# 9

## Textualized Places, Pre-Angkorian Khmers, and Historicized Archaeology

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Archaeologists' growing commitment to studying the historical period has generated rich insights globally (e.g., Andrén 1998; Funari 1999; Orser 1996); this turn has also identified methodological challenges. Understanding the relationship between documentary and archaeological sources has been among the most persistent of these challenges (e.g., Feinman 1997; Kepecs 1997; Stark and Allen 1998). Chapters in this volume use case studies across the Old World to offer original contributions and explore significant, if sometimes intractable issues. Kohl (chapter 10) directly asks whether archaeological and written sources are qualitatively distinct or complementary. Acknowledging that most documentary sources are also archaeological in origin, I examine this relationship between archaeological and historical sources by tacking between my region of specialty in Southeast Asia (Cambodia and the pre-Angkorian Khmer) and chapters in this volume. Let us first turn to Cambodia in the first millennium AD and the origins of the Khmer people.

### Cambodia's Origins and the Khok Thlok Story

It is the year AD 68. Preah Thaong, a brahmin from the east, reaches the Mekong delta by water. Standing at the prow of his ship, he sees the island of Khok Thlok; at its shore is a beautiful woman serpent princess named Nagi Somā. She sees the intruder, assembles her army, and defends the island against Preah Thaong through pitched battle. Preah Thaong conquers her, they fall in love, and their marriage ceremony is held in her father's subterranean *nāga* kingdom. After they are wed, Somā's father (the *nāga* king) "drinks the waters" that cover this land, and creates a land he calls Kambuja. The descendants of this kingdom's residents are the modern-day Khmers who live in the kingdom of Cambodia.

Cambodians teach this amalgamated version of the origin story to their children today. This Khok Thlok, Preah Thaong, or Kaundinya story appears in Cambodian schoolbooks, and King Preah Thaong and his queen, Somā, are also described in post-fourteenth-century Cambodian royal annals (Gaudes 1993, 335–38). Cambodian brides and grooms reenact this story in each traditional Khmer wedding because wedding rituals symbolize the marriage of Preah Thaong and his beloved Nagi Somā (Gaudes 1977; Lewitz 1973). Deeply entrenched in Cambodian ideology, the Preah Thaong story is integral to understanding the origins of the Khmer people.

The Preah Thaong story is not only encoded in texts and reenacted in ritual. It is also closely associated with a particular place: the settlement of Angkor Borei, in Cambodia's Mekong delta. One of Angkor Borei's administrative districts today is called Khok Thlok; the Preah Thaong reservoir sits in the community's center, south of a Buddhist pagoda. Below the contemporary community of Angkor Borei lies a three-hundred-hectare archaeological site, bounded by remnants of a four-meter-tall earthen and brick wall. Within the wall's enclosed area, grazing areas for livestock contain piles of collapsed brick architecture and their accompanying moats and ponds. This Khmer oral tradition has been textualized and materialized through centuries of ritual practice and through the association of a physical place with the original Khok Thlok.

## Cambodia's Origins and External Documentary Evidence

Southeast Asian scholars have long acknowledged the profound influence of South Asia on first millennium AD populations throughout the region (e.g., Coedès 1968; Christie 1995; Groslier 1966; Jacques 1979; Kulke 1986; Mabbett 1997; Wheatley 1983; Wolters 1999). As Trautmann and Sinopoli (chapter 6) indicate, the early historic period in South Asia witnessed the emergence of mature states like the Mauryas and the Kushanas across much of north India and Tamil kingdoms in the south (see also Abraham 2003; Smith 2001). Southeast Asia was a valuable source of raw materials for South Asian polities, particularly its tin sources and its gold (Basa 1998, 409). The coastal regions and inland river valleys of Southeast Asia's South China Sea proved fertile ground for the diffusion of Indic ideology. Whether by accident, through intent, or a combination of both, Hindu and Buddhist beliefs traveled to Southeast Asia with South Asian merchants and missionaries perhaps as early as the late first millennium BC (Bellina 1999, 2003; Ray 1989, 1994). Brick masonry Indic

shrines; Vaishnavite, Saivite, and Buddhist stone sculptures; and inscriptions with indigenous Indian *brāhmī* scripts compose the first millennium landscape of Southeast Asia's coasts and river valleys. Despite this rich record of interaction or "Indianization" (see Mabbett 1997 for recent review), no substantial South Asian documentary corpus has been found that describes Southeast Asia and its people during this time. The majority of external documentation instead lies in Chinese dynastic histories.

The first documentary evidence for Southeast Asia in Chinese chronicles occurs during the Han dynasty (Ishizawa 1995, 11–13; Wheatley 1983, 152) during its often unsuccessful attempts to conquer the land of the southern barbarians. In the latter part of the later Han period (c. AD 25–220), international maritime trade was conducted between China, south India, and ultimately Rome through the South China Sea. Southeast Asia became a transshipment zone for Chinese merchants, who brought gold and silk to coastal polities along the South China Sea to trade for South Asian gems and pearls (Ishizawa 1995, 12). The recovery of several sewn-plank and lashed-lug boat remains, which the Chinese called *kunlun bo* (Manguin 1993, 261) and that date to the mid-first millennium AD (e.g., Manguin 1996), suggest that Southeast Asians played an important role in this international trade network.

Maintaining open routes through Southeast Asia required China either to conquer or to establish political linkages with Southeast Asian polities. The most abundant Chinese documentary evidence for diplomatic missions in the first millennium AD dates to the second through sixth centuries (Wheatley 1983, 153). The Chinese consistently describe one Southeast Asian polity as "Funan," and mention of these polities is found in multiple sources (review in Ishizawa 1995, 13). Emissaries Kang-tai and Zhuying visited Funan in AD 228 and reported the following:

> The people of Funan are malicious and cunning. They abduct and make slaves of inhabitants of neighboring towns who do not pay them homage. As merchandise they have gold, silver, and silks . . . The inhabitants of Funan make rings and bracelets of gold, and plates of silver. They cut down trees to make their dwellings. The king lives in a storied pavilion. They make their city walls of wooden palisades . . . The people also live in raised dwellings" (translation in Coedès 1968, 58; from Pelliot 1903, 261).

Early Chinese contact with Southeast Asian populations was essentially economic in nature (Jacques 1995, 38). For more than a millennium, the Chinese formalized tributary trade relationships throughout

areas of Southeast Asia that they could not conquer; this broad area ranged from central Vietnam and the Philippines to the Mekong delta (see also Junker 1998, 302–5). From the third through the seventh centuries, Chinese emissaries were dispatched to Funan at least twenty-six times (Ishizawa 1995, 17). Southeast Asian tribute to the Chinese court included (but was not limited to) gold, silver, copper, tin, aromatic tropical wood, ivory, kingfishers and parakeets, sugar cane, pomegranates and oranges, and bananas (Wheatley 1983, 111). To the Chinese, this protourban polity was a kingdom (Wolters 1999, 109); to some historians, a chiefdom (Wheatley 1983, 119–98); and to others, an early state (Hall 1982, 1985; Vickery 1998). The Chinese recorded an oral tradition of the origins of Funan in third- through tenth-century Chinese dynastic histories (Hall 1982; Jacques 1979; Pelliot 1903). It is nearly identical to the Khok Thlok story that Cambodians recount and reenact today.

For decades, historians and archaeologists have sought the geographic location of Khok Thlok, and more than a dozen scholars have suggested competing locations for Funan (e.g., Colless 1972–73; Loofs-Wissowa 1968–69; Vickery 1998, 45; Wheatley 1983, 148). Yet the locations of this polity's inland capitals remain a mystery, despite concerted efforts to match Chinese toponyms with the Mekong delta's landscape. Angkor Borei also produced the earliest dated Khmer inscription in Cambodia (K. 600), which dates to AD 611, or Çaka year 533. It also contained an area called Khok Thlok.

### Cambodia's Origins and Indigenous Evidence

In the Çaka year 533, on the thirteenth day of the lunar crossing of Māgha, lunar house of Pusya, the balance was at the horizon. The *Poñ Uy* made these gifts to *Kpoñ Kamratān Añ*: working or field personnel (4 males, 2 females, and one male infant), 60 head of bovines (cattle?), 2 buffaloes, 10 goats, 40 coconut trees, and 2 rice fields at the place of Ampon. Working personnel given by *Jam Añ* to *Vrah Kamratān Mahāganapati*: five male working personnel, 4 women working personnel, and a child, 20 head of cattle, two women specialists to serve the ceremonial specialist, to record sacred days and to make ritual offerings of flowers and incense to the god. (K. 600, north face; from Coedès 1942, 22–23).[1]

The received knowledge of early Cambodia during the first half of the first millennium AD derives primarily from Chinese documentary ac-

counts (described previously) and secondarily from a corpus of indigenous inscriptions. Because these inscriptions predate the establishment of Angkor in AD 802, they are described as pre-Angkorian in age. Many examples of pre-Angkorian indigenous writing, in the form of inscribed stone stelae, have been recovered from sites across southern Cambodia and date as early as the seventh century AD. Some inscriptions have also been recovered from Vietnam's portion of the Mekong delta and from areas of central and northwestern Cambodia (Jacob 1979, 425; Vickery 1998, 97). The few scholars who have studied these pre-Angkorian inscriptions systematically have found evidence for social, political, and religious organization, for measurement systems, and for the natural and artificial environment in which these seventh- and eighth-century Cambodians lived (see, for example, Jacob 1979; Jacques 1979, 1995; Vickery 1998; Wolters 1979).

These pre-Angkorian inscriptions often contained two sections. The first section, or prologue, was commonly Sanskrit. It contained praise for the deity for whom the monument was dedicated and for the current ruler, explained the purpose of the brick structure in which it was found, named the donor of this structure, and listed the date of the dedication. The second section, in Khmer script, listed the date, deity, and donor; it also detailed the nature and precise content of the donations. This section also commonly included a malediction that warned of punishment to any who dared violate the building or its contents (see Vickery 1998, 98). Laudatory, reverent, fiscal, and punitive, these inscriptions provide the earliest internal documentary data from the ancient Khmers.

The seventh- and eighth-century Khmer inscriptions are rife with descriptions of elites, from royalty to local cult leaders. At least seven kings and one queen are listed in the inscriptions, as are seventeen other individuals whose titles suggest the status of king or chief (Vickery 1998, 177–89). Several terms for nonroyal elite officials appear in many inscriptions (Vickery 1998, 190–205). Yet the real power behind these titles remains unclear. Joffe (chapter 3) explores the disjunction between historical and archaeological evidence for the tenth- and ninth-century BC Levantine Iron Age: The former reconstructs large and powerful states, while the latter suggests a series of small and fragile polities. Similarly, Johns (chapter 5) questions the existence of a unified Islamic state during its first seventy years, when scant archaeological evidence suggests centralization and hegemony. Southeast Asian archaeology lags behind Near Eastern archaeology by many decades. Yet increased research on pre-Angkorian Cambodia holds potential to overturn conventional his-

tories of unified kingdoms and large-scale military conquests. Elites in each of the competing polities across the ancient Khmer landscape elevated their material and ideological standing through erecting monuments inscribed with their acts, but we privilege such documentary evidence over the archaeological record at our own peril.

The earliest dated Khmer inscription (K. 557 and 600) was erected in the year AD 611 and later curated at the Buddhist temple of Wat Chruoy in the community of Angkor Borei (Coedès 1942, 21–23). Recovered in 1935 by French scholar Henri Mauger, only two of this sandstone stele's inscribed four sides were intact. Its Sanskrit and Khmer inscriptions list offerings to the local gods (perhaps female [Vickery 1998, 151–55]). Viewed in isolation, as its original translator Georges Coedès (1942, 21) dismissively noted, this inscription contains only lists of servants, land, and domestic animals. Yet analyzed as part of a corpus of seventh- and eighth-century inscriptions from southern Cambodia, these indigenous documents provide hypotheses regarding the sociopolitical organization and economy for this period. As previous historians (particularly Coedès 1968, 68; Vickery 1998, 45) have noted, one strong candidate for this ancient polity's capital is the archaeological site of Angkor Borei.

## Cambodia's Origins and Archaeological Evidence

Angkor Borei is thus an archaeological site, a textualized origin story, and perhaps the center of a first millennium complex polity. During its early first-millennium AD occupation, this settlement was part of a regional economic, political, and social system that stretched across the Mekong delta and perhaps across the Gulf of Siam. Angkor Borei (figure 9.1) was part of early Southeast Asia (following Smith and Watson 1979) during a time when Hinduism and Buddhism first swept eastward from the Indian subcontinent, maritime trade routes between Rome and China traversed the South China Sea, and complex polities emerged along the coasts and river valleys of mainland Southeast Asia. While the Cambodians view Angkor Borei as the cradle of Khmer civilization, scholars view the site as integral to understanding early state formation between around 500 BC and AD 500. Despite its rich potential and until recently, however, most archaeologists have left this early historic period to art historians to decipher.

The Lower Mekong Archaeological Project has undertaken field investigations at Angkor Borei since 1996 (e.g., Stark 2001; Stark and Sovath 2001; Stark et al. 1999). Research examines the origins of state for-
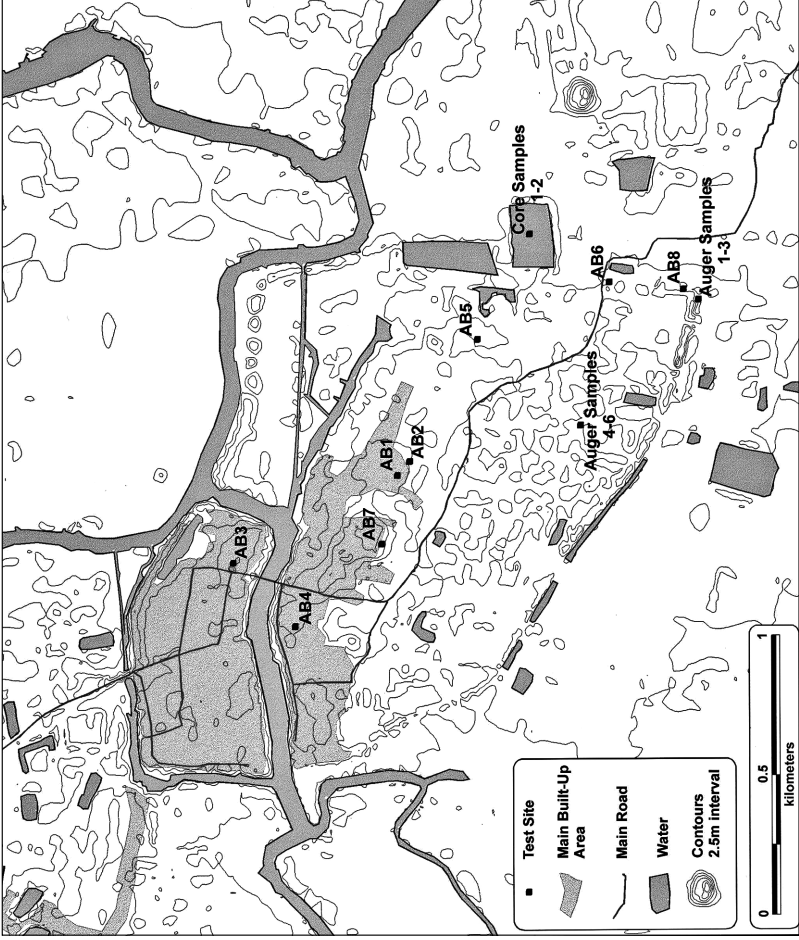
**Figure 9.1** Contour map of Angkor Borei city, showing the locations of archaeological field investigations.

mation in the Mekong delta, where third- and sixth-century Chinese emissaries described the kingdom of Funan (Hall 1982, 1985). Louis Malleret's (1959, 1960, 1962) pathbreaking research during World War II on the possible Funan port site of Oc Eo, in southern Vietnam, produced physical evidence of Indian and Roman contact, including Indian seals, jewelry, and coins associated with Antoninus Pius (AD 152) and Marcus Aurelius. For more than twenty years, Vietnamese archaeologists have identified and tested more than seventy-nine "Oc Eo" culture sites (e.g., Ha Van Tan 1986). Yet no archaeological work had been done on Cambodia's side of the delta since Captain Lunet de Lajonquière completed his survey of historic sites in Cambodia a century ago (Lunet de Lajonquière 1902).

Lower Mekong Archaeological Project members combine archaeological excavations, paleoenvironmental research, and geoarchaeological techniques to reconstruct the occupational history of Angkor Borei and the canal system that linked this center to a network of contemporary settlements (Bishop et al. 2003; Sanderson et al. 2003). Work thus far has established an occupational history that begins in the fourth century BC, more than five hundred years before the Chinese first described Funan, and that has continued without interruption to the present day.

These archaeological approaches illuminate locational, economic, and ecological aspects of this ancient Mekong delta polity. Examination of documentary sources is equally important to understanding the polity that the Chinese visited and with whom they established political alliances through the mid-first millennium AD. Documentary data have been translated and analyzed by several generations of scholars. Exogenous sources consist primarily of Chinese dynastic annals, translated by Pelliot (1903), Wheatley (1983), and Ishizawa (1995). Indigenous sources, which include both Sanskrit and Khmer inscriptions, have been the subject of interest for nearly as long and continue to undergo reanalysis (e.g., Coedès 1968, 40–42; 55–62; Vickery 1998).

Research at Angkor Borei falls within the realm of historical archaeology, because it involves the material culture of literate societies (Andrén 1998; Funari 1999, 57; Funari, Jones, and Hall 1999, 7; cf. Orser 1996). Integrating archaeological and documentary sources on Angkor Borei, and on the early historic period Mekong delta more generally, remains difficult for methodological reasons that archaeologists have debated (e.g., Andrén 1998; Feinman 1997; Kepecs 1997; Leone and Potter 1998). Research in the Mekong delta and more generally on early Southeast Asia provides a comparative context for discussing issues raised in

this volume's chapters. Doing so provides a framework for examining the complicated relationship of archaeology and history, which involves both methodological and conceptual issues. Because my background lies in Asian archaeology, the bulk of my comments focus on the South, East, and Southeast Asia chapters in this volume (i.e., chapters 6–8).

## Methodological Concerns and Chapters in This Volume

One of the most salient methodological issues concerns the tyranny of the historical record (e.g., Johnson 1999, 27). A second issue focuses on the relative importance of documentary versus archaeological data to interpret different points in the ancient past. I will, finally, discuss how chapters in this volume inform on the relative importance or value of indigenous documentary data versus exogenous data. Although some of the chapters did not discuss these topics explicitly, their content exemplifies some of the issues.

Alexander H. Joffe (chapter 3) notes scholars' "historicist" tendency to privilege documentary data over archaeological data. Archaeologists working across the Old World have also confronted this problem in Africa (e.g., Stahl 2001), South Asia (e.g., Morrison and Lycett 1997), and Southeast Asia (Allard 1998; Allen 1998; Junker 1998; Lape 2001; Stark 1998; Welch 1998). This volume reveals how a reliance on documentary records, often without sufficient source-side criticism, characterizes research on the Mauryan empire (Trautmann and Sinopoli, chapter 6), sixteenth-century Indonesia (Lape, chapter 8), and work on the first millennium BC in the Levant (Joffe, chapter 3).

Such historicist approaches characterize much current scholarship in the field, either through a "philological" approach (following Andrén 1998, 113–20) in which archaeology is undertaken to recover new texts, or through an approach intended to provide background information that facilitates textual analysis. Archaeology has played a subordinate role to history in the scholarship of ancient Mesopotamia, to the detriment of the field. Perhaps one explanation for this imbalance lies in the sheer quantity of indigenous documentation for historic Mesopotamia: seventeen thousand tablets were recovered from Nippur, and thirty thousand tablets from the site of Tello (Zettler, chapter 4). In such circumstances, it is no surprise that archaeology has sometimes been viewed primarily as a retrieval system for documentary data, and as a strategy for enriching textual reconstructions.

The Indian case that Trautmann and Sinopoli describe, in which

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonial scholarship used epigraphy and philology rather than archaeology to understand the past, also characterizes Southeast Asian countries formerly under French, British, and Dutch colonial control (Wang Gungwu 1986, xii). This European colonial tradition that subordinated archaeological work to confirming claims made on historical evidence also left huge gaps in our knowledge of critical junctures in history, like how the Mauryan empire (India) stimulated the eastward spread of Buddhism. A similar pattern characterizes mainland Southeast Asia, where a virtual black hole exists for the period around 500 BC to AD 500 (Stark and Allen 1998, 165–66).

Ideally, archaeological and documentary data should complement each other to enrich reconstruction and identify contradictions in the data sources (Funari, Jones, and Hall 1999). Pioneering work of this sort has been done on the Shang period in China (e.g., Chang 1983; Keightley 1983) and has stimulated subsequent archaeological research programs. Research on the port town of Berenike, so ably reported in this volume by Wendrich and colleagues, also offers an excellent example of complementarity, despite the methodological limitations the authors describe. Their botanical analysis was particularly useful, since few textual sources discussed the range of foods and organic raw materials that would have circulated in the Mediterranean–Indian Ocean basin trade network. Some evidence, like the recovery of rice and Job's tears, might support economic models in which foreign traders (including South Asians) lived in these international trading ports. While such a scenario has been proposed for coastal polities in Island Southeast Asia during this period (e.g., Allen 1998; Bronson 1977), preservation conditions do not permit the recovery of supporting botanical evidence in the Southeast Asian tropics.

Gauging the relative importance of documentary versus archaeological data at different points in the past is a second methodological concern raised in this volume's chapters. For the late prehistoric period, and for societies whose writing systems we still do not understand, like the Indus civilization, documentary data may provide an important source of analogies (Andrén 1998, 121–24). But the relationship is more complex at points in the historic sequence when either indigenous documents do not yet exist (leaving the burden of explanation to outsiders' descriptions) or they have a very restricted informational content. The earliest indigenous inscriptions in the Mekong delta, for example, are dedicatory stelae placed in or near brick monuments that were religious in function (some perhaps mortuary, and others local cult shrines). These inscrip-

tions yield information on dynastic genealogies and political structure (Vickery 1998) but remain largely silent on place names and economic organization.

Turning to the Indus civilization, Trautmann and Sinopoli contend that scholars have been less critical of partial or limited documentary evidence that is unsupported by archaeological evidence than the opposite. When writing and literacy become established in a particular society, does the archaeological record recede in importance? Can documentary evidence in the absence of archaeological data be sufficient to establish claims of statehood (following Johns, chapter 5)? Peter Lape's analysis of early colonial organization in eastern Indonesia (chapter 8) illustrates how archaeological data illuminates and challenges reconstructions based primarily on documentary data. His identification of a range of settlements ignored by colonial cartographers underscores the incompleteness of documentary information, and the need to use multiple lines of evidence to study these phenomena. In Li Min's case study of Jinan (China), archaeological information complements the documentary sources and also enables us to study local-level developments within a much larger polity (chapter 7).

Chapters in this volume explore alternative ways to define the relationship between documentary and archaeological data. Andrén (1998, 148) wonders whether texts are superior to artifacts at expressing certain ideas, or vice versa. But perhaps complementarity, rather than ranking or even concordance, is the best possible result of merging archaeological and documentary data. Li Min's comparison of the spatial distribution of Qi coins against textual records produces insights regarding the nature of the local economy. Likewise, comparison of historical accounts with the archaeological distribution of inscribed bronze weaponry yields information on the nature of military confrontation.

My final methodological concern centers on the relative value of indigenous documentary data versus exogenous data. One might argue that indigenous sources are more valuable than exogenous sources, since the latter are written with specific (and often colonialist) audiences in mind. Yet literacy comes to many of the world's regions from the outside first, and the earliest indigenous writing often employs outsiders' writing systems and even vocabulary. In pre-Angkorian Cambodia, inscribed stelae generally include both Sanskrit and Khmer inscriptions, and the content of each inscription varies (Vickery 1998, 95–96).

This volume's chapters have relied on many forms of indigenous documentary data, from inscriptions on stelae (in Iron Age southern

Levant and in the Ashokan edicts in South Asia); inscribed bronze tri-
pods, chime bells, measurement containers, weapons, iron artifacts, and
stamped pottery (Jinan in eastern China); inscribed seals (Indus Valley);
stamp seals, cylinder seals, and tablets (southern Levant); coins, papyri,
tombstones, and travelers' graffiti (Syria and Palestine region); to cus-
toms archives and contracts (Berenike). Exogenous sources are also
varied, including dynastic annals (Jinan) and official histories (southern
Levant), travelers' accounts (Berenike, Banda Islands of Indonesia), and
maps (Banda Islands). These various sources inform differently, and to
different degrees, on the kinds of questions that interest archaeologists.
In some cases, archaeologists find entire populations that documentary
sources exclude from their records. Lape's identification of Banda settle-
ments excluded from sixteenth-century Dutch maps is one case in point,
while the exclusion of transhumant populations in northern Mesopo-
tamia from the Ebla texts (Zettler, chapter 4) is another. Oral traditions
can serve as another important indigenous documentary source, at least
in early Southeast Asia (Wang Gungwu 1979, 4), but analytical tools for
using oral traditions remain poorly developed.

    Despite repeated calls for source-side criticism (e.g., Johnson 1999,
30; Stahl 1993), most historical archaeologists do not engage in the kind
of analysis necessary to make these documents truly useful. Little evi-
dence exists for source-side criticism in Chinese historical archaeology;
if such exists, archaeologists of China rarely discuss it (but see Allard
1998, 323–27). In chapter 4, Zettler contends that a lack of source-side
criticism characterizes both archaeologists who use documentary data
(e.g., the mistranslation of the Curse of Akkad) and historians who rely
exclusively on misleading documents (e.g., studies of fish consumption
in southern Mesopotamia during the Assyrian and Old Babylonian peri-
ods). Johns's systematic analysis of documentary evidence for the ori-
gins of the Islamic state (chapter 5) effectively demonstrates the need to
interrogate historical sources as closely as we do archaeological sources.

    Archaeologists and historians need to engage more aggressively in
source-side criticism in each direction, and to collaborate more closely
and frequently. Historians of early Southeast Asia also recognize this
need (e.g., Brown 1996; Christie 1979; Jacques 1979; Wang Gungwu 1986;
Wheatley 1983; Wolters 1999), since the early historic period contains
scant (and predominantly exogenous) documentary data and also estab-
lishes the foundation for Classical states that emerge across the region
some seven hundred years later. Yet close collaborative research is still
rare, and holistic strategies must be generated to overcome these prob-

lems. The Sumerian Agricultural Group structure that Zettler describes might serve as a useful precedent.

## Writing, Power, and Identity

Despite the geographic, temporal, and thematic diversity of this volume's chapters, some conceptual issues resonate throughout the collection that focus on the relationship between writing, power, and identity. The first concerns social and political impacts of the development of writing. Writing was a technological innovation with deep ramifications (Joffe, chapter 3, and Zettler, chapter 4). Throughout much of early Southeast Asia, organizational changes coincide with the earliest written records (e.g., Stark 1998; Welch 1998, 222). Writing, as an innovation, was particularly transformative when enterprising individuals and groups were able to restrict access to knowledge required to participate in literate culture (Andrén 1998, 147).

The development and control of writing conferred ritual and social power to individual elites. Writing and monumental constructions are, of course, closely linked: Writing inscribes power, monumentality radiates power, and inscribed monuments institutionalize power. In early state societies like pre-Angkorian Cambodia, royalty, nonroyal officials, and elites inscribed records of their economic largesse and religious commitment on and around the earliest architectural monuments in the region (Vickery 1998). In ancient China, Shang and Zhou literate elites worked directly with the kings as diviners and archivists (Chang 1980; Keightley 1978). Activities like prognostication imbued them with authority that derives from restricted access to knowledge of the written word (e.g., Keightley 1994), and diviners whose names are preserved in Shang inscriptions may well have included chieftains from polities that the Shang conquered (Lewis 1999, 15). Writing was used for similar ends in ancient Cambodia: Jayavarman II inscribed himself as Cambodia's first universal monarch (or *cakravartin*) in AD 802. Subsequent generations erected inscribed stelae in their brick and (later) sandstone monuments that traced direct ancestry back to this king to legitimize their rule.

That writing was linked to economic power is clear across much of the Old World. Yet religious and economic power merged in the indigenous documentary traditions of Egypt and in Mesopotamia (Zettler, chapter 4): In both cases, temple economies controlled substantial wealth. In this light especially, our continued inability to translate the Harap-

pan texts (Trautmann and Sinopoli, chapter 6) is a handicap in efforts to understand the growth and nature of Indus civilization.

The act of writing also conferred social power and created social identity. Societies inscribed themselves on their social and political landscapes through outsiders' descriptions and through indigenous texts. The earliest indigenous writing in the lower Mekong basin was derived from a Sanskrit alphabet and appears first in the early seventh century AD; its appearance coincides with the first descriptions of ethnically Khmer populations. Joffe's chapter illustrates the indigenous use of documentary data to inscribe a large scale of social identity in the process that he calls "ethnicization."

## From the Delta Outward

Decades of scholarship by dedicated Khmer epigraphers and historians have been, and continue to be, essential to reconstructing the early history of the Mekong delta. So, too, is systematic archaeological research that not only identifies and recovers "new" inscriptions for the epigraphers, but also provides information on the ancient economic and regional political organization. Historians have repeatedly called for archaeological research in the region (e.g., Wheatley 1983, 124), including the memorable plea that "the answer . . . will be provided by the trowel" (Christie 1979, 287). In studies of early Southeast Asia, archaeologists and historians must work together more closely if for no other reason than mutual need. But beyond that need is a synergy that can be produced only through collaboration.

Oral history, exogenous accounts, and indigenous texts are all as integral to studying emergent state formation in the Mekong delta as is archaeological information; pre-Angkorian research is thus subject to the same methodological issues seen globally in historical archaeology. In many parts of the world, efforts to distinguish documentary sources from archaeological sources are ultimately problematic: cuneiform tablets, Mayan stelae, Ashokan edicts, and Islamic coins are simultaneously documentary and archaeological data sources. Chapters in this volume have incorporated these various documentary forms, sometimes in concert with the archaeological record, and sometimes in contrast. Compared with the deep traditions of Chinese (Li Min, chapter 7), Indian (Trautmann and Sinopoli, chapter 6), and Mesopotamian scholarship (Zettler, chapter 4), archaeological and historical research in the Mekong delta is in its infancy. This volume's substantive and in-

sightful chapters illustrate the great potential inherent in merging documentary and archaeological sources, and offer suggestions for methodological approaches. Their contributions not only identify areas for future research, but also provide valuable guidelines for future studies in lesser-known regions across Asia.

## Notes

My thanks are extended to Norman Yoffee for inviting me to participate in this stimulating project. I am also grateful to Michael Vickery for his invaluable tutorials on pre-Angkorian history in the last several years, and particularly for his assistance in translating the K. 600 inscription. I finally thank colleagues in Cambodia's Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, particularly Her Royal Highness Princess Norodom Bopha Devi and His Excellency Chuch Phoeurn. Their support and encouragement have been essential to my Cambodian research.

1. The title Poñ connotes elite status, refers to the founder or donor of seventh- and early eighth-century monuments, and might have served as rulers' representatives in establishing foundations (Vickery 1998, 190–92). The title Kpoñ Kamratān Añ may refer to a pre-Sanskritic local-lineage goddess (Vickery 1998, 152). The term Vrah Kamratān may refer to a pre-Sanskritic local-lineage god, whose name in this case is Mahāganapati. In pre-Angkorian inscriptions, mratān was a high-ranking sub-royal title (Vickery 1998, 190–205). The term yajamāna translates literally as "sacrificer" in Sanskrit, but its Khmer usage remains unclear beyond the fact that this individual was involved in commemorating foundations and installing deity images within those structures (Vickery 1998:158–59).

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