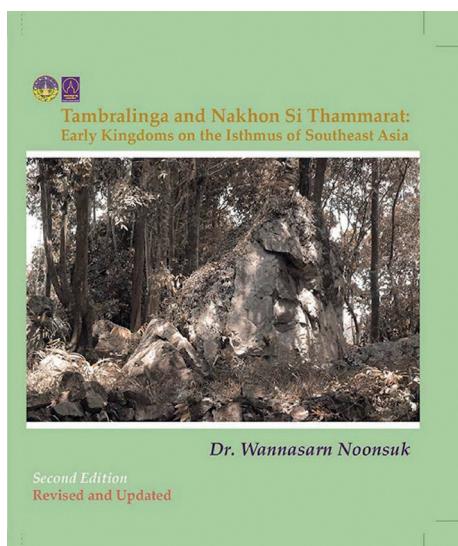


At the outset of her book, Dr. Salinee asks whether a lesser power could introduce a major foreign policy change independent of regional and greater powers having important and contradictory interests of their own. She goes on to suggest that this could only happen if the lesser power anticipates significant change in the international environment. In Chatichai's case, despite the drama of unilaterally reversing years of Thai policy to the surprise and dismay of partners both domestically and internationally, it was not the actions of Chatichai's team, but rather major changes in the international environment that either took place regardless of the Thai actions, or in many cases, after Chatichai and his advisors had left the political stage altogether.

Skip Boyce

*Tambralinga and Nakhon Si Thammarat: Early Kingdoms on the Isthmus of Southeast Asia*, by Wannasarn Noonsuk (Nakhon Si Thammarat Province: Academic Committee under the Committee Nominating Wat Phra Mahathat Woramahawihan as a World Heritage Site, Second Edition, 2018). ISBN: 9789748244297. US\$29.99.



This ambitious work on Peninsular Thailand or the Isthmus of Southeast Asia attempts to address three all-encompassing aspects of the ancient polity of Tambralinga: development, material culture and cultural geography

While keeping its regional context in view, this work focuses primarily on the portion of Peninsular Thailand between the Tha Sak River in the north and the Khu Phai River in the south and between the geographic spine of the peninsula, the Nakhon Si Thammarat Mountains, and the coast of the Gulf of Thailand. It covers the evidence of the area's prehistoric cultures such as the Dong Son bronze drums and evidence of the area's participation in the earliest maritime trade in

the region between the Roman Empire, the Middle East, India (including Sri Lanka) and China. The focus is, however, on the period when a participant in this network was known as Tambralinga, particularly the 5th to the 11th century. Tambralinga was replaced by Nakhon Si Thammarat circa 13th/14th century, ending a history of about 1,500 years (p. 271), after which the peninsula was dominated by Ayutthaya.

Dr. Wannasarn Noonsuk relies on historical studies, his own archaeological surveys and new excavation, ethnographic interviews, and historical records such as inscriptions and chronicles. The majority of new data provided for dating leans toward evidence

from primarily brick and pottery revealed by the author's own excavations, but also reviews earlier stylistic analysis of the early images found in Peninsular Thailand and the region.

It provides a number of very useful features. First there is the brief but complete, summary of places linked into the early trade network between China and the Middle East, highlighting interaction and the sectional nature of the network. Second it summarizes relevant sites, e.g., prehistoric sites and eighty-nine recently documented sites, most of which are Hindu. Much data about sites and artifacts are presented in tables allowing discussion of archaeological finds and preliminary interpretation in the text to weave a cultural impression while still proving the necessary detail to enable additional scholarly work.

The use of ethnographic interviews aims to reveal the lifestyle suited to the landscape and geography to address "*cultural geography*" (pp. 7–8). This objective seems rooted in a strong belief in the continuity of lifestyle sustained by a given geophysical environment over time. To an extent, as the geophysical features endure, this may be so and may thus be a useful tool in studying cultural history, as long as it is seen to provide only the framework for evaluating, very carefully, details of the artifacts found to then substantiate or flesh out and further unfold the cultural story.

This approach (see pp. 8, 10, 72–74, 181–198) echoes a trend in architectural studies,<sup>1</sup> which peaked in the 1970s and 1980s. Architecture as a cultural product or phenomenon can be seen as a result of the interaction of three domains manifesting culture:

- The geophysical domain which provided the resources and enabled sustenance of human life,
- Social or sociopolitical and economic activities and systems structured to enable harvesting and redistribution of those resources, and
- Philosophical and religious support, with values, priorities, symbolism and ordering systems which enabled or justified the socioeconomic strategies as conveyed through legend or heroic tales of ancestors, gods, or spirits and through customary ethical systems, adat or formalized religion.

This work focuses primarily on the landscape and the lifestyle it supported, while noting that current scholarly work on sociopolitical aspects indicated Tambralinga was an "encountering-fraternizing" type "secondary state" (p. 5, citing Didha Saraya 1995: 22) with institutionalized social hierarchy, kingship, and religions, but that its sociopolitical characteristics are not yet known. Wannasarn does however point out, based on found artifacts, the earliest phase of its religious history (circa 5th/7th century) was Vaishnavite Hindu, shifting later, after the 8th century, to Shaivite Hindu (p. 173) and that Buddhism in Peninsular Thailand was first perhaps Mahayana shifting circa the 13th century toward Theravada, as reflected in found artifacts.

While the work does not exactly flesh out the historical development of Tambralinga, Wannasarn does offer a chronological framework (pp. 67–69).

<sup>1</sup> For example, Amos Rapoport; Christian Norberg Schultz; to some extent Christopher Alexander.

- 1) Neolithic : 3,000 – 700 BCE
- 2) Iron Age to Early Hindu-Buddhist: 700 BCE – 400 CE
- 3) Early Tambralinga : 5<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> CE
- 4) Late Tambralinga/ Nakhon Si Thammarat Period: 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> CE
- 5) Ayutthaya Period: 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> CE

He also makes a number of references to how Tambralinga related to or fit into the network of early trade relationships which fostered its development. Note that although his chronology does not include a Srivijaya Period, Tambralinga's relationship to Srivijaya and the nature of Srivijaya are discussed (pp. 199, 205–210). Brief mention is made also of links to Andhradesa since the 5th century (p. 204) as well as Tambralinga's briefly establishing a vassal in Sri Lanka in the 12th/13th century (p. 215). In addition, mention is made of regional relationships, which remain somewhat obscure, e.g., Yarang's link to Bujang Valley (p. 202) or the relationship between Yarang and Tambralinga.

Wannasarn's discussion of artifacts is dominated by pottery and bricks; however a few significant references are made to actual architectural characteristics, e.g., the stupa *anda* (principal body mass citing Kriengkrai Kerdtsiri 2017 and Ueasaman 2017), or square bases with niches and pilasters (pp. 248-250). Architectural remains are unfortunately largely limited to foundations and only a few (often fragmentary) architectural elements. Stone architectural elements (Hindu door frames and thresholds) from early brick shrines date to the earliest period. It has also been noted that use of granite for some instead of the usual sandstone may indicate more than one cultural group (p. 173).

The use of the quincunx (also known as “5-square”) order, an arrangement typical of *pañcāyatana* shrines and practices, is mentioned (p. 249). The *parivara* shrines (miniature stupa forms, for example, surrounding the Great Stupa at Nakhon Si Thammarat) or aedicular acroter,<sup>2</sup> are referred to as “satellite” stupas. The arrangement model derived from *Pañcāyatana* practices involving sets of five deities, which emerged in India in the early centuries CE<sup>3</sup> and by the 9<sup>th</sup> century flourished throughout India as well in Java, Champa and Pre-Angkor Khmer polities. It remained a dominant ordering concept into the Khmer Angkor and the Thai Ayutthaya periods and deserves more study, as does the study of the *anda* form.

While many sites listed in this work, such as Mokhalan, deserve more attention, Khao Kha stands out from the rest, both in relation to its position and probable role in Tambralinga, but also in the broader region, from Champa to Java and Bali. Khao Kha, it seems, is the historic Hindu predecessor of Wat Phra Mahathat, Nakhon Si Thammarat, the major religious site of an early polity in Southeast Asia and is a bridge between prehistoric and Hindu-Buddhist cultures.

The Khao Kha Hindu hilltop / hill-ridge site can be seen as precursor to the use

<sup>2</sup> Architectural terms derived from Roman architecture a sculptural form modeled on a building type, miniature building form used as secondary (or “satellite”) structure or as a finial. “*Parivara*” is Sanskrit for secondary or miniature architectural (aedicular) form (e.g., small shrine or stupa).

<sup>3</sup> I. K. Sarma, *Paraśurāmēśvara Temple at Gudimallam : a probe into its origins* (Nagpur: Dattsons, 1994), p. 93.

of hilltops for Buddhist stupas and monasteries such as Wat Pako of Sathingphra, for example, as well as Sukhothai and later Khmer sites. Even prior to Hindu influence in the region hills held special significance and this transferred into Hindu and Buddhist practices. The Khao Kha ridge runs from north-northeast to south-southwest, which, along with north-northwest to south-southeast, is a common orientation for early settlements and religious sites in Thailand and Myanmar. Khao Kha is the site of not just one, but two, natural stone lingas (Figs. 3.10 and 3.11) and has architectural remains of two significant brick monuments (no. 2 and no. 4; Fig. 3.4 and 3.14 respectively). Regrettably, no site plans for these remains were provided, nor for any other site with architectural remains, with the exception of Wat Phra at Nakhon Si Thammarat. It is hoped this can be rectified soon, especially for Khao Kha. Hill-sites feature prominently in Southeast Asia, but have not been adequately studied as such. Typically monuments have been the focus of study and not the layout and use of the site, for example how the orientation of the ridge may influence or be reconciled with the ideal orientation relating to the cardinal directions and surrounding settlements.

It should be noted that Khao Kha no. 4 appears to be a typical Hindu shrine with *mandapa* in front, not too different from the Bujang Valley shrines. A yoni and an image of Vishnu were found at the site and the image appears to be first half of the 6th century (Figs. 3.15, 3.16). During my site visit around 1992, site no. 2 appeared to be a rectangular hall (*mandapa*) entered from one of the long sides, which may have faced an elevated open terrace along one long side. It may have served the various functions as the many *mandapas* found in Hindu temple complexes of India and Southeast Asia.

This book is ‘a must-read’ for anyone working on history and culture of the Malay-Thai peninsula or the early history of Southeast Asia. It presents a wealth of relevant information, both from new archaeological surveys and excavations by its author and by bringing together much scattered earlier work. Furthermore, in spite of providing a wealth of data along with suggesting reasonable interpretations, it makes clear there is more work to do and should inspire new studies.

Pinna Indorf