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Formation of Cities and State of Dvaravati

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Dvaravati refers to the early polities from 6th to 9th centuries in Thailand. The name means “Gate to the port in Sanskrit. Although some Chinese texts, such as *the New History of Tang*” and other histories, and Chinese pilgrims’ documents, refer to the existence of the Dvaravati Kingdom, there was no archaeological evidence to prove its existence until two silver coins, inscribed in Pallava letters with “*sridavaravati svarnapunya*” meaning “the merit of the Lord Dvaravati”, were first found at the Buddhist temple Wat Phra Phrathon in Nakhon Pathom in 1943. This type of coins was distributed in the west Chao Phraya River basin, such as U-Thong, Ban Khu Muang, and Dong Khon (Saraya 1999, 24). This area seems to have been the center of Dvaravati. I have divided Dvaravati into two categories: one composed of port polities and inland cities in a wider sense, and another of port polities along the Gulf of Thailand in a narrower sense.



Figure Massive Stupa Khao Klang Noi near Sri Thep.

In the first century B.C.E., many kinds of regalia and commodities were traded on these networks in the inland and South China Sea. For example, from the 4th century B.C.E, bronze drums were distributed in wider areas in Southeast Asia, from North Vietnam to the Moluccas and the west end of the New Guinea Island. Additionally, double-animal-headed earrings and three-knobbed earrings of the Sa-Huynh culture in Vietnam were distributed along the coastal areas of South China Sea, and nephrite stones as the raw material for these earrings were brought from East Taiwan to Southeast Asia (Iizuka 2010, 61–2). On the east coast of Kra Isthmus of Malay Peninsula, many goods of Chinese and Indian origin were found at the site of Khao Sam Keo (Bellina-Pryce 2006, 281–2), including bronze mirrors, a bronze seal, potsherds, and jade pendants of the West Han Dynasty. Furthermore, stone seals with engraved names in South Indian letters, dating between the first century B.C.E. and the first century C.E., and many kinds of glass beads from India were found. Rouletted wares were also distributed in west Java and the northern coast of Bali. Immigrants from India settled in Southeast Asia and thereafter the technique of making glass beads was introduced.

The maritime trade routes between India and Southeast Asia passed Kra Isthmus. Indian merchants arrived at the east coast of the peninsula, proceeded to the east coast, passing the isthmus by land, and then sailed into the Gulf of Thailand on board. The coastal area of the Gulf of Thailand is the nearest of the Indian merchants’

destinations in Southeast Asia. This coastal area became one of the trade centers for Indian merchants, and cities and polities were formed here.

Prehistoric villages in Thailand usually developed into citadels. At the site of Muang Fa Daet, a big moated city-site of the Dvaravati period in Kalasin Province Northeast Thailand, a cemetery dated after the 3rd century B.C.E. was excavated (Nitta 2005, 79). The overlap of the prehistoric village and the Dvaravati city shows its continuous occupation before the urbanization. As for the population concentration, moated sites in the basin of River Mun in Northeast Thailand are very important. Large moated villages were constructed before the Dvaravati period, to absorb the large population, from the 3rd century B.C.E. to the 3rd century C.E., according to the excavations of the sites Noen U Loke and Ban Non Wat along River Mun in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. Large moated sites along Mun River show that population concentration developed before the construction of cities in the Dvaravati period.

Before the so-called Indianization of Southeast Asia and the commencement of Dvaravati, widespread trade networks were established in Southeast Asia and the populations concentrated at these intersections.

When these internal trade networks were connected with the international ones, cities and early polities were formed in Southeast Asia. Port polities came up in the coastal areas as points of international trade, and inland villages grew into cities as supply centers of exported forest products. Villages between the coastal ports and the inland cities became relay station cities of these trade products.

In the 6th century, Dvaravati cities such as Kubua and U-Thong were formed and flourished on the west coast of the Gulf of Thailand. They were encircled by the moats, and Buddhist temples and stupas were constructed inside and outside the cities. Pots containing silver coins were buried as offerings under the stupas. People were mainly devoted to Theravada Buddhism, but Hinduism was also accepted. In U-Thong, mukha-lingas and a copper plate were found, the latter dated to the 7th century and had in the engraving that Harshavarman, grandson of Ishanavarman, offered a palanquin, umbrellas, and musical instruments to Siva ling (Indrawooth 1999, 139; Saraya 1999, 26). Lingas and yonis were also found at Khok Changdin in the suburbs of U-Thong. Hinduism was widely accepted in other cities such as Sri Thep in Northeast Thailand and Don Si Maha Pot on the east coast of the Gulf. Mahayana Buddhism was also followed in the 8th century (Vallibhotama 1986, 231). A relief of an elephant that had 6 tusks, symbolized as Bodhisattva in the Jatakas, was found in Nakhon Chaisri. In the 7th century, Nakhon Chaisri, which is present-day Nakhon Pathom, became a center of Dvaravati polity. Some silver coins, engraved with the Pallava letters "sridvaravatisubarnapunya", were found in and around Nakhon Chaisri. Another coin was found at Ban Khok, north of U-Thong. This is a rising sun-type silver coin that was engraved with "Lavapura", where *lava* means Lavo, referring to present-day Lopburi, and *pura* means city. This coin shows that a city existed at Lavo. Rising sun-type coins were circulated as a way of settlement for trade in Dvaravati cities.

Cities were formed on the trade routes between the coast and the inland. Sri-Thep was a local center that developed into a city. It is situated at a strategic point on the trade route between the central plain and northeast Thailand. In the beginning, Sri Thep was an encircled moated village. As trade between the coast and the inland became brisk, Sri Thep developed more and more, and its population grew. The city area of Sri Thep was enlarged eastwards to manage the population growth; this enlarged area was rectangular, influenced by Indian city planning. The community of Sri Thep also accumulated wealth, enough to construct a massive stupa nearby, Khao Klang Nok. These massive stupas were constructed in competition with other rivals in U-Thong, Kubua, Thung Setthii (Petchaburi province), Nakhon Chaisri, Lavo and so on.

Northeast Thailand was a supply center of forest products, which were exported in international trade. As a

result of its connection with international trade routes, Dvaravati culture invaded into northeast Thailand where a lot of moated villages were distributed, especially along the Upper Mun basin. Many Dvaravati-style potsherds, sema stones, stone pestles, and querns have been found in the villages. Dvaravati culture crossed the Mekong and entered Laos as well; Dvaravati-style sema stones were distributed along the east bank of the Mekong. I confirmed the sighting of many sema stones at Ban Na Nga north of Vientiane, and Ban Na Muang, Ban Si Khai, Ban Khan, and other villages in Savanakheth province.

Dvaravati cities had three types of city plans. Type A was a city developed from a rural village; these were moated villages with free plans and were distributed in the northeast. Type B was an enlarged city developed from a local village, originally a rural village. These were supply centers of forest products on the trade routes between the ports on the coast and the northeast. As the trade became more active and the population grew, they had to expand their city areas. The expanded area was usually rectangular, influenced by Indian city planning. Type C was a port polity along the coast of the Gulf of Thailand. These were constructed as import-export bases for the international trade. Their city plans were also roughly rectangular, influenced by Indian city planning.

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At the Origins of Srivijaya: The Emergence of State and Cities in Southeast Sumatra

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Archaeological research in southeast Sumatra during the past two decades has brought to light a considerable amount of new data regarding the state formation process that resulted in the late 7th century CE foundation of the Srivijaya polity. Contrary to the process illustrated in early studies, but confirming Oliver Wolters' "favoured coast" hypothesis, it is now apparent that proto-historic settlements, some of them possibly proto-urban, had developed in both the Jambi and Musi river basins centuries before the birth of Srivijaya. Sizeable settlement sites, in particular, have been identified at Karang Agung and Air Sugihan, downstream from Palembang, not far from the present day coastline, in a back mangrove environment. Some appear to have been referred to in Chinese sources in the 5th and 6th centuries and show signs of having adopted Indic religions and language.

Based on the new data, it is possible now to offer a renewed view of the birth of Srivijaya. Various factors may have contributed to shape the new polity. Geographical determinism must be taken into consideration to explain the positioning of the new capital-city at Palembang, on firmer ground, much further upstream than the earlier



Figure Balai Arkeologi Palembang Excavations at Karang Agung, 2002: 3rd–4th Century AD Wooden Poles of Settlement Houses.