the fifth century AD, three of the earliest Vishnu images in this province were found belonging to the earliest style of Vishnu art in Southeast Asia, stylistically dated to the fifth century AD (O’Connor 1972: 19-31; P. Noonsuk and W. Noonsuk 2003: 103). This period, therefore, probably represents the transition between the protohistoric and historic periods in Nakhon Si Thammarat.

B. The Early Historic Sites (c. fifth to tenth centuries AD)

The early historic period at Nakhon Si Thammarat, similar to Peninsular Siam, is marked by the presence of inscriptions created locally. Two of the most important ones are inscription No. 28 found at the deserted Phra Derm shrine in the area of Phra Maha Dhat temple at the center of modern Nakhon Si Thammarat, and the inscription of Hup Khao Chong Koy in Chulaporn district. Both of them are associated with Saivaite cults and engraved with Palava scripts in the Sanskrit language paleographically dated to c. the fifth century AD, which were contemporaneous with the Vishnu images.

There are an increasing number of archaeological sites of this period, most of which are related to Brahmanical concepts as indicated by Brahmanical artifacts and architecture. These sites are distributed throughout the upper coast of Nakhon Si Thammarat (Figure 48). Several scholars have surveyed this area and reported important monuments and artifacts in the early historic period. L. de Lajonquière visited the city of Nakhon Si Thammarat in 1912 where he found five lingas at the shrine of Hor Phra Narai (Lajonquière 1912). Some of these lingas were dated to the fifth to sixth centuries AD by O’Connor who visited the site again and published an article about them in 1983 (Figure 51) (O’Connor 1986f: 160-162). However, both Lajonquière and O’Connor may perhaps
have mistaken Hor Phra Narai with Hor Phra Isuan, which is only 25 meters west of the former, just across the Rajadumnern Road. P. Noonsuk had visited the site of Hor Phra Isuan again in 1982 and found the lingas that were described by both Lajonquière and O’Connor there (P. Noonsuk 1984: 173-174, Figures 15, 17, 21, 22, 23, 32, 37).

O’Connor also surveyed the area of Sichon in 1966 where he discovered the early historic sites of Wat Jom Thong, Na Khom village, and Wat Sra Si Mum (1986d: 127). He reported a variety of antiquities found there including a Vishnu statue, lingas, Buddhist votive tablets (second half of the twelfth century AD), and heads of Bodhisattva images (c. fifteenth century AD) (O’Connor 1986d: 127-134). The Vishnu statue was found at Wat Jom Thong and dated to between the second half of the seventh century and the eighth century (O’Connor 1986d: 128). Two lingas were found at Na Khom village dated before the ninth century AD, while another small linga made of crystal was found at Wat Sra Si Mum that O’Connor presumes was used as a votive object (O’Connor 1986d: 130-132, fig. 6, 7, 8). Based on these archaeological finds, O’Connor concludes that Sichon was almost certainly one of the population centers of Tambralinga (O’Connor 1986d: 134).

H. G. Quaritch Wales visited Nakhon Si Thammarat several times and one of his visits was to the Sichon neighborhood in 1974 where he reported a site at Tambon Thaiburi, Thasala district (1976: 57). He found two Vishnu figures and a mound of bricks with an adjoining tank. The place was an island in the padifields, known to villagers as Koh Phra Narai (Narayana), measuring about forty by a hundred yards. He described the Vishnu statues as belonging to Dupont’s Group C (1976: 57) which can be dated to AD 650-800 (O’Connor 1972: 43). Wales believes that Vaisnavism was the
prominent belief system of Tambralinga unlike Dvaravati in Central Thailand and Korat plateau where Hinayana Buddhism was dominant (1976: 60-61).

One of the first archaeologists who had extensively surveyed early historic sites in Nakhon Si Thammarat is P. Noonsuk with the assistance of officers of the Fine Arts Department (P. Noonsuk 1984, 1996, 2001b, 2004). He reported numerous sites on the eastern part of the province, some of which were later resurveyed and excavated, such as those at Mokalan and Khao Ka, by the Fine Arts Department (Srichai 2001b, 2001c) and the Committee for Monumental Development at Nakhon Si Thammarat (from now on referred to it as CMDNST) (CMDNST 1985).

In this thesis, some selected sites in this period will be presented and mapped with the assistance of GIS in order to demonstrate distribution patterns and spatial relationships among them.

1. Methodology

The thesis focuses fifty-three sites in the early historic period in Nakhon Si Thammarat as samples for studying archeological characteristics and site distribution during this period. All of these sites are located in five districts on the coastal plains of the province including, from north to south, Sichon, Thasala, Phrom Kiri, Chulaporn, and Muang. The distribution of the sites together totals approximately 1,400 km². The archaeological data for each site have been collected during my own archaeological surveys in 2004, together with reviews of previous site reports. The coordinate of each site is in UTM/UPS system of zone 47 using the Indian-Thai datum, and was acquired using the handheld GPS (Global Positioning System) unit, version Garmin Etrex, with
twelve parallel channel GPS receiver and the accuracy of up to fifteen meters. These coordinates were then mapped into base maps using the ArcView 3.1 program in order to demonstrate the positions and distributions of the sites in relation to each other and other geographical features such as rivers, mountains, sand dunes, and coastlines (Figure 48). Unfortunately, the parameters of some sites cannot be obtained due to the absence of moats around the sites and the dense vegetation. This thesis, therefore, will emphasize only the coordinates of the shrines in the settlements that are evident in the landscape.

2. The Distribution of Early Historic Sites

Samples from the early historic sites at Nakhon Si Thammarat will be divided into five groups on the basis of their relationship to the river systems and sand dunes believed to be major routes of connections. In each group, one important site will be described in greater details to focus on the archaeological features of the group. Although each site in the group is not identical to each other, they are quite similar. These groups include the areas of, from north to south, (1) Tha Khwai, (2) Tha Chieo - Tha Thon, (3) Tha Lat, and (4) Maying Rivers, and (5) Haad Sai Keao sand dune as follows (Table 9) (Figure 48).
Table 9: Archaeological Sites in the Early Historic Period (c. AD 500 - 1000) in Nakhon Si Thammarat Referred in the Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name (Figures)</th>
<th>Site Function (District)</th>
<th>Coordinate (Year)</th>
<th>Excavators</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ban Tha Khwai 1 (Figure 53)</td>
<td>Shrine and Residential</td>
<td>E591806 N988189</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>CMDNST** 1985: 41; P. Noonsuk 2004a: 78</td>
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<td>Coordinates</td>
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<td>N942128</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Haad Sai Keao Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Phra Derm</td>
<td>Shrine and Residential</td>
<td>E606710</td>
<td>N929698</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Phra Nakhon</td>
<td>Shrine and Residential</td>
<td>E606589</td>
<td>N929705</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Chai Khlong</td>
<td>Shrine and Residential</td>
<td>E606444</td>
<td>N929615</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Than Phra Syom</td>
<td>Shrine and Residential</td>
<td>E606533</td>
<td>N930033</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hor Phra Isuan</td>
<td>Shrine and Residential</td>
<td>E606442</td>
<td>N931029</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hor Phra Narai</td>
<td>Shrine and Residential</td>
<td>E606468</td>
<td>N931031</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Chandraram</td>
<td>Shrine and Residential</td>
<td>E606233</td>
<td>N933189</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Tha Wang</td>
<td>Shrine and Residential</td>
<td>E606169</td>
<td>N933244</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Tha Teen</td>
<td>Shrine and Residential</td>
<td>E606095</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Table 10: Sites along the Tha Khwai River

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Description</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Address 1</th>
<th>Address 2</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wat Suan Luang</td>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>E606935</td>
<td>N928414</td>
<td>P. Noonsuk 2004a: 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Petjarik 1</td>
<td>Shrine</td>
<td>E606990</td>
<td>N928116</td>
<td>P. Noonsuk 2004a: 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Petjarik 2</td>
<td>Shrine</td>
<td>E606914</td>
<td>N928065</td>
<td>P. Noonsuk 2004a: 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Petjarik (east)</td>
<td>Shrine</td>
<td>E607107</td>
<td>N928039</td>
<td>P. Noonsuk 2004a: 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Kochan</td>
<td>Shrine</td>
<td>E608311</td>
<td>N922829</td>
<td>P. Noonsuk 2004a: 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surua Kochan</td>
<td>Shrine</td>
<td>E608142</td>
<td>N922734</td>
<td>P. Noonsuk 2004a: 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Phra Preng</td>
<td>Shrine</td>
<td>E602113</td>
<td>N924249</td>
<td>O'Connor 1972: 39; P. Noonsuk 2004a: 51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*FAD = Fine Arts Department
**CMDNST = Committee for Monumental Development at Nakhon Si Thammarat

**a. The Group of the Tha Khwai River:** This group is situated along the Tha Khwai River and its tributaries that flows from the Nakhon Si Thammarat range eastward and reach the Gulf of Siam at the area call Pak Nam Sichon or the river mouth of Sichon.

There are five sites in this group on the coastal plain of Sichon district (Table 10) (Figure 52).
Table 10: Selected Brahmanical Images in the Tha Khwai Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Number of Lingas (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Yonis (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Vishnu Images (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Other Images (Reference)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tha Khwai 1</td>
<td>1 (c. 7\textsuperscript{th} - 8\textsuperscript{th} cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 79) (Figure 55)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gold Reliefs with auspicious symbols (c. 8\textsuperscript{th} - 9\textsuperscript{th} cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 79; Srichai 2001c: 182) (Figure 56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tha Khwai 2</td>
<td>1 (c. 6\textsuperscript{th} - 8\textsuperscript{th} cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 80) (Figure 57)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tha Khwai 3</td>
<td>1 (c. 6\textsuperscript{th} - 8\textsuperscript{th} cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 81)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Teen</td>
<td>1 (c. 6\textsuperscript{th} - 8\textsuperscript{th} cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 81)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Sai Sap</td>
<td>1 (c. 6\textsuperscript{th} - 8\textsuperscript{th} cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 81) (Figure 58)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The plans of some sites were preliminarily made by the CMDNST in 1985. The most important site in this group is Ban Tha Khwai No. 1.

Ban Tha Khwai No. 1: This site located in the area of the house of Siri Na Nakhon is around 4,047 m² and contains one big mound 30 meters wide (CMDNST 1985: plan 26; P. Noonsuk 2004a: 78) (Figure 53). The mound is probably one of the brick ruins of an early historical structure found at the site. There are bricks, stone fragments of thresholds and doorframes, and earthen pottery sherds scattered at the site, suggesting that the area around the shrine was also used for human habitations. One yoni was found intact on the mound. The yoni is 93 centimeters high and 97.50 centimeters wide. The style of this yoni is similar to that found at the Khao Ka site (to be presented later) and can be stylistically dated to the seventh to eighth centuries AD (Figure 55) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 79).

In sum, the sites in the group of the Tha Khwai River can be preliminarily dated to the second half of the first millennium AD. Brahmanism seems to be the major religion of the group, as it is of the other groups in this period. Tentatively, it appears that the unique style of doorframes and thresholds found at the sites are reminiscent of Brahmanical architecture (Figure 59). We do not see these kinds of architectural features in the Buddhist temples of this period. Therefore, we may assume that the style of doorframes and thresholds presented thus far in the figures belongs to Brahmanical art. This style is seen in all groups of early historic sites that will be subsequently discussed.

Although the archaeological sites in this group are evidently related to Brahmanical shrines, their functions were not limited to ritual activities since we found evidence of mundane activities around the sites as well such as pottery sherds and
It can be hypothesized that the small Brahmanical shrines were surrounded by communities which supported them and their ritual affairs. These Brahmanical communities may have the shrines as the communal center which performed communal rituals for the sake of the communities.

Each site in this group was connected to one another using the Tha Khwai River and its tributaries. These waterways and land paths can be employed as the channels for communications and interactions between this group, neighboring groups, and the hinterland communities. P. Noonsuk assumes that the center of this group was probably the site of Tha Khwai No. 1 since this site provides the most elaborated yoni that may suggest its distinctive status (2004: 78-79).

b. The Group of the Tha Chieo - Tha Thon Rivers: This group has seventeen sites located in the Tha Thon and Tha Chieo valleys of Sichon district (Figure 60). These relatively short rivers run in a west-east direction from the Nakhon Si Thammarat range to the Gulf of Siam around Ban Thepa, Ban Bang Di, Ban Bang Mai Liam, and Ban Sao Phao. The sites in this group include as follows (Table 11).
Table 11: Selected Brahmanical Images in the Tha Chieo-Tha Thon Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Number of Lingas (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Yonis (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Vishnu Images (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Other Gods’ Images (Reference)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khao Ka</td>
<td>1 (linga parvata) (no later than the 6th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 68-69; Srichai 2001c: 175) (Figure 63)</td>
<td>1 (c. late 5th - 6th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 34; Srichai 2001c: 183) (Figure 67)</td>
<td>1 (c. 5th - 6th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 68)</td>
<td>Gold Reliefs with auspicious symbols (c. 8th - 9th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 71; Srichai 2001c: 182) (Figure 56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Suon Hua Wan 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (c. 6th - 10th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 70; Srichai 2001c: 183)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Pung Kum 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Hua Ton</td>
<td>1 (c. late 5th - 7th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 76) (Figure 74)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most important site of this group is Khao Ka described below.

*Khao Ka:* This site is the southernmost of the group located on the bank of the Tha Thon River. The area of the site comprises the whole small hill of Khao Ka which is 72 meters above sea level, 850 meters long, and 300 meters wide (Srichai 2001c: 173) (Figures 61-62). The hill mainly has two peaks (north and south) and each of them has Brahmanical structures. This site was visited by Srisakara Vallibhotama and a group of students from Silpakorn University in 1966 when they identified some ruins on the south peak (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 67; Srichai 2001c: 171). The architectural ruins on the north peak were visited and cleared by P. Noonsuk and a group of students from Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat Institute during 1985 – 1992 (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 67). During 1987 to 1993, this site was excavated by the Fine Arts Department (Srichai 2001c: 171).

The north peak is the nearest one to the Tha Thon River which passes the hill on the northwestern side. This peak was modified with terraces for building Brahmanical structures and holding ritual performances. The stones were cut and arranged around the top of the hill to support the dirt that was filled into the area to make the hilltop flat. At the center of the north hilltop, we found a *linga parvata* 2.28 meters high like the one at Khao Srivijaya on the Bay of Bandon and the one at Khao Kuha at Satingpra Peninsula mentioned above (Figure 63) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 68-69; Srichai 2001c: 175). The
natural rocks around the *linga parvata* were carved as water channels to lead sacred water from the lingam worship to the cliff on the west side of the hill where the water flowed to the Tha Thon River (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 68-69; Srichai 2001c: 175). The holy water which is associated with the goddess Ganges would make the Tha Thon River its tributary, and its valleys sacred and fertile (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 204). The materialization of water belief, which is one of the prominent characteristics of Tambralinga is therefore clearly demonstrated at this site. One tank has been found between the north and south peaks.

The south peak of Khao Ka hill contains four monuments and three tanks. Monument No. 1 is a large terrace (24 x 60 meters) surrounded by low walls assumed to be a place for the gathering of people who came to worship Siva (Figure 64) (Srichai 2001c: 176). There are a number of earthen sherds and one grinding stone discovered there (Srichai 2001c: 178). Some stone pillar bases found in this monument suggest that there were once wooden structures on the hilltop. Between this monument and monument No. 2, another tank was identified. Monument No. 2 is around 57 meters south of monument No. 1 (Figure 65). This monument is believed to be principal shrine of the site. It is a two-level shrine in which the surrounding brick terrace (26 x 36 meters) supports the body of the top shrine which is 17 meters wide (Jacq-Hergoulac’h 2002: 135; Srichai 2001c: 178). The shrine seems to be of mixed construction, half in hard materials for the foundation, and half in perishable materials, since we found a number of stone pillar bases. This style of architecture is also found in structures at South Kedah and Koh Ko Khao on the west coast of the peninsula. Jacq-Hergoulac’h believes that this indicates an architectural syncretism between the Indian and Malay
traditions (2002: 136). Yoni, soma sutras (or stone water channels), doorframes, and thresholds are also discovered at the monument (Figure 66-67). South of monument No. 2, there are two structures on the ridge of the hill that contains yonis and lingas as well.

There is another tank south of monument No. 2. Generally, the tanks on the hilltop of Khao Kha were made by cutting and digging the natural rocks of the hill. The rocks from the process of making these tanks may also have been used for the construction of the monuments. This technique is found at the hilltop of Phnom Borei at the lower Mekong region in Cambodia as well.

The site of Khoa Ka is probably the symbolic center of the area of the Tha Chieo and Tha Thon valleys as well attested by its size and complexity. The site may have been occupied before the introduction of Brahmanism since polished stone tools on the northwestern foothills close to the Tha Thon River were found, although these tools may have been used in the early historic communities as well.

In sum, the Tha Chieo – Tha Thon Group is one of the largest groups of settlements in Nakhon Si Thammarat in the early historic period. It may represent one of the biggest mandalas in Tambralinga. The sites in the group were apparently connected to one another via the river systems in which some tributaries are now infilled. In the early historic period, the river systems were most likely the major channel of communication between the different communities located both on the coastal plains and in the mountain areas.

The center of this group or mandala was probably the site of Khao Ka as attested by its distinctive geography and complexity. Therefore, the location of the center of a mandala did not have to be necessarily at the geographic or spatial center of the mandala;
rather, it was the conceptual center. Khao Ka is located at the southern part of the group, not at its physical center. The Khao Ka case suggests that the socio-political center of a mandala may be also its symbolic center; that is it represents Mount Meru, the center of the Brahmanical and Buddhist universe. We shall discuss this topic in greater detail in the following section.

It seems that the shrines were closely associated with the tanks since almost all sites presented thus far in this group have tanks. For the sites that contain no tanks, it is possible that they had been modified enough that we cannot identify them today. The tanks related to brick mounds were sometimes dug in the location of infilled rivers where the underground water was easier obtain (CMDNST 1985: 6-53). The tanks and river systems associated with Brahmanical water beliefs were likely one of the most important parts of the religious, social, and economic life of Tambralinga.

c. The Group of the Tha Lat River: This group is located in the Tha Lat valley of the Tha Lat River and its tributaries running from Khao Sai and Khao Cha Om mountains in the Nakhon Si Thammarat ranges, to merge with the Hin River and then to the Gulf of Siam at the area of Ban Pak Nam Pak Duat (Figure 82). The Tha Lat River is also connected to the Klai River through its small tributaries. The Klai River is a large and long river that flows from the deep forest of the Nakhon Si Thammarat range to the Gulf of Siam at Ban Bang Po. The group is in Thasala district close to the south border of Sichon district. There are three sites in this group as shown in the following table (Table 12).
Table 12: Selected Brahmanical Images in the Tha Lat Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Number of Lingas (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Yonis (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Vishnu Images (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Other Gods’ Images (Reference)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ban Tung Pun 1</td>
<td>1 (c. 6th - 7th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 63)</td>
<td>1 (c. 6th - 7th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 63)</td>
<td>1 (Ganesa) (c. early 6th - mid-6th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 63)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Tung Pun 2</td>
<td>1 (c. 6th - 7th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 65)</td>
<td>1 (c. 6th - 7th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 63)</td>
<td>1 (Ganesa) (c. early 6th - mid-6th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 63)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most important site of the Tha Lat Group is Ban Tung Pun No. 1 presented below.

*Ban Tung Pun No. 1*: The site has a big brick mound and two tanks on the southern and western sides of the mound. Several artifacts have been discovered at the site including a linga and a yoni (100 x 100 centimeters) dated to the sixth to seventh centuries AD, and a Ganesa figure dated to the early sixth to the mid-sixth centuries AD (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 63).

In sum, the sites belonging to this relatively small group are located along the Tha Lat River, a tributary of the Hin River that contains several tributaries and can be used as passage ways for communication and interaction among different communities in the area.
**d. The Group of the Maving River:** This group is located in the Maving valley that is dominated by the Maving River and its tributaries comprising, but not limited to, the Kro, Mokalan, Ai Khieo, Nok Tha, and Plai Uan Rivers (Figure 83). The river system of the Maving River is also connected to that of the Tha Phae River immediate north of the modern city of Nakhon Si Thammarat. This group contains eleven sites shown in the following table (Table 13).

Table 13: Selected Brahmanical Images in the Maying Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Number of Lingas (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Yonis (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Vishnu Gods' Images (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Other Images (Reference)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mokalan</td>
<td>2 (c. late 5th - 6th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 53) (Figure 87)</td>
<td>2 (c. late 5th - 6th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 53) (Figure 88)</td>
<td>1 (c. 5th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 62; P. Noonsuk and W. Noonsuk 2003: 103) (Figure 35)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Ta Naen</td>
<td>1 (c. 6th - 8th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 62)</td>
<td>1 (c. late 5th - 6th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 60)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Period</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Figure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sra Hoi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Inkiri</td>
<td>1 (c. late 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; - 8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; cent. AD)</td>
<td>(P. Noonsuk 2004a: 58)</td>
<td>Figure 91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nong Kong</td>
<td>1 (c. late 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; - 8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; cent. AD)</td>
<td>(P. Noonsuk 2004a: 58)</td>
<td>Figure 92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Yothadham</td>
<td>1 (c. late 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; - 8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; cent. AD)</td>
<td>(P. Noonsuk 2004a: 58)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Khao Pun</td>
<td>1 (c. late 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; cent. AD)</td>
<td>(P. Noonsuk 2004a: 55)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Hua Tung</td>
<td>1 (c. late 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; - 6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; cent. AD)</td>
<td>(P. Noonsuk 2004a: 58)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most significant site in this group is Mokalan described as follow.
**Mokalan:** This site is situated on a sand dune close to the Mokalan River in the area of the modern Buddhist temple of the same name. It is the largest and most complex site in the group which may have acted as the center of the group (Figure 84). It was studied by a group of scholars in the Thai-British Expedition of 1958 when H. H. F. Loofs, a scholar of the group, noticed that an alignment 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 eleventh to twelfth centuries AD (Figure 85) (Loofs 1977 cited in P. Noonsuk 2000: 28 and Srichai 2001b: 146).

However, it appears that the date Loofs provided for the pillars is rather later than the monuments and other artifact assemblages found at the site. The style of the decorations on the pillars was reexamined by P. Noonsuk who compared it to the designs in Indian Pallava and Khmer Banteay Srei Arts, which can be dated to the seventh to eighth centuries AD (P. Noonsuk 2000: 31). Besides the stone pillars, which was likely to have been decoration doorframes covering the structural doorframes of the shrines, we also found a number of stone pillar bases, doorframes, and thresholds in the site that resemble those found at the other sites belonging to early historic period (Figure 89).

The site of Mokalan offers a variety of archaeological evidence that can be dated to the early historic period. Several yonis (c. fifth to sixth centuries AD) and soma sutras are found at the site (Figure 88) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 53). The monuments at the site had been excavated by the Fine Arts Department during 1990 – 1993 (P. Noonsuk 2000: 31). There are three monuments (Nos. 1, 2, and 3) connected in an east-west direction and another one (No. 4) attached to the biggest monument of No. 3 at the northern side. A big tank (20 x10 meters) located in the southeast of the main monuments is now infilled.
The excavations of the monuments demonstrate that the brick structures had been built on top of old structures and some stone parts, such as doorframes, of the old ones were reused as foundation stones for the subsequent structures (Figure 86) (P. Noonsuk 2000: 39; Srichai 2001b: 148). Two lingas and a yoni stylistically dated between the fifth and sixth centuries AD was found during the excavations as well (figure 74) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 53, 2000: 35; Srichai 2001b: 152). In addition to Brahmanical items and structural parts, this site also had some Buddha images stylistically dated between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Srichai 2001b: 153). The site was probably used as a Buddhist temple after the decline of Brahmanism in this area. Ceramics found at the site include earthen ware with shoulders, kendi, Chinese Sung porcelain, and Sukhothai ware dated between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries AD (P. Noonsuk 2000: 35; Srichai 2001b: 153).

Around 1 kilometer northeast of the site of Mokalan, it is the Tung Nam Kem site that is believed to be a trading center closely associated with the Mokalan site. The site of Tung Nam Kem yields 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 90) (Wicks 1992: 221). It is the largest recorded discovery of Rising Sun coins in which Wicks calls Class A in Southeast Asia (Wicks 1992: 221). These types of coins are distributed over a vast area of Southeast Asia, comprising 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, the coin type is believed to have been originated in upper Burma (Wicks 1992:
The precise date of the coins has not been explicitly proposed, but they were probably used in the first millennium AD, perhaps even prior to the sixth century AD (Hudson 2004: 124). The site of Mokalan may possibly demonstrate the existence of a large community (or communities) that had both economic space (markets) and religious areas (shrines). They had connections not only with other overseas polities, such as upper Burma and other sites in mainland Southeast Asia, but also with other local communities through the river systems and probably land paths as well. The coins found at the site also suggest that the community of Mokalan may have a relatively sophisticated monetary system and was active in long-distance trade network.

In sum, this group of settlements includes the vast area of the Maying river system and its tributaries. This network of waterways facilitated the connection and the flow of cultures and information between and among the sites within it. The sites in the foothill area, therefore, can communicate and interact with the sites along the rivers and the sites on the coast. The foothill settlements, such as the sites of Wat Hua Tung and Wat Khao Pun, may have acted as intermediaries between the hinterland groups and the coastal communities in terms of exchange activities and social interactions.

e. The Group of the Haad Sai Keao Sand Dune: This group is located on the Haad Sai Keao sand dune, a sacred place of Nakhon Si Thammarat mentioned in several chronicles, such as the chronicle of Nakhon Si Thammarat or Tamnan Muang Nakhon and the chronicle of the Great Stupa of Nakhon Si Thammarat or Tamnan Phra Dhat Nakhon (Wyatt 1975). The name Haad Sai Keao literarily means Crystal Sand Beach. It refers to the area of the ancient city of Nakhon Si Thammarat situated on the sand dune.
This sand dune is part of Nakhon Si Thammarat Sand Dune that runs from Khanom, Sichon, Thasala, to Muang districts. The Haad Sai Keao sand dune is, therefore, a part of the sand dune system on which the sites of Mokalan and Wat Ta Naen are located. The northern border of the Haad Sai Keao sand dune is the Tha Phae River and the southern border is the Tha Rua River (Figure 93). This sand dune is around 19 kilometers long and 600 – 700 meters wide through which a number of rivers and streams pass (Figure 47).

There are fifteen sites located on the sand dune and one site (Wat Phra Preng) positioned west of the sand dune on the Yat River that flows to the sand dune as well. The fifteen sites on the sand dune constitute a small area of only 7.2956 km². It shows the density of sites per area unit. Unfortunately, the sites in this group are heavily disturbed by the growing city of Nakhon Si Thammarat. Therefore, much archeological evidence, such as mounds and tanks as well as architectural parts of ancient shrines, have been destroyed through time (Figure 94). The sites in this group are presented as follows (Table 14).

Table 14: Selected Brahmanical Images in the Haad Sai Keao Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Number of Lingas (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Yonis (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Vishnu Images (Reference)</th>
<th>Number of Other Gods’ Images (Reference)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wat Phra Derm</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (c. late 5th - 8th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 23)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Than Phra Syom</td>
<td>1 (c. 6th - 8th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk)</td>
<td>2 (c. 6th - 8th cent. AD) (P. Noonsuk)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Name</td>
<td>Lining Composition</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hor Phra Isuan</td>
<td>Linga attached</td>
<td>(c. 5th - 6th cent. AD)</td>
<td>(Lajonquière 1912; O'Connor 1986f: 160-162; P. Noonsuk 2004a: 37)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hor Phra Narai</td>
<td></td>
<td>(c. 5th cent. AD)</td>
<td>(O'Connor 1972: 39)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Chandraram</td>
<td></td>
<td>(c. 6th - 8th cent. AD)</td>
<td>(P. Noonsuk 2004a: 39)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Tha Teen</td>
<td></td>
<td>(c. late 5th - 8th cent. AD)</td>
<td>(P. Noonsuk 2004a: 41)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Suan Luang</td>
<td></td>
<td>(c. late 5th - 8th cent. AD)</td>
<td>(P. Noonsuk 2004a: 42)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wat Petjarik 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wat Petjarik (east)

(c. 6th - 8th cent. AD)
(P. Noonsuk 2004a: 42)

1
(c. 6th - 8th cent. AD)
(P. Noonsuk 2004a: 44)

Ban Kochan

Suruao Kochan
1
(c. 5th - 8th cent. AD)
(P. Noonsuk 2004a: 44)

Wat Phra Preng

The center of this group is the site of Wat Phra Derm which is described below.

*Wat Phra Derm:* This site is a deserted temple in the area of the present Phra Maha Dhat temple at the center of modern Nakhon Si Thammarat city (Figure 95-96). The mound of a Saivaite shrine was modified subsequently to be a Buddha footprint vihara. There are stone pillar bases, threshold and granite doorframes with designs that are similar to those at Mokalan. Earthen pottery sherds are scattered throughout and around the site. It is this site that provides inscription No. 28, engraved in Palava script in the Sanskrit language paleographically dated to c. the fifth century AD. It mentions
Tambralingeshvra as noted above. Besides inscription No. 28, this site may have been the source of inscription No. 29 and a yoni dated stylistically between the fifth and eighth centuries AD preserved in the museum of Phra Maha Dhat temple (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 23). Inscription No. 29 is inscribed in Tamil script and Tamil language which Coedès translates and paleographically dates to the ninth century AD (Coedès 1961: 21-40, 59-60). This inscription refers to the law of the polity in which any person who harmed the water of the Ganges (water), red cows, and one’s mother would be executed, by orders of Dharmmasenapati (perhaps the minister of law). On the basis of its location and inscriptions, this site is therefore likely to be the symbolic and political center of the Tambralinga mandala.

The group of communities in the Haad Sai Keao area seems to have interacted with overseas sites for a long period of time, from the late centuries BC to the early centuries of the second millennium AD, for we found Dong Son style bronze drums at the site of Ket Kay located around 2 kilometers southeast of Ban Kochan on the bank of the Chung Hun River, a tributary of the Tha Rua River. The communities in the Tha Rua valley provided a variety of Chinese ceramics including those of Tang Dynasty perhaps of the ninth century as well (Bronson 1996: 189; P. Noonsuk 1996: 325).

In sum, on the basis of evidence presented above, we may assume that the group of the Haad Sai Keao sites seems to be the heartland of Tambralinga. It contains numerous Brahmanical sites and inscriptions. In one of the latter, the name Tambralinga is evidently mentioned. The communities in this mandala were connected to each other by sand dunes and waterways to communicate with other mandalas and hinterland groups as well.
IV. Interpretation and Discussion

We have seen that the area of Nakhon Si Thammarat has been occupied by human society since the prehistoric period. During the protohistoric period (c. 500 BC to 500 AD) the societies in the area appeared to have participated in long-distance exchange networks as witnessed by the material evidence. The fifth century AD seems to be period of transition to the history of the area, where are found the early development of Indic writings systems and religions. Thereafter, around the fifth to tenth centuries AD, there is evidence of Brahmanical communities settled along the rivers and throughout the coastal plain including the foothill areas of Nakhon Si Thammarat.

The development of the early polities in Nakhon Si Thammarat associated with overseas societies seems to have begun in the protohistoric period, much like other early polities in Peninsular Siam (Bellina and Glover 2004: 72-72; Manguin 2004: 283-284; Wheatley 1975: 238). These polities appear to have developed along both exclusionary and corporate patterns of organization (Blanton et al. 1996). However, the precise nature of the socio-political organization of Nakhon Si Thammarat in the protohistoric period is still vague and needs more archeological evidence.

A. The Early Mandala of Tambralinga (c. fifth to tenth centuries AD)

Around the beginning of the second half of the first millennium AD, we see organizational changes and an increasing number of Brahmanical communities appearing in groups organized on the coast of Nakhon Si Thammarat. These groups of communities suggest the emergence of a mandala structure as proposed by Wolters (1999). The concept of the mandala was later adopted by P. Noonsuk to apply to this
area, emphasizing a Brahmanical conceptual system as its foundation (2001b). He postulates that each community in this area in the early historic period settled around and supported its Brahmanical shrine that established its sacred geography (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 195). He bases his hypothesis on the concept of sacred geographies of Brahmanical shrines in India where they call them "Tirthas" meaning the place to come across or the place for salvation (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 195). Tirthas are sacred geographies and can be found in, for example, mountains, banks of rivers, high areas, sand dunes, and even large trees (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 195). Tirthas that are the most sacred in which shrines are built, are not only the place for people to pass across from their world to heaven but also the place where Brahmanical gods present themselves as avatars to the world. These sacred sites, therefore, are the links or the gates between heaven and earth (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 196).

These shrines located in Tirthas did not exist in isolation since the Brahmanical mandala concept requires them to have a center with surrounding peripheries in order to complete the sacred cosmological structure, a sacred circle (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 229). As the result, a mandala consists of several communities in which each of them had its shrine at the center. P. Noonsuk believes that, in a mandala, the shrine of the most sacred site would be the center of the whole mandala, and several mandalas would constitute a supra-mandala (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 241). To decide which place in the group of mandalas of Tambralinga was the center, he takes into account the epigraphic record of the inscriptions found in Nakhon Si Thammarat. He then finds that the shrine of Wat Phra Derm was probably the center of the mandala of Tambralinga since inscription No. 28 apparently mentions the name of the Siva of Tambralinga (or the Lord of
Tambralinga) (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 241). It is important to note that no inscription found at other groups mentioned above, except the Haad Sai Keao Group. Besides the epigraphic record, P. Noonsuk also considers the importance of the Brahmanical concept of the sacred Ganges, making the Haad Sai Keao sand dune the most sacred place since this sand dune is surrounded by a number of rivers representing the sacred Ganges and its tributaries flowing from the mountain which is also a sacred Tirtha (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 23). The area of Haad Sai Keao was not only the center of Tambralinga in the early historic period, but also the center of Nakhon Si Thammarat that developed from Tambralinga in the thirteen centuries AD (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 406).

Each group of settlements presented in this thesis is perceived as one mandala that made up the supra-mandala of Tambralinga. In the other words, the mandala of Tambralinga contained the mandalas of Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo – Tha Thon, Tha Lat, and Maying River, and the Haad Sai Keao sand dune. Each mandala mentioned above had its own connection network based on waterways and land paths. These communities had never existed in isolation and were always connected. This network tied communities in the mandala together and facilitated the interaction and the circulation of resources between them. The network also supported the management of the mandala since it allowed the center of the mandala and other communities within it to communicate with each other and involve them in the socio-political and economic systems of the mandala. This unified the mandala with its center as symbolic head which had authority to decide political concerns on behalf of the whole mandala as a single entity.

In the mandalas of Tha Khwai and Tha Lat Rivers, we cannot determine their centers any degree of certainty, but in the mandalas of the Tha Chieo – Tha Thon and
Maying Rivers and the Haad Sai Keao sand dune, the center of each mandala is rather evident. The site of Khao Ka is distinct from other sites in the mandala of the Tha Chieo – Tha Thon since it is the largest site embracing the whole mountain and has relatively more complex composition. It was likely the religio-political center of its mandala. In the mandala of the Maying River, it appears that the site of Mokalan, with its notable monumental complexity was the center. In the vicinity of this site, there is the site of Tung Nam Kem which yielded the largest find of the Rising Sun variety of silver coins in Southeast Asia. Thus, the two sites may have together formed the center; one important economically, and the other religiously. In the Haad Sai Keao mandala, two important inscriptions make the site of Wat Phra Derm distinct from others. Inscription No. 28 mentions the Siva of Tambralinga, while inscription No. 29, the laws of the mandala, suggests that this site was probably not only the center of the Haad Sai Keao mandala, but also the supreme center of Tambralinga.

The five mandalas of Tambralinga were connected to one another by networks of river systems and sand dunes, all bearing cultural and organizational similarities. There were connection networks among them that allowed them to communicate and interact with each other as well as to circulate resources. These networks were the basis of the development of the supra-mandala polity. All five mandalas were integrated into a single political entity in which the new identity emerged as the mandala of Tambralinga. They interacted with other polities as a single political unit with a single identity as witnessed in the foreign records that regard it as Tambralinga.

Theoretically, the mandala of Tambralinga, of course, could have waxed and waned and its center could have shifted. However, on the basis of epigraphic and
archeological evidence, it seems that the center of the Tambralinga mandala did not change, at least after the early historic period that began around the fifth century AD. As previously mentioned, there is no inscription of the early historic period found at the other four mandalas other than the mandala of Haad Sai Keao. This seems to suggest that it was always the symbolic and political center located at the site of Wat Phra Derm. Inscription No. 28 of the Wat Phra Derm site make it clear when it refers to the Siva of Tambralinga (or the Lord of Tambralinga), apparently, the god-king of the mandala of Tambralinga.

The area of Wat Phra Derm continued to be the center of Nakhon Si Thammarat as well when it emerged in the thirteenth century AD, since it is the place of the Great Stupa of Nakhon Si Thammarat (Figure 82). This stupa was probably built in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries AD and considered to be the symbolic center of Nakhon Si Thammarat in several chronicles written around the mid second millennium AD (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 408). It has always the most sacred place in Nakhon Si Thammarat, indeed in all of Southern Thailand until today. All this demonstrates that the Haad Sai Keao sand dune, especially in the area of Wat Phra Derm, has always been the religio-political center in the history of Nakhon Si Thammarat.

The mandala of Tambralinga was strongly associated with Saivism. The inscriptions and archaeological record found at all the sites presented above demonstrate this. This local Saivaite tradition was a shared culture among the mandalas. We have seen, among them, the similarities in the belief system, artistic conventions, and the mandala structure according to the Saivaite cosmology. This religion cannot be separated from the socio-political and economic life of the people of the mandala. In order to
understand the importance of Saivism in Tambralinga, we shall first examine the early historical inscriptions found in Nakhon Si Thammarat, besides inscription No. 28 and No. 29.

First, the inscription of Hup Khao Chong Koy, one of the most ancient inscriptions found in Nakhon Si Thammarat (and in Thailand), clearly shows that Saivism was established at Tambralinga since the fifth century AD. It praises the greatness of Siva who is the lord of forests and the god of the gods, and declares that the persons who worship Siva will be blessed with prosperity (Tipayakesara and Keaoklay 1980: 89-93).

Second, inscription No. 27, engraved in Palava script and the Sanskrit language paleographically dated to the sixth century AD, found at Wat Maheyong on the Haad Sai Keao sand dune was translated by Coedès (1986: 44-47). It mentions the coexistence of Buddhism and Saivism in the mandala. The Saivaite religion in this mandala in the period was led by the Brahman party of Agastya who once introduced Saivism to South India and afterward was transformed into one of Siva’s avatars, the Siva Maha Guru (P. Noonsuk 2001b: 180).

These Saivaite inscriptions demonstrate that Saivism was established in Tambralinga at least since the fifth century AD if the dating is correct. In this early century, the king of Tambralinga was probably identified with Siva through the Saivaite ceremony. It is the institutionalization of Siva-king or sacral kingship of the mandala as witnessed in inscription No. 28. The party of Brahmins of Tambralinga was plausibly associated with the South Indian Saivaite institution originated by Agastya. The Saivaite Brahmans were also important political actors in the process and management of the
mandala of Tambralinga since the inscription No. 29 of the ninth century AD states that the law in this mandala was established by Dharmmasenapati who clearly is also a Brahman (Coedès 1961: 21-40, 59-60).

A large number of lingas, yonis, and Saivaite shrines were discovered throughout the studied area. The Saivaite images, related architecture and inscriptions, all seem to dominate those of Vaisnavism which mainly includes only Vishnu images from the late fifth century AD. Vishnu may, therefore, be an earlier, but subsequently, a secondary god in Tambralinga. Paul Lavy (2003), based on a pre-Angkorian case, suggests that the popularity of god images and lingas was linked to patterns of political authority and Vishnu images and Siva lingas embodied different conceptions of leadership. Vishnu was perceived as protector, while Siva as conqueror. The Southeast Asian rulers employed lingas to claim their possession of the soil or their territorial control (Levy 2003: 26). In pre-Angkorian Cambodia, there is evidence of attempts by Khmer rulers to consolidated political authority by employing the Harihara image, an integration of both Siva and Vishnu principles. Although the mandala of Tambralinga was not the same, since there is no Harihara image in the isthmian region and Vishnu seems to be a secondary god of the mandala, the Siva-king of Tambralinga, like the Saivaite Khmer king, probably utilized lingas to symbolize his control over his mandala.

Another significant aspect of Saivism in Tambralinga is the belief of Ganges. This belief is represented not only by the tanks associated with Saivaite shrines but also in inscriptions. Inscription No. 29 refers to the law of the mandala in which any person who harmed the water of the Ganges, red cows, and one's mother would be executed. This suggests that the water (the sacred Ganges) was valued and protected by the law of
the mandala. The goddess Ganga is closely related to Siva since she is one of his wives and flows to the earth through his hair and from the sacred mountain which is his seat (Flood 1996: 151). One of the most ancient manifestations of this mythology in Southeast Asia is represented at the site of Khao Ka, around the fifth century AD, where the sacred waters from Siva worship at the mountain-linga flowed to the Tha Thon River situated below, making the whole river system sacred and the whole valley fertile. A similar representation of this Saivaite belief in the sacredness of water is also found at the waterfall of Kbal Spean, a source of the Siem Reap River that flows to Angkor, in which thousands of small lingas were carved on the floor of the waterfall perhaps around the eleventh century AD (Sach 2001: 179). Worship of the Ganges exists not only in India, but also in Brahmanical Bali, an island in maritime Southeast Asia, in which such worship is still practiced, in both household and community levels for the fertility of the rice fields (Lansing 1995: 75-87). It thus seems that the beliefs of Saivism are found not only in the political organization of Tambralinga but also in the socio-economic life of the people in the mandala.

Although we have, thus far, seen the development of the mandala of Tambralinga to be closely associated with Saivism, there is evidence of Buddhism in this mandala in the early historic period as well. Inscription No. 27 mentions the coexistence of Saivism and Buddhism in Tambralinga. It suggests that the people of this mandala also honored Buddhism. There is evidence of Buddhism in several sites in the area of Nakhon Si Thammarat (P. Noonsuk 2001a: 222-316, Srichai 2001c: 157), even on the Haad Sai Keao sand dune which is the center of Tambralinga. Two so-called Dvaravati-style Buddha images of the sixth to seventh centuries AD have been found in the area of Phra
Maha Dhat temple. It is not surprising to find Buddhism and Brahmanism coexisting in a single polity since that integration can be found in India and other polities throughout Southeast Asia. Skilling reexamines the Dvaravati kingdom, heretofore considered to be a Buddhist Kingdom by noting the presence of Brahmanical images and (therefore) shrines in the Dvaravati area in central Thailand (2003: 105). People clearly made offerings or requested ritual performances from both Brahmans and Buddhist monks according to their inclinations and needs (Skilling: 2003: 105). This phenomenon also happened in India, the birthplace of Brahmanism itself where we have evidence of multiple religions in Saivaite shrines (Lahiri and Bacus 2004: 321).

It may appear that the lord of Tambralinga had a monolithic power as the institutionalization of the god-king or sacral kingship suggests. However, in fact, the power of Siva-king was probably shared by administrative subordinates and even his own kinship groups. For example, inscription No. 29 tells us that the Brahmin Dharmmasenapati had administrative authority to establish certain laws for the mandala. Yet, the inscription does not mention the god-king. It is possible therefore that the political management of Tambralinga was handled by a group of subordinate officials in which Brahmans played important roles. The god-king may have been the supreme symbolic ruler, but his political power was shared by his administrative and local subordinates. This kind of corporate pattern of organization was not unique to Tambralinga but can be seen in other complex polities around the world such as those in Mesopotamia and Egypt (Blanton et al. 1996: 3). We may thus hypothesize that the center of the mandala of Tambralinga in the Haad Sai Keao area may not have held absolute socio-political power over all the other mandalas in the polity, but shared it with
each mandala which was partly autonomous. However, these mandalas regarded the center of Tambralinga at the area of Wat Phra Derm as their symbolic and political center which not only performed rituals on behalf of the whole mandala but also established the uniform laws to apply to the whole mandala.

The corporate system of organization was found also at in the community level. The appearance of a number of community shrines in all the mandalas in Tambralinga and the absence of a massive royal temple suggest that the political economy of this mandala was based on corporate system in which each community had some degree of power. Around each community shrine, there were areas for the gathering of people to observe ritual performances carried out on behalf of the whole community and for its fertility and prosperity. These ceremonies aimed to promote the social solidarity and affirm the corporate system of organization (Blanton et al. 1996: 11).

However, the establishment and construction of Saivaite community shrines had always been serious affairs with a multitude of ritual operations that required precise knowledge of Brahmanism (Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002: 141). A Brahmanical community cannot prosper without properly made shrines to house god image, even though they may be only small, community shrines. It is possible, therefore, that the construction of community shrines were completed by the knowledge and support of the center of each mandala which was also the symbolic center and possessed well-educated Brahmins.

The Brahmins in Tambralinga, however, were not necessarily Indians since we have seen that Indian Brahmins who came to Peninsular Siam married the daughters of local people (Wheatley 1966: 17). Their children, thus, subsequently became Brahmins of local origin.
The establishment of community shrines, consequently, suggests mutual interdependence between and among the politico-symbolic center and local communities. The center probably help supported the construction of Saivaite community shrines in its domain as their symbolic head. When people worshiped Siva, it means that they also worshiped and supported the Siva-king and the Saivaite center. This was a win-win situation for both the center that desired to propose the significance and sacredness of Siva and the Siva-king, and the local communities that required community shrines to promote the social solidarity in their domains.

In sum, on the basis of the evidence provided above, we may hypothesize that the emergence of the mandala of Tambralinga closely associated to Saivism signifies organizational development in the early historic period of the peninsular history. There may be religious, political, and economic reasons behind the organizational development. Saivism was firmly established in Tambralinga in the fifth century AD and this religion strongly influenced the construction of the mandala structure in this polity. According to Saivism, the sacred mandala structure will offer prosperity, fertility, and sacredness to the polity, community, and even temple.

Within this structure, several polities or small mandalas were attached to each other surrounding the center to form the suppra-mandala entity under the beliefs of Saivism (in the case of Tambralinga), so that the attachment between them was strong since they spiritually connected to each other and shared the same ideology. The institutionalization of Siva-king and the establishment of laws according to Saivism supported the unity of the mandala. The Saivaite ideology, therefore, played a vital role in the formation of the mandala of Tambralinga. Although some scholars suggest that the
mandala structure is rooted in the prehistoric period (e.g., Wolters 1999: 56), we do not have sufficient historical and archaeological evidence in the peninsula to confirm this hypothesis. In the protohistoric period, we do not see groups of settlements organized in the mandala manner. Therefore, more systematic archaeological research on settlement patterns of early coastal polities is needed in order to answer the questions surrounding the organizational development in this region.

The emergent mandala structure of Tambralinga was also beneficial in political and economic terms. This structure tightened numbers of communities together and thus strengthened the alliance system as well as enhanced the politico-economic power of the polity as a whole. This makes the polity stronger in the competitive environment of maritime Southeast Asia in that a number of polities competed with one another for political and economic power. This is also the reason why the politico-symbolic center needed to include more vassals as stated by Wolters that “a successful king needed wide a space in which to flex his muscles” (1999: 30).

The aggregation of communities situated in different ecological niches in the mandala of Tambralinga also allowed the polity to have a more extensive economic base and a wider variety of resources to depend on, to circulate within the mandala, and to trade with other polities in the trading network. They can also help each other when a community or mandala experienced famine or natural devastation caused by unusual dry or rainy seasons.

**B. The Inter-Mandala Interaction**
We have seen in chapter three that there were a number of Brahmanical mandalas in maritime Southeast Asia interacting with each other in the early historic period. The interaction between them may have spread an organizational ideology in mandala structure (see Renfrew 1999: 119). The mandala of Tambralinga seems to have played a vital role in the diffusion of this ideology that caused organizational similarities in the maritime polities of Southeast Asia since the archaeological evidence suggests that this mandala is one of the coastal mandalas that possessed the most ancient evidence of Brahmanism, and therefore, which is the basis of the Brahmanical mandala structure. However, it is believed that mandala structure can be also based on Buddhist ideology depending on the historical background of a society. Aung-Thwin suggests that some polities in Southeast Asia may have used Buddhist ideology as a foundation of their mandala structures, such as that of Pyu polity in Burma (personal communication). Therefore, it is interesting to investigate why one polity chose to use Brahmanical ideology, while the other chose Buddhist one for their mandala organizations.

We have always believed in the cultural and socio-political uniqueness of each mandala in maritime Southeast Asia, at least in some given aspects. It is because the ideology of the Brahmanical mandala structure was adopted by local polities through the process of localization that modified some elements of this Indic ideology to fit into their cultural backgrounds (Wolters 1999: 55). Additionally, the Brahmanical materials that had been localized in Tambralinga had to be re-localized again when they were diffused to other polities before they could belong to those polities in the maritime region (Wolters 1999: 56). The process of re-localization, therefore, caused cultural diversity in the region.
The power of mandalas waxed and waned, expanded and contracted. It is thus possible that the mandala of Tambralinga may have extended to include other parts of Peninsular Siam (P. Noonsuk 2004a: 20). In AD 1230, we are rather certain that the area around the Bay of Bandon was included in the mandala of Tambralinga as inscription No. 24 found at Chaiya praises the greatness of the king named Candrabhanu who is the Lord of Tambralinga (Wolters 1958: 587). It is also possible that this area was part of the mandala of Tambralinga earlier than AD 1230 since we have no inscription signifying the existence of any other autonomous center of any mandala in the early historic period in this area although there are a number of Brahmanical shrines and statues found at Khao Srivijaya and Chaiya. If there was a powerful autonomous center in the region, we should have found its inscriptions to demonstrate that fact. The mandala of the Bay of Bandon, therefore, may be a mandala in the Tambralinga supra-mandala system, centered at the Haad Sai Keao sand dune. Also, Tambralinga may have acted as *primus inter pares* or chief amongst equals in the peninsula in the early historic period since it was the most powerful mandala among other isthmian mandalas. This hypothesis, however, requires further investigation.
Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusion

The focus of this thesis is to explore the significance of Peninsular Siam in maritime Southeast Asia during the period 500 BC to AD 1000. Using archaeological, geographical, historical, and epigraphic data, it attempts to examine three major questions: (1) When did isthmian polities first emerge, and what were the factors behind that emergence? (2) How were these polities organized and how did they develop? (3) How did these polities influence the socio-political and economic development of other polities in other parts of maritime Southeast Asia?

This thesis includes five chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the significance of the thesis topic, the questions that the thesis intends to explore, and the methodology. The topic aims to enhance our knowledge of the protohistory and early history of the isthmus and Southeast Asia in general, and attain a better understanding of the characteristics of socio-political development in Peninsular Siam and interaction in the Southeast Asian maritime world.

Chapter 2 reviews the historiography of Peninsular Siam during 500 BC to AD 1000. It succinctly outlines various approaches and perspectives of different scholars who have written about and tried to reconstruct the development of societies in peninsular Siam during the period, to present the general trends of previous research in this area. Models of socio-political development, maritime trade and social interaction, religions, subsistence patterns, and the historiography of Tambralinga are discussed in this chapter.
Chapter 3 presents the geographic, historical, and archaeological record of the area and discusses the socio-political development of the isthmian polities. Information from various sources are compared and discussed in order to propose the general trend of socio-political development of polities in this region, and the importance of this region and its societies in the maritime interaction between 500 BC and AD 1000.

Chapter 4 explores the development of the mandala of Tambralinga and its relations to other mandalas in the isthmus and the maritime Southeast Asia. It describes and shows the archaeological evidence and the distribution of archaeological sites at Nakhon Si Thammarat province, which is the heartland of this mandala, with the assistance of geographical information system (GIS).

Chapter 5 summarizes and concludes the thesis and suggestions for future research.

The major contributions of this thesis to the literature are as follows. First, it thesis proposes a chronology for the socio-political development of the isthmian polities during the period 500 BC to AD 1000. Second, it offers an alternative model for the political organization of the polities, emphasizing both exclusionary and corporate patterns of state formation using dual-processual theory. Third, it clarifies the relationships between the organizational development maritime Southeast Asian polities and peer polity interactions in the region. Fourth, it explains the development of Tambralinga, an important maritime polity that has been relatively neglected, using historical, epigraphic, and archaeological data.

Peninsular Siam occupies a strategic location situated between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It has mountain ranges that form its backbone and are the source of
forest products which were valued by foreign merchants since the late centuries BC. The rivers flow from the mountain ranges situated at the middle of the region to both the east and west coasts providing transpeninsular routes which became the channels for interaction between communities on the two coasts and the transportation of goods from one coast to the other.

The model of socio-political development of the isthmian polities follows Manguin’s theory, in which the emergence and the development of these early coastal polities is closely associated to the intra- and inter-regional exchange network since the late centuries BC (Manguin 2004: 283). There are two phases of the socio-political development of the isthmian polities proposed in this thesis for the period between the fifth century BC and the tenth century AD.

Phase I is the period of the early coastal polities during c. the fifth century BC to the fifth century AD. The polities in this period were involved in the long-distance trade network that embraced the Mediterranean world, the Middle East, Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and China (Bellina 2003; Bellina and Glover 2004; Glover 1996; Manguin 2004). These polities, however, did not develop out of tribal societies (Wheatley 1975: 240). Instead, they grew out of a relatively complex socio-political organization that saw developments in metallurgy and long-distance intra-regional exchange networks before the emergence of the inter-regional trade network as suggested in the distribution of Dong Son bronze drums from 700 BC and Sa Huynh artifacts from 600 BC (Fine Arts Department 2003: 171-179; Higham 2002: 175; Bellwood 1985: 273).

Foreign records mention a number of polities in the peninsula which were not only “the stepping stones” between the east and west, but also the source of valuable
minerals and rare products. The Chinese records describe the relatively complex political
organizations of these isthmian polities which had a variety of people of different origins
(Wheatley 1966). In this phase, the isthmian polities, occupying strategic locations in the
maritime east-west trade network, seem to have played relatively more important roles, as
suggested by the historical records as well as by the a number of trade items found in the
isthmian protohistoric sites such as Khao Sam Keao, Phukhao Thong, Tha Chana, and
Khuan Luk Pat. Both historical and archaeological evidence in shows that the isthmian
polities participated in various interaction spheres including (1) a network across the Bay
of Bengal, (2) a network between the isthmus polities and those of the Samon valley in
Burma, (3) a network across the Gulf of Siam to Central Thailand and the Mekong Delta,
and (4) a network in insular Southeast Asian Seas.

Using the concept of peer polity interaction (Renfrew 1999: 119), this thesis
proposes that the interactions between the isthmian polities and polities in other regions
probably have encouraged changes in socio-political organization of the peninsula. By
participating in the competitive environment of the trade networks of this period, the
isthmian political units were compelled to improve their political structures. They did
this by adopting relatively more advance organizational ideas which they then “localized”

An alliance system among the isthmian polities was also constructed to assure the
solidity of their polities. At the end of this phase around the fourth to fifth centuries AD,
these polities also appeared to have played a vital role in the diffusion of new Indic
organizational concepts to the rest of maritime Southeast Asia, spreading the Vaisanavite

Using dual-processual theory (Blanton et al. 1996: 2), this thesis suggests that the socio-political formation of the isthmian polities was probably based on corporate patterns of organization since there is evidence for power sharing and communal rituals that emphasize social solidarity which restrained the monolithic power of the rulers. These corporate patterns continued to be the basis of the isthmian socio-political organization in the subsequent phase as well.

Phase II (c. fifth to tenth centuries AD) is the period of the early mandalas of Peninsular Siam. The concept of mandala was proposed by Wolters (1999) and applied to the isthmus by P. Noonsuk (2001b). This concept describes the way in which pre-modern Southeast Asian polities may have been organized, whereby a center was surrounded by vassals, in which the supra-mandala overlord tended to identify himself with Siva (Wolters 1999: 27). We have evidence of Brahmanical communities throughout the peninsula including the areas around the Bay of Bandon, in Takuapa, in Nakhon Si Thammarat, in the Satingpra Peninsula, and in Patani. Nakhon Si Thammarat was likely the province in which one of the earliest mandala developed. Five major groups of Brahmanical communities are identified in this area, containing Tha Khwai, Tha Chieo-Tha Thon, Tha Lat, and Maying Rivers, and the Haad Sai Keao sand dune.

Each group represented a mandala with a center and vassals which altogether constituted the supra-mandala entity of Tambralinga, the name that appears in the Indian records from the second century AD and in the local inscription in the fifth century AD. The mandala of Tambralinga is strongly associated with Saivism in which its overlord
identified himself with Siva. However, this mandala seems to have been based on
corporate pattern of socio-political organization. The power of the king was shared by
powerful subordinates and there is evidence of mutual interdependences not only
between the god-king and other political actors but also between the center and local
communities. The constructions of communal shrines were created to perform communal
rituals and promote social solidarity. Although the center of a mandala theoretically
shifted, it seems that, throughout the histories of Tambralinga and Nakhon Si Thammarat,
the center had never moved from the area of Haad Sai Keao. Also, Tambralinga may
have acted as *primus inter pares* or chief amongst equals in the peninsula in the early
historic period since it seems to be the most powerful mandala among other isthmian
mandalas. This hypothesis, however, requires further investigation.

This thesis draws together various strands of information to begin to answer the
questions surrounding the socio-political development of isthmian polities and their
significance to the maritime world of Southeast Asia, despite limited data from well-
controlled excavations in the area. The hypotheses that have been proposed in this thesis
deserve more archaeological investigations in the future. There should be more
archaeological excavations and surveys conducted in several sites in the isthmus
including in both the protohistoric and early historic sites in order to gain a better
understanding of the socio-political organizations and economic activities of these
ancient communities. If the isthmian societies in the protohistoric period were based on
corporate pattern of organization, then future excavations should show that there are
relatively less social stratification or less discrepancy in individual wealth in burial goods
(Feinman 2000: 208-209).
The future archaeological research should provide scientific dating of the isthmian sites and study the site functions and distributions in the protohistoric and early historic periods. The information of site functions and distributions will enable us to draw the relationships between archaeological sites and determine the spatial structures of the peninsular polities (Leong Sau Heng 1990). More research on ceramic analysis will also offer us a better understanding of interactions among maritime societies. In order to study peer polity interaction in maritime Southeast Asia, we need to have more research focusing on artifact comparisons.

The subsistence economy of the isthmian societies has been relatively less studied. Stargardt (1998) and Allen (2000) have examined agricultural practices in the Satingpra area. However, we cannot yet conclude whether the people in the coastal area of the peninsula in the period 500 BC to AD 1000 practiced irrigated agriculture. More geo-archaeological research on agriculture in the coastal area will therefore shed light onto the subsistence economy of the coastal polities in this period. Perhaps intensive archeological projects need to be carried on as soon as possible, for, the archaeological sites in this region are destroyed daily.
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Legend
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2. Ancient Tank
3. Defunct River
4. Threshold

The area that villagers found a Vishnu image.

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