

# **The private Kingdom**

**Evaluating the economic importance  
of trade in the past; with focus on the  
Cambodian Medieval Kingdom and  
the Maritime Silk Road trade.**



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**Cover: The first temple mountain, *Bakong*, located in the Rolous temple group, preceding the capital of Angkor (Authors private picture 2011).**

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## Chapter 1.

## Introduction

*“It is an incontestable fact that merchants played an important role in the transmission of culture in South and Southeast Asia”* (Chutiwongs 2004, 540)

*“Trade and interaction thus seem likely to have been a fundamentally creative, destabilizing, sometimes perhaps even critical force in the promotion the development of civilization”* (Adams 2001, 349).

*“Trade appears to have been the key to economic growth; control of trade appears to have provided the key to political development”* (Christie 1995, 277)

*“The waxing and waning of states in various parts of Southeast Asia were directly tied to shifting international trade routes”* (Hall 1985, 25)

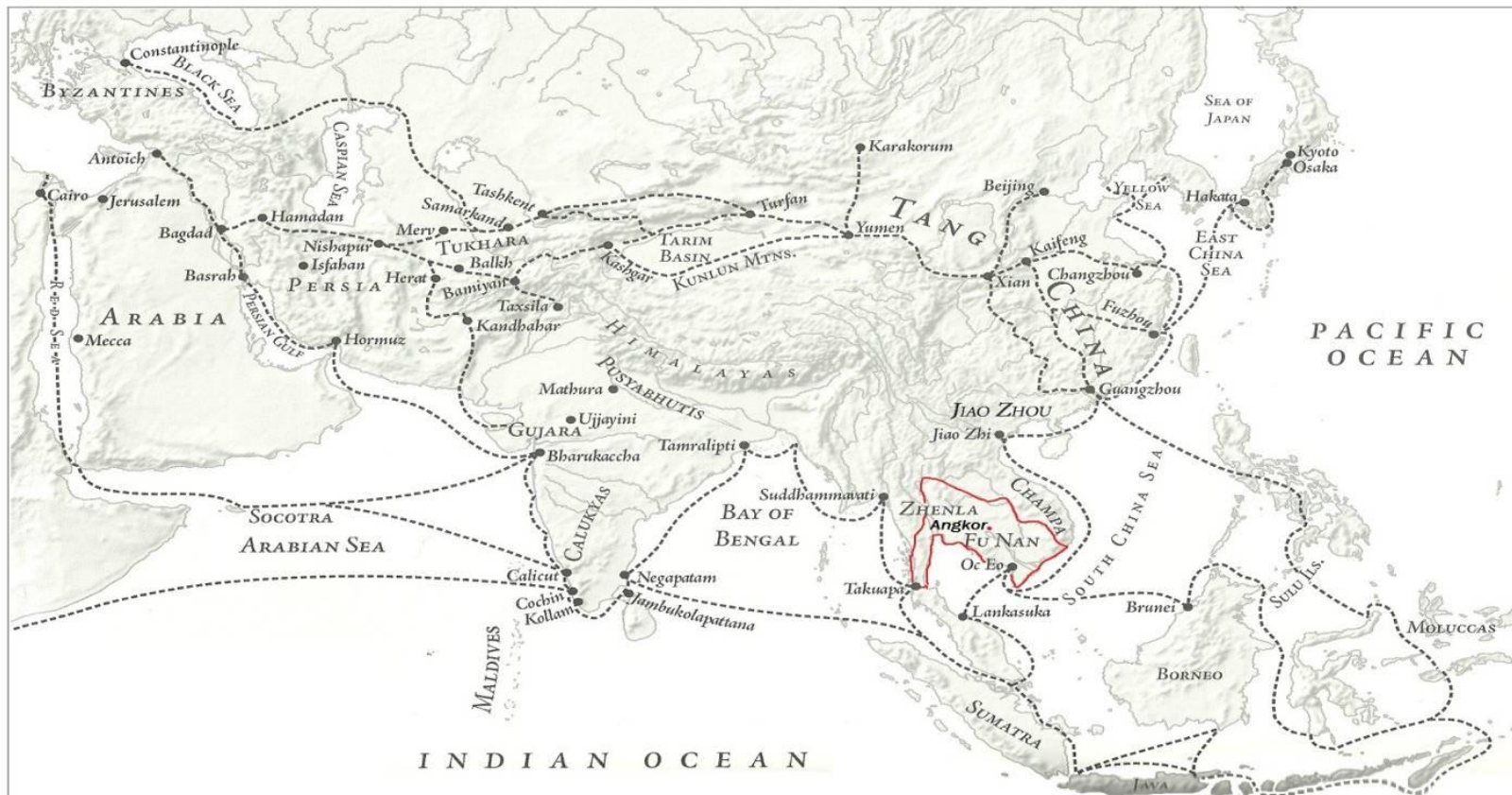
Trade as the medium of interaction is awarded a central role in archaeology, as the way ideas spread (Renfrew 1975; Flannery 1983; Binford 1972, 204). When concerning the late Iron Age and Medieval period (c. A.D. 200-1400), set trade is often interpret both as socially and economically significant, as the above quotes illustrates. Trade, in this period is often perceived as socially influential, conducted as a rational endeavor and motivated by profit maximization. However is trade and profits awarded an excessive role in the civilizations of the past?

By reexamining historical sources and archaeological data this thesis will evaluate if trade was essential to the medieval Cambodian Kingdom’s economic strategy.

It is the impression that the emphasis on trade is resting on a theoretical perspective and less on factual data derived from archaeology. The economic importance of trade forms a dominant paradigm, especially in regards to the medieval period in Southeast Asia (e.g. Oka & Kusimba 2008, 349). The region display religious influences from foreign lands like China, India and the Middle East, introduced through the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium A.D.. The reason why foreign cultures were adapted into Southeast Asia initially rested on migration and occupation theories (Legge 1999, 7). However, those theories made the indigenous people into passive receivers of foreign ideas, and have been abandoned (e.g. Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002, 492-3; Higham 2002, 224-5). All the dominating theories of the cultural spread today relates to trade, in particular the

establishment of a long distance maritime trade route between the Middle East and China; the ‘Silk Road’ seen in figure 1 (Higham 2002, 230-5; Hall 1999a, 192-5; Glover 1989, 2-4).

Essential parts of the Southeast Asian civilizations history therefore are closely linked to trade, which makes it an interesting subject to examine from an archaeological viewpoint.



**Fig. 1. Map of the Silk Roads in the 7th century A.D., Angkor Kingdom at its height of power from 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century has been marked (from Khoo 2003, x).**

The thesis will focus on the Cambodian Kingdom in its evaluation, which for several reasons is interesting in regards to the Silk Road trade. The Kingdom was a powerful realm with vast territories towards the sea, which for that reason alone could be expected to have been involved in the Silk Road trade. The Kingdom also adopted Indian religious ideas, writing and statecraft (Coedes 1962, 54-6; Kulke 1986, 7-8) which documents that they had foreign contacts. Lastly, the capital Angkor was the center for c. 600 years, A.D. 802-1431. That makes Angkor an interesting constant source of data, in a period that witnessed an extensive escalation in the international trade (Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002, 413-5).

The general consensus today is the mainland states in Southeast Asia; Burma, Thailand and Cambodia, during the reign of Angkor were less concerned with trade, compared to the

insular regions (Shaffer 1996, 3; Allen 1997, 81; Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002, 96). The location of Angkor far inland also suggests that the Kingdom practiced an agriculture economic strategy rather than maritime commerce. Nevertheless, historians and archaeologist alike have suggested both agriculture and trade were actively pursued by Angkor Kingdom (Hall 1999, 246; Higham 1998, 196). States, rulers and merchants all supposedly pursued the profitable trade, which could make or break the states (Wade 2009, 221; Bronson 1977, 40).

A few recent scholars have degraded trade's commercial scale and organization. John Miksic, working with the Chinese ceramics data found at Angkor, believes the distribution and quantities suggest that the import here was limited in comparison to the insular regions (Miksic 2006a, 6-8; Miksic 2009a, 74). Victor Lieberman made a similar assessment in regards to trade in medieval Burma (Lieberman 2003a; Lieberman 2010). However, trade still forms the dominant discourse today and none of the two attempted to lead their thoughts to a broader critique of the economic motives behind the 'Silk Road' paradigm.

The paper will therefore in the following chapter attempt to establish the theoretical background the trade paradigm and its assumptions rest on. I suggest the economic determinacy has its roots in Marxist and later Cliometrics economic thinking. Today, all scholars are aware of the Marxist thinking and its inherent weaknesses, but the American New Economic thinking has remained almost unchallenged (Boldizzoni 2011, 5-7), at least in regards to Southeast Asian history.

After establishing the theoretical background I will turn to the Cambodian case. Chapter 3 reviews the non archaeological sources, related to the 600 years reign from the capital of Angkor. Temple reliefs, Chinese documents and religious inscriptions on temples are the main sources of information in the country, where archaeological excavations have remained limited (Coe 2004, 197-9). The non archaeological sources were, by the first visiting scholars, studied to establishing a cultural historical storyline of Cambodia (Stark 2004, 102). However, from the 1970s, the focus changed to the study of the socio-economic structures instead (e.g. Sahai 1978, 18; Sahai 1977b, 35; Jacques 1986, 327; Hall 1975; Wicks 1992, 183-195). These historical and artistic sources have been used to illustrate the Kingdom's economic interests and are therefore interesting to reexamine in the scope of this thesis.

Historical sources are influenced by their authors; Chinese merchant documents might emphasize trade whereas temple inscriptions speak about religion. Archaeology therefore is an important data tool, to establish what actually was being shipped in the Kingdom and give a sense of the scale. After the historical source I will therefore be treating the relevant archaeological data to evaluate whether trade was essential to the medieval Cambodian Kingdom economic strategy.



Archaeological data can be a useful source of information, although it is an interpretive science like history, it is still dealing with tangible and numerical data. The weakness is that most of a material culture cannot be identified in an archaeological context, only the durable materials. When dealing with medieval trade routes using archaeological sources, it is therefore necessary to define;

- 1) What archaeological data could be expected from the trade?
- 2) What quantities should be found to suggest trade was on a large scale?
- 3) What distribution pattern should be expected from large scale trade?

The Cambodian archaeological data is problematic; much of the archaeological work done here relates to temple reconstructions and safeguarding (Stark 2004, 102; e.g. UNESCO 2011). Temple construction phases and artistic styles are well established, but have little relevance in regards to the scope of this thesis. Actual archaeological excavations to create stratigraphic data have been minimal.

From Chinese sources we know that Cambodia produced no durable goods meant for the Chinese markets. The country's exports were organic raw materials, like ivory, skins and feathers (Kraan 2009, 9; Coe 2004, 149) which will be impossible to trace to Cambodia, even if they were retrieved in an archaeological context.

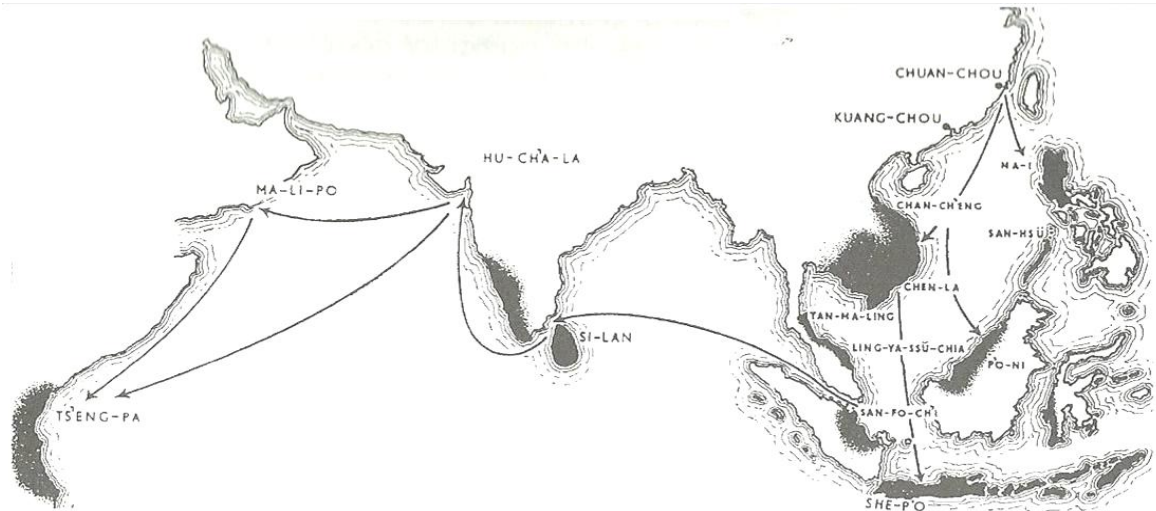
Indian and Roman objects like beads, coins and ceramics, arrive in the Mekong Delta, at sites like Oc Eo during parts of the Iron Age, c. A.D. 0 - 400 (Glover 1989, 4, 19). But this trade seems to end with the Cambodian Zhenla kingdoms A.D. 550 and later Angkor dynasties A.D. 802 takes power.<sup>1</sup> It seems that at this time, durable goods from India stopped arriving to the country (Groslier 1981, 35). Middle Eastern glass, which was shipped regularly towards China as part of the cargo from the 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Jiayao 1996, 134), is to my knowledge also missing from the Cambodian archaeological context.

The archaeological data this thesis will investigate in more detail is the durable Cambodian goods, which might have been exported within the Southeast Asian realm. However the main attention will be on Chinese exports. The Silk Road trade is characterized in the European mentality by Chinese goods like tea, lacquer ware, silks and porcelain, and these products were also reaching the markets at Angkor (Daguan 1296/7, in Harris 70-1). Unfortunately, most of these objects would be irretrievable from an archaeological context today, except for the porcelain. Chinese porcelain is durable, recognizable and had a worldwide

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<sup>1</sup> For ease of reference; appendix 1 and 2 in the back, respectively illustrates the relevant dynasties reign and a larger map of sites mentioned in this thesis.

distribution in the medieval period, illustrated in figure 2. Chinese ceramics was exported in great numbers during the entire reign of Angkor, which makes it an excellent material group to examine in regards to Cambodia and the Silk Road trade.



**Fig. 2. Song dynasty ceramics distribution map and trade routes, with the Chinese names (Mathers & Flecker 1997, 103)**

The economic importance of trade at the time is seen as fundamental for the development and prosperity of the civilizations in the medieval period. Chapter four reviews whether the archaeological data can support that trade had such an importance for Cambodia. Chapter 5 will extend the question to establish if trade at all, seems to have been socially significant in Angkor society. Finally, the discussion will address weaknesses in the thesis, but will also attempt to extend the Cambodian case to a wider criticism of economic determinism in the past. Although there has been a theoretical break with Marxism, economic motives still seemingly are positioned at the heart of most long and short term developments.

## Chapter 2

## Economic focus in archaeology

The introduction proposed that many archaeological publications have emphasized economic strategies in order to understand a society's long term developments. The idea of focusing on underpinning economic circumstances rather than on singular events was formulated by the Marxist theorists and the French Annals School in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Boldizzoni 2011, 120; Trigger 1989, 222-3). Their aim was to trace the history of capitalism and its influence in shaping the world (Preucel & Mrozowski 2010, 12). In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century economic history had become an established study, which argued that economic structures were instrumental for understanding societies (Boldizzoni 2011, 2-3).

The study of the economic strategies was introduced into western archaeology by Gordon Childe (1892-1957), who had been inspired by Soviet Marxist theory (Greene & Moore 2010, 46). The Marxist economic theory, which focused on raw materials, production, and specialization, was perceived as a more scientific means of approaching the past than earlier cultural, historic, nationalistic, and sometime even racist views (Trigger 1989, 250-251).

The study of economic strategies to understand social structures have been well integrated into the archaeological school of Processualism (Trigger 1989, 314-5). Universal patterns for societies were being formulated in which geography; environment, production specialization and economic strategies were considered key components (Preucel & Mrozowski 2010, 5-6). Karl August Wittfogel's hydraulic society's theory is a perfect example of how economic strategy was believed to form the societal structure. Wittfogel suggested that hydraulic societies; meaning societies that relied on the construction of large dams and dikes to have irrigation. Eventually would create social classes of workers and planners which eventually developed into despotic leadership (Wittfogel 1957, 43).

Processualism is concerned with general patterns and long-term developments, and downplays the role of the individual. It suggests that the individual is shaped by the social structure, which in turn was shaped by larger forces such as geography, climate, and economic strategy. Individuals and migration are therefore considered to be of minor influence (Trigger 1989, 296, 302).

The Processualist view of humans' ability to shape its society had difficulty in explaining cultural differences, social developments and change. The Processual view is challenged by social anthropologists and sociologists, whom argue that social practices are too different between cultures to be understood from production or environmental determinacy alone. They instead

suggest that structure is a product from the combination of individual and the larger structural forces (Bourdieu 1972, 72; Preucel & Mrozowski 2010, 20-2).

Anthropology's dynamic perspective on society was introduced into archaeology through post-Processualism, which emphasizes development and the particular traits of a society (Trigger 1989, 348). Post-Processualism does not perceive the society as a unified whole, but instead as a dynamic mix of people and ideas that changed frequently (Renfrew 2001, 131-2).

Unlike Processualism, Post-Processualism is very interested in migration, interaction, and exchange, which are perceived as important to understanding how ideas got mixed and why societies changed (Trigger 1989, 330). Post-Processualism's focus on interaction as the source of understanding social developments naturally places trade in a paramount social role (e.g. Adams 2001, 349).

There is an ongoing debate (e.g. Oka & Kusimba 2008, 340-2) whether interaction with foreign groups was a natural human state, or if it was an occurrence motivated by wants and needs such as prestige, profit, or social security. However, when dealing with long distance interaction in medieval Southeast Asia, the profit motives have generally been emphasized:

*“Perhaps because of numerous epigraphic references to markets, traders, and commerce in Southeast Asian economies predating European arrival, there was no effort to negate economic underpinnings for exchange”* (Oka & Kusimba 2008, 349).

Trade was not only perceived as a way to spread new ideas and innovations but also a source for economic rise and demise along the trade routes (Bronson 1977). Processualism's economic thinking mainly had been influenced by Marxism (Barnard 2000, 81), but the economic structures regarding trade seems to have been inspired by American economic beliefs after World War II. The American academia embraced universal humanism and (capitalistic) global economic interaction, as opposed to European 'political archaeology' (Trigger 1989, 314-5).

The economic Cliometrics school arose in America during the 20<sup>th</sup> century as an opponent to a Marxist approach in viewing global interaction. The approach gained momentum as the Marxist regimes collapse, which was interpreted as the result of an economic strategy that had opposed the human nature. Instead of perceiving economy in terms of social classes and exploitation, Cliometrics view capitalism and market forces as the source for human developments, ingenuity, initiative and diligent drives (Boldizzoni 2011, 4). Establishing capitalism, or at least maximization strategies, as natural to human nature, its origin were sought in the markets of the past (Boldizzoni 2011, 72, 74).

The Cliometrics theories of maximization strategies and rational driven exchange were challenged by archaeologists, anthropologists and economist alike. The alternative Substantive view, argues that the rational capitalistic markets systems, govern by supply and demand is a modern impression with little substance for the past (Dalton 1975, 101; Polanyi 1957, 45). However, the economic perception regarding Silk Road trade in Southeast Asia, in my impression is imbedded in the Cliometrics view.

The economic profit motives in Silk Road trade remains unchallenged, but another relevant debate has divided the scholars in *Primitivist* and *Modernist*. *Primitivist* generally argues that the past was random and irrational, whereas the *Modernist* suggests the past was rational and organized. A typical debate between the positions has been to what extent blacksmiths in the past were aware of their metal compositions (e.g. Pearce 1998). The Primitivist-Modernist debate regarding Silk Road trade has been scale and organization of the trade. Primitivist argues that trade was conducted on a local scale; long distance trade would have been unsystematic with little economic significance for the societies involved (Laur 1955, 88; Lieberman 2010). The Modernist instead argues trade in the past had been socially important, developed and organized, comparable to the industrial world (Wade 2009, 224; Chase-Dunn & Hall 1997, 29).

Chinese shipping documents, early European travel accounts, Chinese ceramics distribution and shipwrecks all have supported that trade was organized and economically significant. Especially shipwreck archaeology revealed an extensive bulk trade prior to the European arrival. Not only did luxury items travel long distances, but also raw materials including metal, woods and pepper wares (Flecker 2009, 40). All this information has meant that most scholars working in the region today have adapted the Modernist view (see chapter 2.3).

## **Chapter 2.1. Trade and profit**

The Substantive challenged the Cliometrics theories, as mentioned above, Karl Polanyi's seminal work are essential to review in that debate (Dalton 1975, 65, Carney 1973, 17; Boldizzoni 2011, 20). He was inspired by early 20<sup>th</sup> century anthropological work, which made him questioned the antiquity of rational maximization trade strategies (Polanyi 1957; Polanyi 1975). Polanyi suggested exchange had developed in an evolutionary fashion, seen in table 1. The profit motives in our modern day market were the result of a long social and economic development.

Initially all exchange interaction would have been for personal relations, most people were largely self sufficient. However with increased social complexity and product specialization, exchange would become part of a *redistributive* economy. Yet, the specialized goods and crafts

were still rare and only certain social classes had access to specialized or foreign goods. Eventually, as the populations, production and exchange grew, so would the specialized objects become accessible to all, developing into a *market* economy, in which people were less self sufficient (Polanyi 1975, 133-138; Carney 1973, 21-2). The Silk Road trade has been positioned as a market exchange economy (Wade 2009; Shaffer 1996; Hall 1985), between states that appear to have practiced a redistributive exchange (Sahai 1977a; Sahai 1977b).

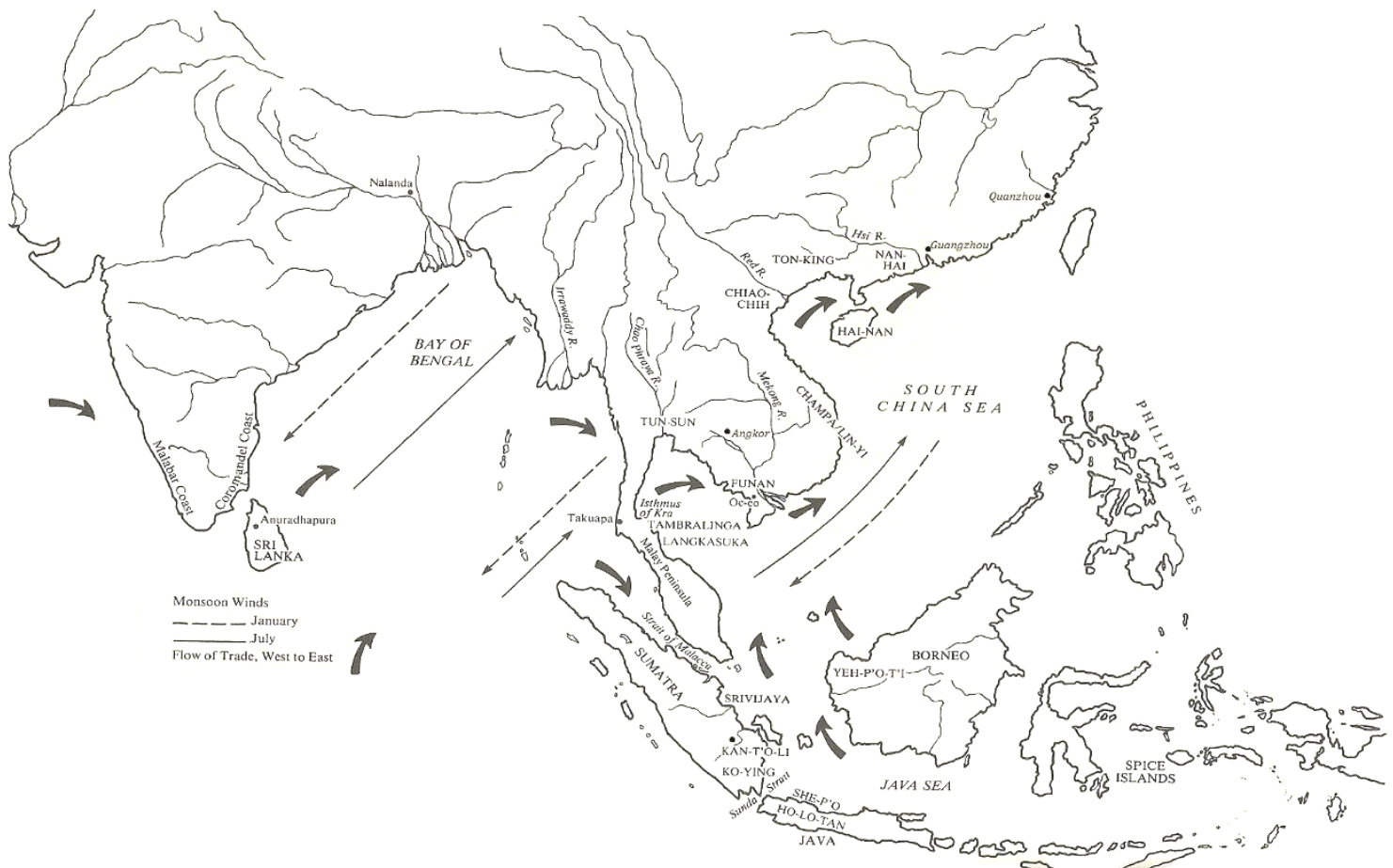
**Table 1. Polanyi exchange system model (from Carney 1973, 21-2).**

<b>Social system</b>	<b>Exchange model</b>	<b>Level of social interaction</b>
Egalitarian	Reciprocity	Personal
Chiefdoms	Redistribution	Partly personal
States	Market	Impersonal

The model has been meeting criticism; some suggest that material exchange and gain motives always would have been the driving force for long distance contact, also regarding early exchange, and the social side of exchange is overemphasized (Oka & Kusimba 2008, 356, 364). Another weakness is that multiple exchange modes and motivations could have existed simultaneously within a culture (Chase-Dunn & Hall 1997, 31). Chinese documents formulated by merchants visiting Angkor describe trade along capitalistic market structures (Hirth & Rockhill 1912, 53), whereas the temple inscriptions seem to refer to a religiously established redistribution system (Sahai 1977a, 131, 133). Polanyi did not deny that market trade could have been present earlier than the western industrialization, but maintained that reciprocity and redistribution defined the majority of transactions in the past (Boldizzoni 2011, 22).

## **Chapter 2.2. The Chinese Silk Road trade**

It seems prudent at this time to sketch the setting for international trade during Angkor's reign. The Silk Road was a caravan route that came into use at the end of the first millennium B.C.; transporting prestige goods between the Chinese, Roman, and Arab world (Hall 1999a, 195; Schaffer 1996, 23; Glover 1989, 47-8). After sailors knew how to use the monsoon wind patterns for long distance travel, seen in figure 3, ships could use the shifting seasonal winds to cross the open sea in certain times a year. The maritime development brought Indian, Malay and Middle Eastern sailors to trade hubs along the long distance trade route to China (Shaffer 1996, 29; Hall 1999a, 193).



**Fig. 3. Map of the monsoon winds. Ships would pass the Cambodian coast lines around August and February, about a month after they left Guangzhou or Srivijaya (Hall 1985, 22).**

The merchant ships followed the changing monsoon wind and would leave as soon as the wind changed (Shaffer 1996, 81). The regularity of monsoon wind travel would have meant that the international trade passed Cambodian shores around August and February; about a month after the ships would have left the main ports in the East or West. Sailing up to Angkor would then have been an additional month of travel, according to a Chinese travel account (Daguan 1296/7, in Harris 2007, 45).

The historical record reveals that there was a substantial amount of foreigners engaged in trade around the establishment of Angkor A.D. 802. It is known from Chinese sources that Indian merchants lived in China from the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and that the Indian Buddhist religion was commonly practiced in Southeast Asia already in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (Coe 2004, 58-9; Wade 2009, 236). Foreign merchants even sacked and burned the city of Guangzhou in A.D. 758, and a later Chinese revolt A.D. 874 resulted in the killing of over a 100,000 foreigners (Hirth & Rockhill 1912, 15, 18; Federspiel 2007, 19). Such vast number of people supports the Modernist perspective on the maritime Silk Road.

The existence of something similar to a market economy, driven by supply and demand and necessities, also can be suggested from Chinese shipping records. The Chinese exported highly specialized products like steel, cast iron, silk, tea, brocades, lacquer ware, copper coins,

and ceramics, which were wanted outside its realm. The products imported by the Chinese were foreign exotics such as spices, ivory, feathers, rhinoceros horns, turtle shells and scented wood. The foreign merchants arriving in China were required to pay some of their merchandise as toll, which the Chinese officials sold in the Chinese markets for gold, rice, straw, and other goods (Pearson *et. al.* 2002, 28; Hirth & Rockhill 1912, 19). Although the products imported seem to have been unnecessary luxury items, some of the metal exports could have been essential on the markets along the Silk Road.

International trade with China escalated through the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium A.D.. From the 10<sup>th</sup> century Guangzhou harbor records we know that the town received direct trade from Arabia, the Malay Peninsula, Tongking, Siam, Java, Western Sumatra, Western Borneo and the Philippines islands, but there is no mention of Zhenla; the Chinese name for Cambodia, at this time (Hirth & Rockhill 1912, 19).

The Chinese Song dynasty A.D. 960-1279 has been credited with introducing trade as an economic strategy into the empire (Lo 1969, 58). The Chinese ceramics were exported in greater quantities and more shipping ports were opened in the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century for international trade, which previously had been restricted to Guanzhou (Flecker 2001, 221; Pearson *et. al.* 2002, 24). The Song dynasty's reliance on trade seems to have escalated when they lost their northern provinces in 1127; starting the Southern Song dynasty. To protect their border from the north, a strong navy was developed and the court became engaged with maritime affairs, which at the time retrieving most of its revenue from maritime trade (Jacq-Hergoulch 2002, 393). As part of their maritime involvement China granted higher status to some of the Southeast Asian kingdoms, such as Angkor (Lo 1969, 64, 66), which likely means the diplomatic ties became closer at this time.

The following Yuan dynasty A.D. 1271-1369 seems to have escalated the Chinese maritime presence both in regards to navy and trade (Lo 1969, 95). The Yuan attempted to extend their dominance outward after they had defeated the Southern Song and made a series of military expedition into Southeast Asia, attacking Java, Cambodia, North Vietnam and Burma from in the 1270s and 1280s. The campaigns generally seem to have failed, but Angkor, according to Chinese sources, did become a vassal state that paid tribute for little over a decade (Shaffer 1996, 87; Coedes 1966, 124-8).

The last Chinese dynasty relevant for the reign from Angkor was the Ming dynasty A.D. 1368-1644, who show clear signs of being economically trade orientated. They sent out great navies to suppress piracy, explore and establish their supremacy. With the Ming dynasty, export porcelain started to be mass-produced (Christie 1990, 46). They also introduced the tribute



mission structure again. The tribute structure had collapsed during the weakened Southern Song dynasty (Bielenstein 2005, 685-6). The tribute missions were a diplomatic interaction in which foreign rulers were invited to present gifts and formally acknowledge the Chinese emperor as their sovereign, in return for symbolic titles and rich gifts (Zurndorfer 2004, 22-3; Bielenstein 2005, 6). The tribute missions were expensive for the Chinese court, who reciprocated all gifts with equal or greater value (Serruys 1967, 211). The Chinese court therefore was selective about who they accepted and on what rank. Curiously the maritime super power in Southeast Asia, Srivijaya was awarded a lower status by the Song court (Bielenstein 2005, 62). The Chinese emperor Taizu (1370-98), even considered Ayutthaya and Cambodia as the only “*well behaved*” and rejected missions from several other ports (Baker 2003, 49).

Chinese – Cambodian interaction seems from the historical sources to have escalated from the Southern Song dynasty, but especially from the Yuan’s direct involvement in Southeast Asia. However, the Chinese foreign policies through the dynasties were not stable; they had several periods of mass embargoes, passivity or expansions (van Leur 1955, 84). The Chinese highest nobility even exercised a (public) indifference towards wealth (Liu 1988, 84) and foreign trade was deemed an unworthy object of interest in high policy china (Dalton 1975, 107). Economic rationality, at least on the highest level of the society, therefore appears to be less convincing. The impression could of course be questioned, others have suggested the Chinese court and the tribute missions clearly had rational commercial motives (Wade 2009, 224-5), which brings us back to the Primitivist – Modernist perspectives.

### **Chapter 2.3. Cambodia’s Economic Focus**

The Chinese maritime trade, beginning with Tang dynasty and escalating from the Song dynasty onwards, seems to have been a later influence on Cambodia. The pre-Angkor kingdoms, the Zhenla kingdoms, A.D. 550-802 neglected maritime trade to pursue an agricultural economy (Coe 2004, 68). The agricultural program around the Cambodian rivers and lakes generally has been perceived as the source for Angkor’s prosperity (Groslier 1986, 261; Stark 2004, 100; Coedes 1962, 103). However, with Angkor’s increasing power in the region and the growing scale of the maritime Silk Road trade in the 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, Angkor supposedly became interested in participating in the international trade routes.

The global economic focus in archaeology emerging after World War II has influenced the study of Cambodia. The leading western scholars in the region such as Bernard Philippe Groslier, Ian Glover, Charles Higham, Miriam Stark, Pierre-Yves Manguin, and in particular

Kenneth Hall all seem to have adopted the Cliometrics and Modernist view on the Silk Road trade.

Archaeologists Higham, Stark, and Glover work with the preceding Iron Age period (c. 200 B.C.-600 A.D.); Glover and Higham worked with data from Thailand, Stark studied the Mekong Delta. Higham's focus has mainly been on the internal economic system, but all three have emphasized the importance of maritime trade for the region's economic and social development (e.g. Glover 1996, 59; Higham 2002, 231; Stark 2004, 100, 106).

The idea that trade was economically and socially significant is most prominent in Hall and Manguin's work, which both link the maritime trade to development and economic growth in Southeast Asia (Manguin 2004, 300; Hall 1985, 9; Hall 1999a, 189, 196). Hall in particular fully adopted the Cliometrics perspective, visible in his resolve to recognize rational economic profit motives through the entire region's history (e.g. Hall 1985; Hall 1999a).

Groslier, a Marxist-inspired French archaeologist (Coe 2004, 17), emphasizes the underpinning economic strategies of the social structure. His interest is on the agricultural and religious structures not trade (e.g. Groslier 1986), but still considers the Chinese import trade to have been substantial enough to have outmoded indigenous developments in Cambodia from the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Groslier 1981, 21).

Even though there exists the general consensus that trade was of a limited influence to Angkor (Shaffer 1996, 3; Stark 2004, 107; Jacques 1986, 332), most scholars today seems to have been influenced by the economic trade discourse. Boldizzoni's attack on the rational economic Cliometrics view, laments how;

*“The majority of the younger contributors are willing to agree more or less passively to adapt their narratives to rational choice, new institutional and law-and-economics models”*

(Boldizzoni 2011, 78).

Although Boldizzoni is referring to historians working with classical studies, it is my impression that the same observation applies to Southeast Asia. The last four decades of work in this region positioned Silk Road trade in a Modernist perspective, heavily influenced by Cliometrics. It has created a strong, unchallenged discourse, in which the economic relevance is “*primordial*” for our understanding of the past (Jacques 1986, 330).

## **Chapter 3                      Historical sources regarding Cambodian trade**

The previous chapter suggested the focus on trade in archaeology, as a social and economic significant power, was influenced by the Cliometrics movement. Both Processualism and Post-Processualism seem to have accepted the market economic structures of the Silk Road trade as well as its influence on social developments. The ‘Silk Road’ was a well established discourse when Cambodia re-opened for archaeology after its civil war, but the Kingdom already before that had been positioned as part of the regional trade paradigm (e.g. Hall 1975, 320).

Archaeological data had been next to impossible to retrieve from the country during the wars consequently the economic discourse had been supported through alternative sources of information. This chapter intends to examine the non archaeological sources that have been used to support the trade paradigm. Iron Age finds documented the first foreign influence into Southeast Asia came from India, supposedly brought by trade (e.g. Glover 1989, 11; Hall 1999a, 185). The adaption of Indian social structures, religion, writing and poetry began around 6<sup>th</sup> century (Pollock 1996), inspired from two dominant Indian Hindu empires; the northern Gupta and the Southern Pallavas dynasty.

The early Indian contacts brought foreign objects, glass making technology as well as subsequent wheel thrown ceramics production to the Mekong Delta (Glover & Henderson 1995, 148; Francis 1996, 141, 150). However, from the Zhenla period onwards A.D. 550, trade activities seemed to be rather quiet in the Mekong Delta, as Indian objects disappeared from the archaeological record (Groslier 1981, 35). The loss of Indian trade supposedly is linked to the introduction of monsoon travel, which made it easier to circumvent the Delta (Shaffer 1996, 18). It is interesting to note that the clearest adaption of the Indian styled cultures in Cambodia in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, such as writing and temple constructions, correlates with a drop in known trade from India.

### **Chapter 3.1.                      Epigraphy and trade**

The main source of information from the founding of the Empire A.D. 802 and the following centuries hereafter derives from the epigraphic temple records in Cambodia. According to Claude Jacques, trade and socio-economic structures generally had been ignored in the early studies of the temple epigraphy (Jacques 1986, 327). The situation has changed, in the 1970s when Satchīdananda Sahai used Zhenla and Angkor period inscriptions to create a synchronic picture of the social, juridical and economic structure in the Kingdom (Sahai 1977a, 1977b; 1978). Michael Vickery later argued the inscriptions are too divided in time to create a synchronic whole

(Vickery 1986, 95). Kenneth Hall instead studied the epigraphic record to create a diachronic picture (Hall 1975, 320; Hall 1985, 171).

Hall's study was based on 20 specific references to merchant activities in the Cambodian temple inscriptions between 922-1071 A.D. (Hall 1975, 320). He believed that trade from the 10<sup>th</sup> century began to be part of the established redistributive temple economy, which led to great prosperity (Hall 1985, 169-70). According to Hall, the development was particularly noticeable during the reign of Suryavarman I, who supposedly opened the country's door for large scale trade and introduced official weights and measures (Hall 1985, 173, 175).<sup>2</sup> Such assessment led to the commonly accepted impression that Suryavarman I "*encouraged the growth of a commercial economy*" (Stark 2004, 106). Hall further interpreted the reference to merchants and trade in the inscriptions as a sign of the importance that the nobility put on trade. The Merchant worked for the state, that "*took a definite interest in the economic activities of its domain*" (Hall 1975, 321). Hall mapped the inscriptions mentioning trade in the Kingdom to indicate the trade routes (Hall 1975, 324), and argued based on these inscriptions that Chinese commodities were commonplace in the Cambodian markets from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Hall 1985, 321).

Hall's work has been instrumental in creating the;

*"Commonly accepted perception today, that maritime trade was at the center of state evolution in the region"* (Vickery 1987, 211).

Victor Lieberman states that Hall's work has been seminal in the study of medieval Southeast Asia (Lieberman 2003a, 17). With full respect for his study, I am slightly concerned with his assessments regarding the importance of trade around the reign of Suryavarman I in light of the limited amount of archaeological data he provided to support those assessments. In my view, his study seems to have exaggerated the importance of trade.

The temple inscriptions are referring to religious concerns; we cannot reject the possibility that much of the society were outside the temple system (Jacques 1986, 332). Furthermore, whether the 20 inscriptions can be considered to be representative depends on perspective, but around 1.200 in total has been found in Cambodia (Coe 2004, 39-40). The Indonesian realm had a total of 41 inscriptions mentioning trade, 18 of which probably relates to foreign merchant activities (Wheatley 1975, 266-72). Cambodia's neighboring Kingdom, Champa, and on the other hand never mentioned trade in its inscriptions (Jacques 1986, 333).

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<sup>2</sup> For ease of reference is appendix 3 a list of Cambodian kings, their reign and known international interaction.

Champa were located along the shipping routes and were according to the Chinese involved in both trade and piracy (Lo 1969, 73). It is therefore very difficult to determine if the Cambodian temple inscriptions mentioning merchants and trade, represents rare occurrences or regular economic activities.

The Cambodian epigraphy from A.D. 870 onwards gives little mention of maritime or international subjects (Lieberman 2003a, 223) and Hall's of markets and merchants might not always have been relating to international commerce. Hall relied on older French translations of the inscriptions but his interpretation of markets and merchants have been labeled "*doubtful*" by a Sanskrit expert (Vickery 1987, 212). The standardized scales and weights Hall suggest Suryavarman I introduced, to facilitate the significant international commerce, also "*demand a real imagination*" (Vickery 1987, 212). To my knowledge no standardized scales and weights have been found in Cambodia. It is therefore my impression that the commercial activities might have been slightly overemphasized.

### **Chapter 3.2. War and trade**

The temple inscriptions mainly concern the religion; Hinduism and Buddhism or royal donations. The inscriptions occasionally mention wars and conquests, which seems to be motivated by raiding gains or to prove masculine prowess (McDonald 1981, 62, 64; Hall 1985, 206). However, war in both Marxist and Cliometrics thinking are interpreted as economically motivated, respectively for resources and trade control (e.g. Bronson 1977; Weber 1978, 25; Webb 1975, 191). Subsequently, the military conquests in the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century have been perceived in the Silk Road paradigm, which suggest the wars was fuelled by the Kingdom's desire to control international trade routes (Hall 1985, 171, 173; Lieberman 2003a, 222).

Through the 10<sup>th</sup> century the Cambodian military campaigns had been directed against Champa. Supposedly with the growth of the Silk Road trade, Siam and the Malay Peninsula were becoming more important in the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Hall 1985, 171).<sup>3</sup> Angkor therefore directed its interest towards these mercantile regions and became increasingly involved in foreign luxury trade (Allen 1997, 85). The Cambodian conquest of most of the Malay Peninsula supposedly was motivated by the desire to gain direct access to the international trade routes (Hall 1985, 171; Hall 1999a, 246). Srivijaya on Sumatra controlled the Strait of Malacca, but on the peninsula around the Isthmus of Kra there were overland trade routes that circumvented the straight (Shaffer 1996, 20; Hall 1999a, 246).

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<sup>3</sup> Siam = Thailand



**Fig. 4. Motive depicting the Cambodian army marching to war, from the reliefs of Bayon temple late 12<sup>th</sup> century. (Coe 2004, 187)**

The commercially motivated expansion strategy from Angkor has been supported with other information. One example concerns a gift from Suryavarman I to the Indian Chola dynasty 1020/1 (Jacq-Hergoualch 2002, 354; Hall 1975, 331-2). The Chola dynasty was a maritime power at the time; they occupied or raided Sri Lanka, Maldives Islands and Srivijaya in the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Jacq-Hergoualch 2002, 355). The gift to the Indian court therefore was perceived as an alliance against *Srivijaya*, which according to Chinese sources was the powerful maritime Kingdom in the region (Shaffer 1996, 37). The gift was therefore motivated by a newly arisen need to control and safeguard the trade routes which the Cambodians had conquered on the Peninsula (Hall 1985, 198, 332-4).

However, 9<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> centuries sites on the Malay Peninsula; *Laem Pho* on the east side of the Malay Peninsula and *Ko Kho Khao* on the west (Jacq-Hergoualch 2002, 281, 289), have been used to support the idea of an overland crossing of the Peninsula (e.g. Bronson 1996, 181). But these sites display abandonment and a drop in Chinese and especially Arabic goods between the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries (Jacq-Hergoualch 2002, 391, 421). It could therefore appear that the trade hubs along the coast had lost their strategic role, prior to the Cambodian ‘occupation’.

Further, the actual existence of the overland trade route has been questioned. It is first reported in a Chinese mission to India c. 140-87 B.C., but no later description of such a crossing exists (Jacq-Hergoualch 2002, 31, 50). Early European military expeditions attempted the

crossing, describing it as more problematic than the river systems on maps otherwise would have indicated (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002, 34). The overland crossing (if used) demanded the help from locals living inland, with whom the maritime trade hubs likely had little interaction (Allen 1998, 285; Christie 1990, 45).

The drop in foreign goods on the peninsula does not support commercial interests in the occupation, but there might be undiscovered sites from the 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> centuries that can change the perception in the future. Certain scholars suggested that the declination of international trade was the result of the growing Cambodian kingdom, which weakened the Peninsula, which was drawn into the mainland economic networks; Burma, Thailand and Cambodia effectively circumvented the maritime trade routes (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002, 353-4; Sutherland 2003, 4-5; Hall 1985, 177; Hall 1999a, 246). The occupations meant to access and control a part of the Silk Road trade is on present data unconvincing.

### **Chapter 3.3. Reliefs and trade**

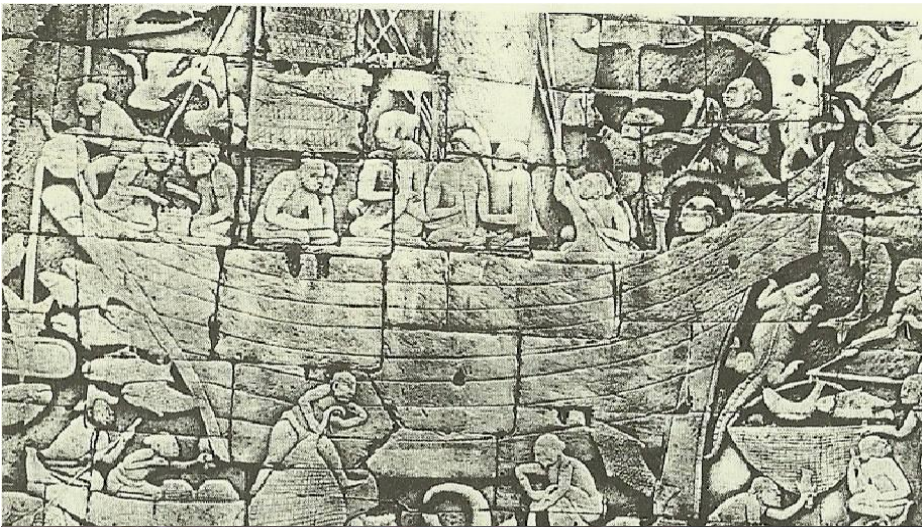
The *Bayon* temple reliefs are one of the most interesting sources of information regarding life in Angkor and Chinese presence here. The *Bayon* temple was built by Jayavarman VII start 13<sup>th</sup> century as a central temple mountain in his reestablishment of Angkor as the capital. Angkor had been raided A.D. 1177 by Champa, which archaeologically has been supported by an extensive burning layer (Jacques 2007, 36). Along the walls of this temple are reliefs depicting local and foreigners, men, women and children and war and peace time (Freeman & Jacques 1999, 84-94). Chinese nobles and commoners on the temple reliefs are identified by their hair knot, local Khmer, Siam and Champa people are identified from their hats, clothes or weapons (Jacques 1995, 33, 38). Accordingly the Chinese could represent settlers (Roveda 2007, 323) or a royal wish to show the Chinese support for the king (Vadillo 2011, 85). Groslier suggested that the Chinese could have been a diplomatic envoy for the crowning of the king, or was meant to symbolize the flourishing commercial activity his reign had begun (Groslier 1973, in Roveda 2007, 351). However, no inscriptions or apparent reading sequence exist on these outer reliefs, they are therefore open for various interpretations (Roveda 2007, 312, 322).

An interesting feature in regards to trade is the depiction of a Chinese junk, which was a large type cargo ship. According to my research, this is the only ocean going vessel depicted on the Cambodian temple relief that otherwise only depicts river crafts, seen in figure 5 and 6. I made the distinction by looking at the ship design on the reliefs of Angkor Wat and Bayon; the normal ships are long, low and with oars, but the junk has a sail and is depicted as very high.



What is interesting about the presentation of a large vessel on the temple reliefs is it shows that these types of vessel did frequent Angkor. A Chinese visitor A.D. 1296 describes how they had to change to a smaller boat for the last part of the journey to Angkor; in addition they had to stay 6 months there, probably waiting for the monsoon winds to change (Daguan 1296/7, in Harris 45-6). Such travel account makes Angkor part of the Silk Road trade between China and the Malacca Strait ports less convincing. Small vessels could have made the trip upriver year round, but Chinese merchants sailed in large junks with many people to ward off pirates (Hirth & Rockhill 1912, 31). Those ships had a deep keel (Manguin 1993, 262, 266) and could have had a hard time reaching or leaving Angkor when the rivers were not flooding. The international shipping depended on the Monsoon winds and would have passed the Cambodian coast twice a year (Hall 1999a, 193), but Daguan's prolonged stay in Angkor could suggest that Chinese merchants going here were not planning to continue further west. I tentatively suggest the logistics of the Silk Road trade and Angkor's location might not have match well, and the products from Cambodia wanted by the Chinese could just as easily have been acquired from Champa or Siam, which were easier accessible for the large ships.

The representation of foreigners, mainly Chinese on the royal temples, does not indicate by itself that there were large scale commercial dealings with China at the time, nor that there was a large permanent Chinese presence at Angkor (Willmott 1966, 15).



**Fig. 5. Chinese Junk depicted on Bayon temple (top), with sail, anchor and deep keel (Zephir 1997, 110).**



**Fig. 6. Boat relief from Angkor Wat, illustrating court leisure on a boat. The boat shape is the type commonly depicted on Bayon and Angkor Wat reliefs; long, slender with many rowers. (Authors private picture 2011)**



### Chapter 3.4.

### Chinese sources

Chinese sources could increase our understanding of Angkor's commercial interests but are rather limited; three Cambodian missions were sent to the Chinese court in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, all by the same Cambodian king, depicted on figure 7. Harbor Master *Chau Ju-Kua's* second hand description of Angkor in 1225. The third and most informative source is Zhou Daguan who visited Angkor in a diplomatic visit A.D. 1296/7 and while there described the country and people. However, it is important to note that the Chinese sources were divided by several generations and only represent a flimsy picture of Cambodian-Chinese interaction.

**Table 2. Main contemporary Chinese sources regarding Angkor (Authors design).**

Name	Year	Chinese dynasty	Reason for contact
Suryavarman II's tribute missions	1116, 1120,1129	Northern Song	Diplomacy
Chau Ju-Kua	1225	Southern Song	Shipping records
Zhou Daguan	1296/7,	Yuan dynasty	Travel account

The tribute missions are not very informative in regards to Angkor society, but they do suggest the Kingdom had external interests. For three hundred years Cambodia didn't sent missions, which suggest a renewed international interest in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. However, the three missions to the Northern Song emperor is in stark contrast to the neighboring Champa kingdoms 57 missions to that dynasty (Bielenstein 2005, 48-9). The types of gifts also differs in that Champa and Srivijaya sent foreign exotics objects such as black slaves, glass from the Middle East, corals, spices and tortoise shells attained outside their realm (Bielenstein 2005, 50, 63); whereas Cambodia sent local products such as elephants, ivory, tiger teeth and feathers. The lack of Western foreign goods given by Angkor suggests that the country at this time did not attract much merchandise from the eastern bound Silk Road trade.

A hundred years later in Harbor Master Chau Ju-Kua's descriptions, it becomes clear that Cambodian products were known in China. Ivory, gharu wood, yellow wax, kingfisher feathers, dammar resin, gourd dammar, foreign oils, raw silk, cotton, sapan wood and colored incense were traded for Chinese gold, silver, porcelain, satinets, skin covered drums, sugar, preserves and vinegar (Hirth & Rockhill 1912,53). I cannot find the support for an economically influential role for Angkor's products in the harbor master record, which Angkor generally is awarded (e.g. Hall 1999, 246; Lustig 2009, 2; Stark 2004, 111; Higham 2001, 136). The objects reported were luxury items, which seem to fit the redistribution needs of a select group (Carney 1973, 68, 109), not trade targeted at a wider population segment in a market economy. The suggestion could be

criticized by our flawed ability to discern between luxury and utilitarian goods in the past (Champion 1989, 8). But it does seem reasonable to suggest that the Chinese gold, silver, porcelain and satin were luxury objects in Angkor since these appear as royal gifts for temples (Coe 2004, 150).



**Fig. 7. Suryavarman II depicted on the reliefs on Angkor Wat. Expanded the Kingdom into neighboring Champa, Da Viet and Siam and sent three diplomatic missions to the Chinese court (Poncar & Maxwell 2006, 131).**

The most influential historical regarding Angkor is *Zhou Daguan*, a Chinese emissary from the Yuan dynasty who visited Angkor A.D. 1296/7. During his 6-months stay in Angkor, he wrote down his observations regarding the customs, people and the country (Hendrickson 2007, 116; Coe 2004, 131). According to him, “*Zhenla has long been a trading country*” (Daguan 1296/7, in Harris 2007, 46). He presented a lush, friendly and rich country, in which Chinese could settle down, trade and easy get women (Daguan in Harris 2007, 81-2). Cambodia had at the time adopted Theravada Buddhism and ceased making stone temples and inscriptions, but still appears to be a rich and powerful state in these descriptions (Chandler 1992, 61).

Daguan describes the products of the country, none of which appear in the local market transactions. They derive from the jungles; resin, rosewood, peppers, lac, ivory, feathers, rhinoceros horn, cardamom, oils and honeycombs. Especially the honeycombs are interesting since Daguan informs us that ships are filled with 2000-3000 combs, totaling approximate 54 tons (Daguan 1296/7, in Harris 2007, 69-70). The information suggest that there have been large ships and shipping in Angkor at the time.

The reading of Zhou Daguan’s description has been used in the Modernist perspective of the regional trade. Chinese can settle and trade here easy, Chinese objects are sold in the markets

and it ‘has long been a trading country’ definitely supports a commercial link with China. However, the work was originally translated from Chinese to French by Paul Pelliot A.D. 1902, with a second addition made 1951. The French edition was later translated into English, which has been the version used until Peter Harris in 2007 translated the travel account again, using the original Chinese documents (Harris 2007, vii-viii). I discovered a difference between the old and new translation, which is of note in regard to the level of commercial interaction.

According to the earlier translation the Chinese objects exchanged on the markets were coins, which led to rational economic conclusion that “*Angkor Cambodia-found it convenient to adopt a variety of exchange options*” (Hall 1999b, 449). However in the new translation; Chinese coins have been translated simply as Chinese goods (Harris 2007, 70). The difference has led scholars to believe that Chinese coins were part of a Cambodian market economy and thus overemphasizing the economic interaction between the two countries (e.g. Hall 1999b, 450; Wicks 1992, 206).

Daguan claimed that Angkor had long been a trading country, yet he also stated that Chinese merchants’ years ago had been highly respected by the locals. Increasing numbers of Chinese coming to the country had recently meant some people had begun to cheat and slighted them (Daguan 1296/7, in Harris 2007, 71). Such an observation must have derived from informants living in the country, such as Mr. Xue, a Chinese man that had lived in Angkor for 35 years (Daguan in Harris 2007, 80). The changed attitude therefore might have occurred over a generation, likely with the Yuan dynasty enforcing its supremacy in Southeast Asia in the 1270s-80s (Shaffer 1996, 87; Coedes 1966, 124, 128).<sup>4</sup>

### **Chapter 3.5. Trade and Angkor’s abandonment**

The historical sources end with Zhou Daguan, Angkor was later abandoned in the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century but we know little of the reason. The Cambodian documents were written on skins, none of which has survived (Zephir 1997, 41) and the later Cambodian, Thai and Champa royal chronicles are all too imprecise and idealized to be historically useful (Coe 2004, 198-200; Coedes 1966, 196). When the Portuguese showed up in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Angkor had been abandoned.<sup>5</sup>

Without historical sources or extensive archaeological research, the reason for the abandonment has been influenced by the dominant theoretical paradigm at the time. The cultural

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<sup>4</sup> The Yuan made a (failed) military raid against Cambodia A.D. 1283.

<sup>5</sup> Angkor Wat continued as a Buddhist temple and Cambodian kings resettled and restored temples in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but the role as the Kingdoms center was over.

historical explanation for the abandonment was linked to the growing threat from Siam. The Thai were becoming the new regional power and several times in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century raided Angkor (Zephir 1997, 93; Coedes 1966, 196).

The economic explanations however have been the most influential the last many decades. In a characteristic Marxist explanation was the abandonment linked to resources. The massive building constructions, temple offerings and administrative elite have been seen to have caused the economic collapse of Angkor (Briggs 1951, 258-9). Groslier argued the agricultural program of Angkor had led to the economic prosperity and power of the Kingdom, but the water system eventually depleted the soil and collapse; leading to the abandonment (Groslier 1986, 255, 263).

The agricultural explanation recently was supported by the current 'Greater Angkor Project'; Sydney University's archaeological projects that corroborates with French, Cambodian and Thai Universities. They made drillings and found supporting evidence for Groslier's suggestion, that the local environment no longer could sustain the population (Evans *et. al.* 2007, 14281). The project further found indications that extreme weather conditions had plagued Angkor the last decades before its abandonment (Kummu 2007, 1418).

Another economic explanation for the abandonment of Angkor relates to trade, which is perceived as being ever more dominant in the regions interaction, as we are nearing Anthony Reid's seminal definition 'the Age of Commerce' from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Reid 1988).

*"Once the choice had been made to become a trading Kingdom, locating the Cambodian capital at Angkor no longer made much sense"* (Chandler 1992, 79).

Others also perceive the Ming dynasty to be the water shed, when a substantial group of indigenous inhabitants in Southeast Asia began to shape their livelihood towards international commerce (Lieberman 2010, 533; Ray 1995, 51). The relation between Cambodia and the Chinese Ming dynasty also seems to have been strengthened. The Ming A.D. 1369/70 inviting countries to renew the tributary system and establish embassies (Foccardi 1986, 17), Cambodia responded to the request by sending 12 missions from A.D. 1371 to 1419 (Chandler 1992, 78). Such a renewed interest in foreign relations could support the assumption that trade interest was at play, which motivated a move closer to the shipping lanes.

However, economic strategies are not the only long term explanation possible. The military conflict with Siam lasting over a century could have resulted in a continuing migration away from Angkor (Coedes 1966, 196). Also, the change in religion from Mahayana Buddhism to Theravada Buddhism around 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century, could have meant the capital no longer formed

the same religious heart (Stark 2004, 111; Coe 2004, 196-7, 201). An interesting alternative proposal suggests that Angkor's royalty could have continued until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Phnom Penh royalty instead represent usurpers (Jacques 2007, 43). These are alternative suggestions to the commercial interests; chapter 5 will go into further detail as to why I am doubtful of economic explanations.

## Chapter 4.

## Archaeological record

The archaeological study of Angkor is still in an early stage; much of the French data was destroyed in the Cambodian civil war (1970-5) and in the following Khmer Rouge regime (1975-9), which was followed by a decade of civil war. Foreign archaeologists were invited back in the 1990s, which have produced many minor archaeological papers, but few large scale excavation reports. A comprehensive archaeological framework for the Cambodian Kingdom is therefore still far-off (Coe 2004, 19; Stark 2004, 101).

This chapter intends examine the archaeological data regarding the medieval Cambodian international trade. The motive is to establish the archaeological data and thereby improve our understanding to what extends Angkor was part of the maritime Silk Road trade.

An initial problem when examining trading is how archaeology can determine if traded objects were part of a market or select trading (Renfrew & Bahn 2008, 374-9), i.e. how do we determine if an object was a rare *curiosa*, a prestige object or when it had been part of market organized trading? Quantities and distribution data must be used in determining such questions. If the foreign objects were common and widely distributed, it suggests large scale organized trade. Rare objects or objects restricted to certain areas on the other hand could be signs of restricted or smaller scale commerce. The characterization would logically be influenced by ones Primitivist or Modernist perspective; meaning peoples definitions of scale and distribution pattern varies. How much should be found to be termed as organized trade in comparison to down the line trade? I don't think an absolute rule can be established and have chosen to make this distinction for each individual material group.

For defining which materials that can be linked to the international trade relations, the shipwreck evidence can be helpful, table 3. Shipwreck cargoes generally consists of a main cargo of ceramics and/or metal, and a secondary cargo of luxury objects with very different origin, such as bronze mirrors and gongs, glass, ivory tusk, gold and spices (e.g. Sjostrand *et. al.* 2011; Pearson *et. al.* 2002; Kimura 2010; Green 1983; Mathers & Flecker 1997).

In the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. long distance trading supposedly changed from shipping prestige goods to also shipping in bulk goods, like cloths, metals and porcelain (Whitmore 1977, 145). That cloth, especially cotton, was a part of the Cambodian medieval economy, is unquestionable from temple inscriptions, which list cloth as a recurrent valued gift to the temples (Wicks 1992, 188).

Daguan describes Chinese silk and western cotton as sought after products in the Cambodian markets; Hall as a result suggests that the Indian cotton was shipped in bulk to the

Cambodian markets (Hall 1999b, 451). Indian cotton was dominating the markets when the Europeans arrived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but if it was Indian cotton Daguán was referring to is uncertain (Harris 2007, 101). The Chinese harbor master Chau Ju-Kua A.D. 1225 actually mentioned cotton and raw silk as objects coming from Cambodia (Hirth & Rockhill 1912, 53). The country therefore might have been self sufficient in cloth production, which could suggest the imported cloth, were luxury objects imported on a smaller scale. The luxury status of imported cloth could be supported with information from Chinese dynasty annals (A.D. 479-501), as well as Zhou Daguán's description c. 700 years later, where certain colors and brocade motives are reported to have been restricted to specific classes (Daguán 1296/7, in Harris 2007, 50-1; Coe 2004, 58).

Unfortunately, due to the decomposition of cloth in the warm humid climate in Southeast Asia, we can no longer expect to recover such items from an archaeological context. Defining the cloth trade; in bulk or prestige, as well as social and spatial distribution is therefore impossible with present knowledge.

**Table 3. Known shipwrecks in Southeast Asia with a metal cargo, location is marked in appendix 2. Data from Flecker 2011; Kimura 2010; Sjostrand et. al. 2011 (authors design).**

<i>Name of Ship</i>	<i>Provenance of Ship</i>	<i>Dated century</i>	<i>Main cargo</i>	<i>Other cargo</i>
<i>Belitung</i>	Indian or Arab	9th	10 ton Lead	Indonesian scales weights
<i>Intan</i>	Indonesian Lashed-lug vessel	10th	Tons of tin	elephant tusk, tiger teeth
<i>Tanjung</i>	Chinese	10th-11th		61 Bronze gongs, 76 copper disks
<i>Pulau Buaya</i>	Chinese	12th-13th	Cast iron cooking pots, Iron blades	Copper (non Chinese), Chinese bronze gongs
<i>Java Sea Wreck</i>	Indonesian Lashed-lug vessel	13th	200 tons cast iron	Indonesian scales and weights, elephant tusk
<i>Quanzhou / Houzho</i>	Chinese	13th	Pepper, Fragrant wood, Sandal wood, Laka wood, Garro wood	
<i>Turiang</i>	Chinese	14th		Elephant tusk
<i>Sinan wreck</i>		14th	8 million copper coins, Longquan (Celadon) Ware	
<i>Ko Rang Kwien</i>		14th-15	thousands of Chinese coins	Elephant tusk, Iron cooking pans,
<i>Royal Nanhai</i>	South Chinese	15th	20 tons Iron	

The archaeological data regarding metal import can also be problematic; tin, silver, gold, iron and copper have been found on shipwrecks in large quantities (table 3). Valuable metals are mentioned in the temple epigraphy as gifts (Rooney 2000, 134), and Daguean even describe how the market at Angkor request Chinese silver and gold (Daguean 1296/7 in Harris 2007, 71). Archaeologically, metal is threatened in Cambodia by the moist warm climate, which corrodes some metal types away. However metals most acute danger lies in its plastic properties that make it possible to remelt it again.<sup>6</sup> Through the generations, people could have remelted the metals, thereby effectively removing the original vessels from the archaeological record. Burials have often been the way metals ended in the archaeological contexts, but cremations without gifts became the custom in Cambodia from mid 1<sup>st</sup> millennium A.D.. 15<sup>th</sup> century urn burials in Cardamom Mountains and 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> century urn burials next to Srah Srang (figure 11, 12) illustrate the lack of gifts (Miksic 2009a, 78; Groslier 1981, 16). Even Angkor Wat's central tower; containing Suryavarman II ashes only had two sapphires and two gold leafs deposited (Higham 2001, 117-8).

#### **Chapter 4.1. Chinese ceramics**

Shipwrecks in Southeast Asia have documented bulk trading of Chinese exported porcelain dating to the reign of Angkor, 9<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century (Flecker 2009). A weakness is our impression of shipping scale in regards to Chinese porcelain could be inflated from the shipwreck data, since these types of cargo are easier to locate (Flecker 2009, 36). Archaeological sites in the region therefore should be examined to better establish the scale and distribution of the trade.

Archaeological sites and surveys throughout Southeast Asia suggests that porcelain, not only passed the region on its way to India and the Middle East, but was traded here as well (Miksic 2009a; Misugi 1996, 201-2). This makes Chinese ceramics an exceptional useful archaeological source of information in regards to medieval shipping and trade.

The Chinese ceramics was made in a highly specialized production and began to be exported in the Tang dynasty (Miksic 2009a, 72; Rooney 1995, 87-8). Occasionally the Chinese administration would put export restrictions on metals, coins, weapons, wax or tea, but since there were no restrictions on ceramics, this production kept expanding (Li and Chen 1984, in Pearson *et. al.* 2002, 26). Chinese porcelain remained a prestige object until the Ming dynasty, when mass production and less expensive wares changed the distribution patterns (Christie 1990, 46), but it remained a valuable object people took care of nevertheless (Miksic 2006b, 149).

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<sup>6</sup> The threat of remelting was illustrated in a recent excavation of a looted Iron Age cemetery, where the looters had sold the coarse and corroded metal objects to the local scrap yard (Reinecke *et. al.* 2009, 25-35).



Chinese ceramics is interesting archaeologically, the high firing temperature made it harder and more durable than other ceramics types and its glaze gave it a unique appearance. The material properties of Chinese ceramics means that it generally is collected, registered and identified when found in archaeological contexts. But, specific identification of the Chinese ceramics found throughout Southeast Asia has not always been a high priority (Miksic 2006a, 5).



**Fig. 8. (left) Chinese Blue-and-White 14<sup>th</sup> century, imitating the kendi shape, popular in Southeast Asia and India, H: 16.3 x D: 12 cm (Miksic 2009a, 89).**

**Fig. 9. (middle) Cambodian 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> century kendi, H: 21 x D: 24 cm (Miksic 2009a, 95).**

**Fig. 10. (right) Kendi depicted on the Bayon temple 12<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> century (Rooney 2000, 135).**

‘Chinese porcelain’ immediately brings the Blue-and-White ceramics to mind. The artistic style and design was produced for international demands, like the blue-and-white vessel, figure 8, that is imitating the ‘Indian’ kendi style in figure 9 & 10. The glaze, paint and shape make it possible to date and provenance the porcelain back to specific kilns and periods. However, as table 4 shows, not all Chinese ceramics was Blue-and-White. 70% of the ceramics excavated from Angkor’s royal palace was celadon, only 3% Blue-and-White (Groslier 1981, 21; Dupoizat 1999, 108). Celadon is a homogeny greenish glazed ware that was produced over several centuries in different kilns, such sherds can be harder to identify since they has fewer identification traits.<sup>7</sup>

Comparing different sites in Southeast Asia with excavated Chinese ceramics is also problematic. Miksic described the best documented sites in Southeast Asia in regards to Chinese

<sup>7</sup> Of the 90 pictures of Chinese ceramics Miksic presents in his book about Southeast Asian ceramics only 2 are celadon, one being a whole vessel (Miksic & Ong 2009, 144-157), suggesting a reduced interest for this type of ceramics compared to blue-and-white.

ceramics (Miksic 2009a, 71-82), but the different areas have had different archaeological arrangement. The Bayon Northern ‘library’ counted sherds (e.g. Shimizu 2000, 201); the Phimai excavations counted and weighed sherds (e.g. Talbot & Janthed 2001, 188) and the Phimeanakas excavation simply register types, periods and general trends, but without numerical data (e.g. Groslier 1981; Dupoizat 1999, 115; Dupoizat 1999, 150). Sherd comparison can only really be relevant if the sizes are approximately the same, weighing runs the risk of over emphasizing the heavy ceramics types. Using both weight and number would probably be the best way to deal with a large assemblage, but that has rarely been done.

**Table 4. Trends in the Chinese export of ceramics (data after Misugi 1996, 209).**

Chinese dynasty	date	Ceramics export trend
Tang dynasty	618-906	Three colored ware and white porcelain
Five dynasties / Ten Kingdoms	907-960	Yue-Yao Celadon exported
Song dynasty	960-1260	Longquan Celadon exported, white, blue-and-white
Yuan dynasty	1260-1368	Celadon export continues, but now blue and white ceramics also is mass produced for export from Jingdezhen kilns.
Ming dynasty	1368-1644	Blue and White and polychrome, Celadon export declines.

**Table 5. Comparison of Chinese ceramics between Srivijaya, Angkor and the Peninsula. (Data from Miksic 2009a, 72, 77; Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002, 361)**

Site	Date	Total number of sherds	Total weight	Imported sherds
Palembang (Srivijaya)	7 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup>	c. 55.000	800 kg	10.000 18 %
Phimeanakas (Angkor)	10 <sup>th</sup> – 16 <sup>th</sup>	c. 55.000	unknown	5.425 c. 10 %
Satingpra (Peninsula)	9 <sup>th</sup> – 13 <sup>th</sup>	unknown	unknown	c. 50.000 10 <sup>th</sup> : 8.5 % 11 <sup>th</sup> : 14.3 %

Defining whether Chinese ceramics was imported as bulk goods in Angkor demands a comparison to other powerful regional sites. The comparison could be done by counting or weighing sherds, which gives a sense of scales. However, to gain an impression of organization and significance of the commerce, a comparison between the local and imported ceramics is necessary. Comparison within medieval Southeast Asia has been difficult, Van Orsoy de Flines registered ceramics in a large survey in Java, Indonesia, where he found that Chinese ceramics were widely distributed, but he did not report any numerical data or made a scale comparison between the local and Chinese ceramics (Orsoy 1949, 66-88). The same problem arises from

*Barus* on Sumatra where Dupoizat informs that 250 years of Chinese ceramics from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> was present (Dupoizat 1998, 150).

There are several uncertainties in the comparison attempted in table 5; the data collecting have been different, amount of excavated soil could vary, and the periods the sites cover are different. Most problematic is that none of the sites are fully excavated; any new excavation therefore could change our data. However, these three regional centers illustrate that Chinese ceramics here seems to have been a smaller part of the ceramics in use. The observation is particularly interesting since Phimeanakas, which was the royal compounds temple at Angkor, was in use during the height of Chinese export, but still appears to have had a smaller import level.

#### Chapter 4.2. Chinese ceramics in Cambodia

Groslier has made the most seminal work regarding the Chinese ceramics in Angkor. He excavated within the royal palace compound, *Angkor Thom*; in use from 10<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century, and an urn burial site next to *Sarah Srang*, giving him a long ceramics sequence (Groslier 1981, 16). Unfortunately much of his data was lost in the Cambodian civil war and he died 1986 without ever having the chance to re-examine the material (Cremin 2006, 121).

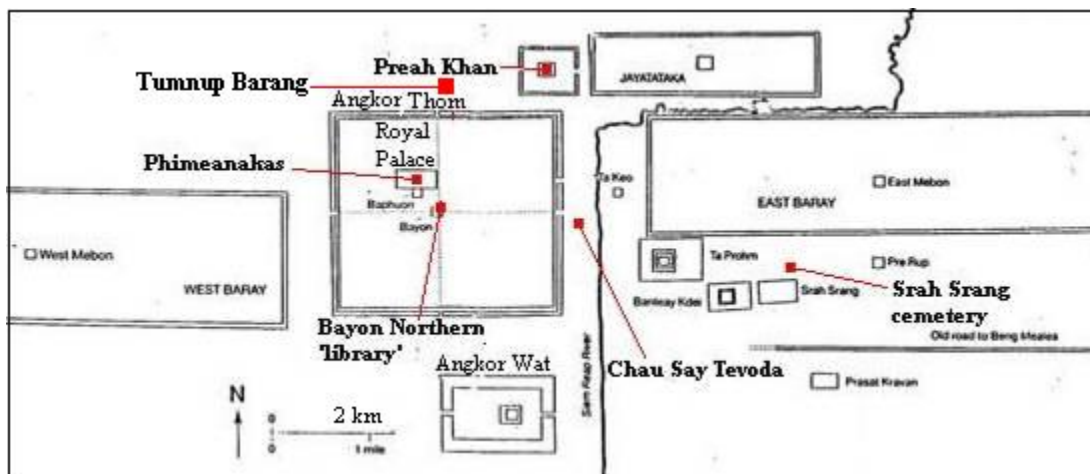
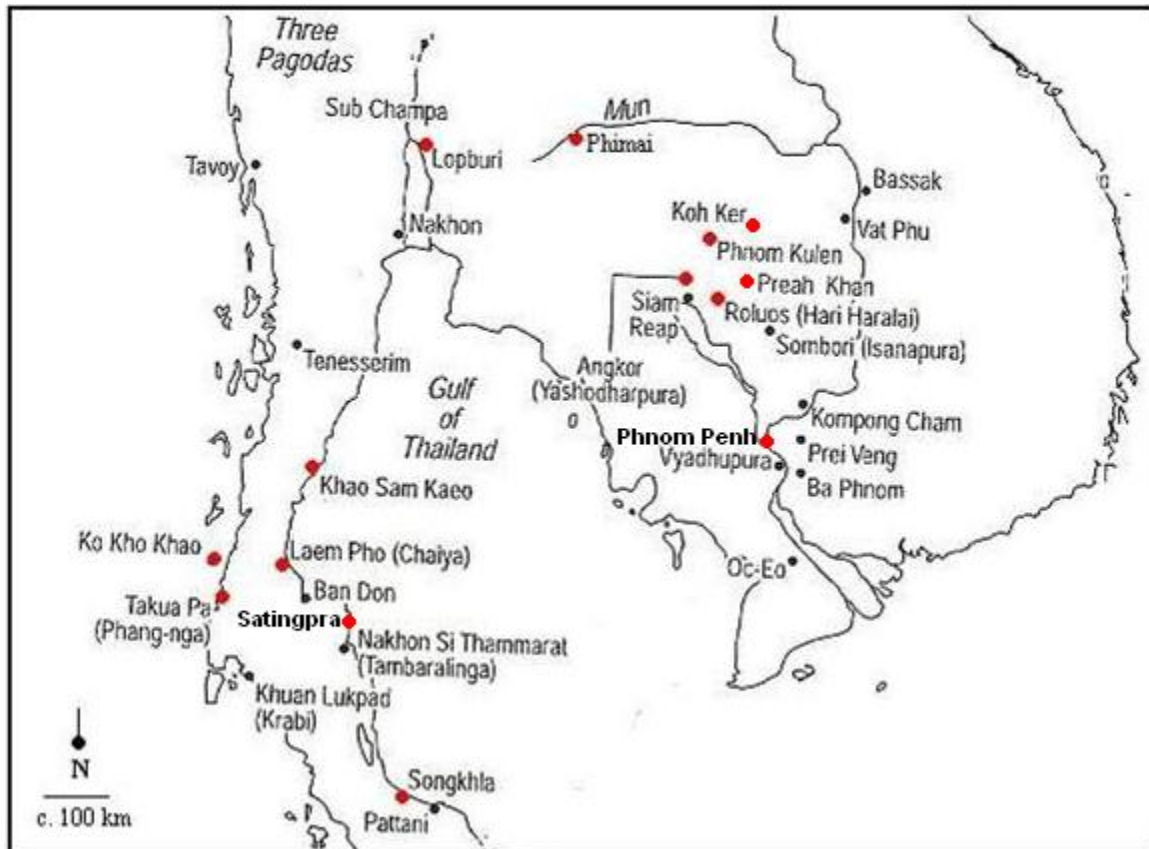


Fig. 11. Angkor capital with the main temples. Red marking referred to excavated sites with Chinese ceramics (from Coe 2004, 104-5).

According to Groslier, Chinese ceramics was mainly restricted to the capital (Groslier 1981, 32). Later excavations have also revealed small amounts of Chinese ceramics in most of the Kingdoms main provinces (Hendrickson 2011, personal communication), but there is no information of this data yet. Although, if the *Prasat Hin Phimai* temple excavation in *Phimai*; a

well excavated Cambodian province in Thailand from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards can be representative, then Chinese ceramics were imported later to the provinces. The excavation found that the main Khmer occupation layer counted for 70% of all ceramics found on site, but was without Chinese ceramics, which first arrived later, early 12<sup>th</sup> century (Talbot & Janthed 2001, 184, 188-90).



**Fig. 12. Map showing Angkor, Phimai, Phnom Kulen, Roluos and other centers from the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century (from Indrawooth 2004, 126).**

The Chinese ceramics vessels imported in the 10<sup>th</sup> century mainly consisted of white covered boxes (Guy 1989, 20) shown in profile in figure 13 and as sherds in figure 14. The vessels cluster around temples, which could suggest they had a ritual purpose; possible as offering vessels (Dupoizat 1999, 108). Groslier further noted that the Chinese covered boxes, found in Angkor were rare forms in China, and suggested these were deliberately designed for export to Cambodia (Groslier 1981, 17). Ceramics experts have also further noted the distribution and shapes of these Chinese vessels seems to differ from that of contemporary sites in Java, Sumatra and the Thai peninsula (Rooney 1995, 93; Miksic 2009a, 77).

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century more vessel types were introduced, which correlates well with the decline in the Cambodian own kiln fired ceramics production (Miksic 2006a, 7; Dupoizat 1999, 115). The Chinese ceramics vessels were generally for serving i.e. plates, cups and bowls, which the locals never attempted to reproduce (Groslier 1981, 21). That Chinese ceramics seems to have occupied a vessel type niche could suggest it was becoming common in the Cambodian markets, or local copies should have been expected. Zhou Dagan also confirms that Chinese celadon was present in the market as a sought after good (Daguan 1296/7, in Harris 2007, 71).

**Table 6. Chinese and local ceramics types in percentages from recent excavations (from Cremin 2006, 123).**

Site	Construction	Date of Excavation	Khmer Unglazed	Khmer Glazed	Chinese	Sherds in total
<b>Bayon North 'Library'</b>	Start 13 <sup>th</sup>	1995-1999	822 71.1 %	274 23.7 %	60 5.1 %	1156 100 %
<b>Chau Say Tevoda</b>	Mid 12 <sup>th</sup>	1998-1999	17 62.9 %	3 11.1 %	7 25.9 %	27 100 %
<b>Preah Khan</b>	Late 12 <sup>th</sup>	1989-1999	31 41.8 %	34 45.9 %	9 12.1 %	74 100 %
<b>Royal Palace Phimeanakas</b>	Late 10 <sup>th</sup>	1995-1998	unknown	unknown	5425 10.8 %	c. 50.000 100 %
<b>Trapeang Thlok, zone 2</b>	unknown	2004	c. 7888 90 %	c. 771 8.8 %	c. 26 0.3 %	8765 99.1 %
<b>Tumnap Barang</b>	unknown	2001-2005	5715 88.1 %	575 8.8 %	190 2.9 %	6480 98.8 %

Groslier believed that Chinese ceramics commerce grew to become the dominant ceramics type from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, representing 70-80% of the ceramic assemblage (Groslier 1981, 16, 30). Several ceramics experts have repeated Groslier's estimate, which supported the Modernist impression of the Silk Road commercial organization (e.g. Rooney 1995, 92, Guy 1989, 17, Brown 1988, 46; Miksic 2009a, 77). However, recent excavations at Angkor; seen in table 6, does not support Groslier's data (Cremin 2006, 121). Chinese ceramics instead seems to cluster around certain religious sites in a far lower scale (Miksic 2006a, 6; Miksic 2009a, 97). Even within the royal compound, which was the site for Groslier's excavation, could a later excavation in the 1990s 'only' document a percentage of 10.8% imported ceramics.

The presence of Chinese ceramics in Cambodian markets at the time of Zhou Dagan cannot be doubted, but the scale of the import is less apparent. Groslier believed Chinese ceramics was imported in such numbers that it replaced the local ceramics in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. However, the small but well documented Japanese restoration project of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Bayon temple's Northern 'library' suggest otherwise. The excavation discovered three building phases of the temple and found a total of 60 imported ceramics sherds, seen in table 7. The upper layer

was the smallest but had the second highest proportion of sherds, the middle layer was the largest and the proportion of sherds in the soil was also highest here (Shimizu 2000, 202). If we divide the ceramics proportions between the layers, as done in table 7, it is clear that the imported vessels haven't replaced any of the local ceramics types. Other excavations are necessary to be more certain of the impression, but the excavation is currently the best data in regards to the Chinese ceramics at Angkor.

**Table 7. Stratigraphic data from the 13<sup>th</sup> century Northern Library, Bayon temple. Illustrating the imported ceramics percentage compared to the local (data from Shimizu 2000, 213).**

Temple phase	Earthenware	Local glazed ware	Imported ware	Total
<b>Upper</b>	138 71.1 %	44 22.7 %	12 (2 Thai) 6.2 %	194
<b>Middle</b>	527 71.6 %	182 24.7 %	27 3.7 %	736
<b>Lower</b>	157 69.5 %	48 21.2 %	21 (1 Thai) 9.3 %	226

Chinese ceramics began to be exported from China in the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Misugi 1996, 201), but according to Groslier did import of Chinese ceramics into Angkor not begin until the Song dynasty, late 10<sup>th</sup> century (Groslier 1981, 21). Groslier's estimate was supported by later excavations at Angkor, where no sherds older than the 10<sup>th</sup> century was identified (Dupoizat 1999, 115). Based on the known data it appears that Angkor capital, the two first centuries of Chinese ceramics export, no interest or contact had in the ceramics trade. Hereafter took it an additional century before the Cambodian provinces imported Chinese ceramics.

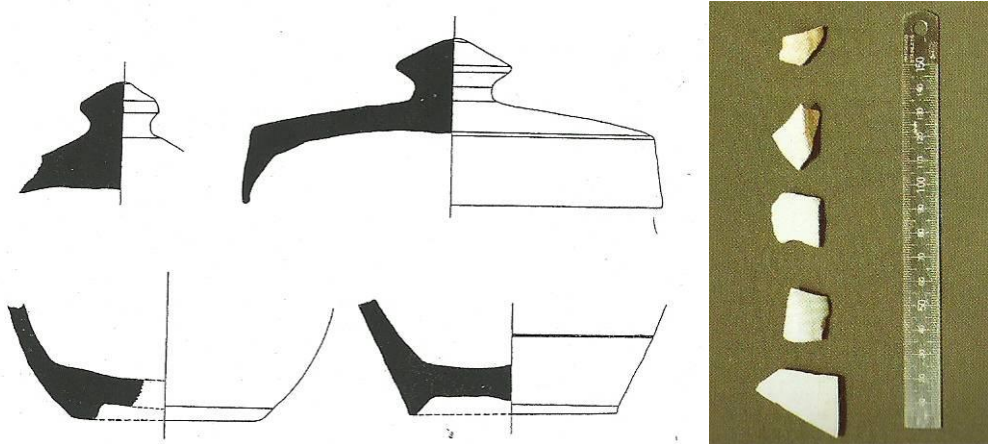
The Chinese ceramics were not offered as gifts by the Chinese court until the Ming dynasty, which means its arrival at Angkor must have been through private merchants (Miksic 2006a, 5). Especially private merchants are seen as maximization players; whose presence suggests a market based economy rather than a redistributive (Dalton 1975). However, it appears that the ceramics remained restricted to the temples and royal compounds, whereas it in Java already from Song dynasty onwards seems to have been accessible for a broader segment of the population (Miksic 2009a, 72-4; e.g. Orsoy 1949).

An important uncertainty regarding the data from Angkor is that the town was founded in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and the royal palace area Groslier and Dupoizat worked on in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Freeman & Jacques 1999, 111-3). The later construction dates makes the appearance of earlier Chinese ceramics here less probable, although not unthinkable since it probably was an objects people would have brought with them (Cremin 2006, 121; Miksic 2006b, 149).



Excavations at earlier Angkor centers like 8<sup>th</sup> century *Phnom Kulen* and 9<sup>th</sup> century *Rolous* shown in figure 12 could be the sites where we could find the early ceramics import (Freeman & Jacques 1999, 194-203). But, both sites were known and excavated prior to Groslier's work (CISARK 2012) and he mentions nothing of any Chinese ceramics found there, which is suggesting there had been none (reported).

So far the Chinese ceramics, documented through large scale stratigraphic excavations has not been done, but should prove an interesting potential project. Especially Koh Ker (Chok Gargyar) site could prove to be an interesting excavation project; the city functioned a few decades in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, as the capital (Coe 2004, 108). An excavation here could therefore potentially address the questions of the earliest Chinese import. Another site of particular interest could be Preah Khan (Kompong Svay), built 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> The site also functioned as a royal seat of power in short periods in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The site could potentially tell us more of the Chinese ceramics import and its possible connection with the nobility, if any.



**Fig. 13. (left) Chinese White covered jars shown in profile, for a long time was the main type of Chinese ceramics imported to Angkor (Dupoizat 1999, 108).**

**Fig. 14. (right) Right side depicts some white sherds found in the Bayon 'Library' excavation (Shimizu 2000, 211).**

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<sup>8</sup> The provincial centre east of Angkor; not the temple in Angkor by the same name.

### Chapter 4.3.

### Chinese Coins

Chinese ceramics are not the only archaeologically visible trade-related material. Chinese copper coins likewise appear along the medieval Silk Road through Southeast Asia. From the Tang dynasty onwards Chinese coins developed into a unified currency system in the form of a cast bronze coin with a square central hole as shown in figure 15 (Aelst 1995, 361; Ament 1888, 287). Only 4 % of the Chinese state revenues came in the form of money in A.D. 749, this had grown to over 50% in A.D. 1065 (Lo 1969, 61) becoming the established payment method in China.



**Fig. 15. Chinese copper coins, which became an accepted medium of exchange throughout insular Southeast Asia. Tang dynasty coin A.D. 618 (left) and a Song dynasty coin A.D. 960 (front and back). (www.MoneyMuseum.com).**

The Chinese coins are interesting in regards to the international trade, since they became a payment method in certain areas of Southeast Asia as well, especially on Java that even produced their own Chinese coins from the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Hall 1999b, 440; Wicks 1992, 65, 297-8).

The inspiration for minting coins in Southeast Asia had been introduced from India through Burma in the 5<sup>th</sup> century (Miksic 2003, 23). The iconographic design, seen in figure 16, on these coins derived from Indian religion (Mitchiner 1998, 44; Indrawoath 2004, 133). In the second half of the first millennium, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia stopped producing coins and returned to a moneyless barter economy (Miksic 2003, 29; Wicks 1992, 3-4).

The abandonment of money cannot be recognized in the insular regions where Indian, Chinese, Caliphate and local coins have been found (Heng 2006, 197). Coins here were initially part of a weight economy; valued solely for their material value (Wade 2009, 223). Chinese copper coins were of a lower value and could therefore easier be used in smaller transactions and became wider distributed. Commercial areas in Java, Sumatra, Malaysia, Korea, North Vietnam and Japan through the 12<sup>th</sup> century began adapting Chinese coins, not only as a metal value but as



a standard value i.e. a currency (Hall 1999b, 440, 448; Mitchiner 1998, 177; Wade 2009, 242). The Chinese copper cash in Java the 13<sup>th</sup> century was used to such an extent, that they even minted their own ‘Chinese’ cash (Aelst 1995, 385).<sup>9</sup>



**Fig. 16. Early silver coins from Southeast Asian mainland c. 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (Wicks 1992, 117). Design origin from Indian Hindu-Buddhist Vedic traditions, temple (left) and rising sun (right) symbolizing universal creation (Mitchiner 1998, 36-43)**

The Chinese authorities attempted to limit the export of metals several times (Mathers & Flecker 1997, 31; Wicks 1992, 24; Wade 2009, 228) except for a period of 53 years in the end of the Northern Song dynasty A.D. 1074-1127 (Heng 2006, 186-7). The period led to a massive increase in the production of coins and represents 54.6 % of all Chinese coins produced through Tang and both Song dynasties (Mathers & Flecker 1997, 31). The Southern Song and Yuan dynasties restricted the export again, but that changed with the Ming dynasty that encouraged the use and payment in Chinese Cash in Southeast Asia, which became a standard measure of payment in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Hall 1999b, 448; Heng 2006, 189; McKinnon 1984, 108).

Not all sites adapted Chinese coins, excavations on trade hubs like *Ternasik* and *Kota Cina* (appendix 2) had a large amount of Chinese copper coins; 1.064 found littering the surface on Kota Cina excavation (McKinnon 1984, 106). *Kedah* in comparison mainly had coins from Sri Lanka (Heng 2006, 195-7). The observation of coins found on Southeast Asian sites has led to the suggestion that coins in some trade hubs represent the different traders visiting and the immigrants settling (Heng 2006, 195; McKinnon 1984, 108).

The lack of coins in the mainland therefore could have been the result of an alternative trade network where Chinese copper not was valued (Hall 1999b, 441). The suggestion cannot be supported by archaeological data, for now we must simply accept that an important material group, closely linked to trade, merchants and settlements, presently is missing from the medieval Cambodian data.

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<sup>9</sup> Identified from a higher amount of tin in their composition.

#### Chapter 4.4.

#### Cambodian trade

The Chinese ceramics is the only durable archaeological evidence of Chinese-Cambodian trade, but what of the Cambodian - Southeast Asian trade? Daguon writes that more people from Siam “*in recent years*” have settled in Angkor, where they produce silk (Daguon 1296/7 in Harris 2007, 75-6). He further writes that Thai and Champa cloth are being worn in Angkor capital (Daguon 1296/7 in Harris 2007, 50). A commercial interaction therefore seems plausible

The neighboring contact can be documented in archaeology by Thai and Vietnamese ceramics found in Angkor capital, but the data is too limited to suggest any organized trade. For instance, only 3 Thai sherds were found in the Bayon Northern ‘Library’ excavation, compared to the 57 Chinese (Shimizu 2000, 213). Dupoizat, who worked with the most extensive imported ceramics material from Angkor capital, also informs that only a few of the 5.425 imported sherds were Thai and Vietnamese (Dupoizat 1999, 103). With such limited information regarding imports the possible exports should be investigated.

Cambodian goods for the Chinese markets were organic, but it is possible the Kingdom had a specialized production which could be identified in an archaeological context. The technique to create glazed stoneware for instance was never introduced in the insular regions (Guy 1989, 1) and the Shipwreck data shown the insular regions were dependant on metals. Table 3 indicate that raw metals were imported into the insular regions in vast quantities. Like the 9<sup>th</sup> century *Belitung* wreck that carried circa 10 tons lead (Flecker 2001, 339) or the 13<sup>th</sup> century *Java Sea Wreck* a cargo of 190 tons cast iron (Flecker 2003, 392). Cambodian metals and ceramics could therefore reasonably have been products traded to other Southeast Asian markets.

However, my preliminary research discovered few Cambodian products outside the kingdom. The data is restricted to handful religious bronze figurines and a few Khmer ceramics vessels, figure 17, 18 & 19. These finding seem to have been restricted to Thailand and the eastern side of the Malay Peninsula, which in periods were vassals of Angkor and continuously within the Angkor’s sphere (Indrawoath 2004, 141).

I am unaware the exact number of Cambodian cast bronzes found and have to rely on Jacq-Hergoualc’h who identified small Khmer styled statues in museum collections on the eastern side of the Malay Peninsula (Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002, 381). He mentions 4 bronze statues with Cambodian design, one from the late 10<sup>th</sup> century and the rest from the ‘Bayon’ period around A.D. 1200. Several other bronze statues were found, mainly Buddhist, which displayed a mix of

Javanese, Khmer and Mon styles (Jacq-Hergoualc'h 2002, 402-5).<sup>10</sup> The mixing of styles, which is beyond the scope to go into detail with, makes their direct origin from Cambodia less certain. Scientific analysis of Khmer bronzes might make it possible to identify the regions the bronze originated from in the future, but these examinations are still preliminary (e.g. Reedy & Meyers 2007, 113).

The religious nature of the statues, small size and low numbers makes it impossible to use these to document an organized bulk trade network, as religious statues more likely was part of a personal transport (Adams 1975, 459).



**Fig. 17. (left) The God Vishnu on his mount Garuda. 12<sup>th</sup> century Khmer gilded bronze. H: 16.8 x D: 8.9 cm, Angkor Wat, Cambodia (Brooklyn Museum).**

**Fig. 18. (middle) Khmer Urn 11<sup>th</sup> century illustrating ‘typical’ features such body form and decorative cord-pattern band. H: 26.8 x D: 24.7 cm. (Miksic & Ong 2009, 102).**

**Fig. 19. (right) 12th century Khmer styled storage jars, found of Thailand's Coast (Brown 1988, 54). Size not informed but similar vessels, H: 59 cm (Rooney 2000, 138).**

The Cambodian kiln fired ceramics was the result of specialized production with an artistic style, seen in figure 18 & 19, which is unique enough to be identified outside the Kingdom. The Cambodian stoneware ceramics was coil built, wheel turned, glazed and fired in

<sup>10</sup> Mon people are an ethnic group living from Burma to Cambodia. Khmer are the Cambodian main ethnic group.

kilns on high degrees, making it very hard and durable (Brown 1988, 48). The production began in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century and witnessed few changes before the production ended in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Groslier 1981, 9) or 15<sup>th</sup> in certain remote regions (Miksic 2009a, 78).

However, we are faced with problems if we trace Cambodian ceramics back to Angkor capital, for the production did not restrict itself here. A recent archaeological project identified kilns along the road from Angkor to the province center *Preah Khan*, (Hendrickson 2008, 52, 55). Phimai region likewise had its own large scaled ceramics production from the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Miksic 2009b, 55; Welch 1998, 222).

The brown glazed ceramics were not even restricted to Cambodia, kilns in Thailand continued the production after it had ceased in Cambodia (Brown 1988, 54), which first changed when Thai shapes from the north became popular in the end 14<sup>th</sup> century (Guy 1989, 29). Chinese southern kilns also produced brown glazed stoneware that is easy to mistake for Cambodian (Shimizu 2000, 206). Sherds found in the Philippines and Indonesia were in 1981 still given a Khmer origin, when they in fact were Chinese, Vietnamese or Thai (Miksic 2009b, 50; Brown 1981, 41). Groslier even stated there had been a tendency to class ceramics, which was neither Thai nor Chinese as Khmer (Groslier 1981, 9). Finding ‘Cambodian’ sherds outside the kingdom is therefore laden with uncertainties.

Cambodian ceramics have been identified on sites within the Gulf of Thailand, which Jacq-Hergoualc’h writes is of a low percentage compared to the Chinese, but he offers no numerical data (Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002, 407). The presence of Khmer storage jars of the Thai coast is a clear sign of trade within the Gulf of Thailand (Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002, 402, 408). To my knowledge, the only documented ceramics found along the Peninsula is about a dozen large Khmer styled jars. These were, caught in nets off Thailand’s coast and are illustrated in figure 16 (Brown 1988, 54). I am therefore tempted to believe that these are the ones Jacq-Hergoualc’h is referring to.

If we extend our search outward, Cambodian ceramics have been found in a few isolated examples in Indonesia (Brown 1988, 53), but we are left with the observation that Khmer glazed ware not generally were meant for export (Stark 2004, 109). The little ceramics finds and few bronze statues, located within the periphery of the Kingdom cannot support large scale international trading. In particular when we compare these to the Chinese or Thai material found all over the region. The impression is supported by the excavated shipwreck data, where no Cambodian objects, figurines or ceramics to date have been identified. Ivory and tiger teeth illustrated in table 7 could of course have originated from Cambodia but this is impossible to verify.

## Chapter 5                    Evaluating Cambodian trade interest

This thesis has been skeptical of the Modernist perspective of economically significant trade at Angkor. Through a review of the relevant archaeological data; the international trade appears to be far from Polanyi's market structures. Trade at Angkor instead seems to have been part of a redistribution economy, controlled and orientated towards specific groups (Wheatley 1975, 253). The lack of an organized market economy is indicated by the Chinese ceramics' distribution and by the lack of Cambodian products internationally as well in the missing Chinese coins or any other currency found here. It is therefore my impression, with present archaeological data, that the Primitivist perspective is more accurate. However, it is the suggestion in this chapter that the Cliometrics belief in maximization strategies also is an ill fit for the civilization of Angkor.

Merchants either were passive or active traders, the latter being the ones traveling and taking the risks (Polanyi 1975, 134-5). Becoming a merchant was not simply a matter of choice, but also a matter of the social structure within which people were born. Fredrik Barth, studying ethnic groups in Afghanistan, argued that a trading identity was embedded in the ethnic group's society and in its values. It was through these values people defined themselves (Barth 1969, 126). Following Barth's observation, I believe it is reasonable to suggest the ethnic Khmer group not were traders. They were an agricultural society, which would have made the decision to become a merchant less likely. I am convinced that people in the past were much more influenced in their choice of profession by their upbringing (e.g. Insoll 2007, 27).

By establishing the possibility that full time merchants were ethnic minorities, we should address the position by using the historical sources. The international ports in the period reported sailors were Malay, Arab, Chinese and Indian (Shaffer 1996, 12-3; Christie 1995, 278; Sutherland 2003, 5; Wheatley 1975, 236), there is to my knowledge no mention of Khmer. The merchants in Cambodia also were foreigners; two temple 10<sup>th</sup> century inscriptions mentioning trade refer to Chinese, Vietnamese and Champ merchants selling foreign goods in the Cambodian market places (Hall 1975, 321).

Chinese merchants must have remained active in the region, for when Champa made an attack on Angkor in A.D. 1177, they needed a Chinese guide being themselves unfamiliar with the route (Jacques 1995, 37; Jacques 2007, 36). Such a reference in a temple inscription could have carried a political message, for instance that China had sanctioned or helped in the attack. However, the Chinese presence in Angkor, this time clearly as merchants, again was reported by

Daguan 1296/7 as well as later European sources. From A.D. 1540 European sources describe trade as mainly conducted by the 3000 Chinese merchants living in Phnom Penh (Chandler 1992, 80). This is not much different from the impression Europeans had in 1641 when they reported that almost all international trade here was conducted by foreigners, mainly Chinese immigrants (Coe 2004, 219). In a Dutch-Cambodian military conflict three years later, the active merchants in Phnom Penh were Europeans (Dutch and Portuguese), Japanese and Chinese (Kraan 2009).

Daguan, which is our best historical source, informs that the market has no stalls but consists of mats on the ground, laid out from 6 am to 12 noon. He added; those “*who know how to trade are all women*” (Daguan 1296/7 cited by Harris 2007, 70). Daguan’s information suggests that that the indigenous inhabitants were not active merchants and that trade was of a minor social importance.

One should be careful suggesting that trade, when conducted by women, equals a lower social importance or status. Females in medieval Cambodia (figure 21) occur in perceived power roles. The king, for instance, had a female guard (Daguan 1296/7 cited by Harris 2007, 83) and in Zhenla and early Angkor period, the society was based on matrilineal descent (Jacques 2007, 32). One of the Zhenla Kingdoms was even ruled by queens through several generations (Higham 2001, 42; Jacobsen 2008, 22, 32).

Nevertheless, the fact that merchants were women, combined with the limited market opening hours, suggests that trade not was conducted by active traders or as a full time profit strategy, but instead a place to barter the domestic surpluses (Boldizzoni 2011, 76). Full time specialization throughout history often has been restricted to the male gender, due to females generally being closer tied to the domestic sphere (Ortner 1974, 72-3; Rosaldo 1974, 23).

Daguan hints at a humorous reason the Khmer might have been discouraged from becoming active traders. The Cambodian women demanded physical intimacy with their husbands, and would not accept more than a few nights alone (Daguan 1296/7 cited by Harris 2007, 56). One can therefore imagine traveling along the monsoon winds, and being gone 6 month a year could have caused domestic problems.

## **Chapter 5.1. The non commercial identity**

I cautiously suggest that the ethnic Khmer’s lack of active merchants and Silk Road participation was a product of social mechanisms; as well as the geographic location, religion and self sufficient households to name a few determining elements.

This thesis argued that long distance trade, like the Silk Road probably was restricted and financed by the elite in redistributive economic systems at this time. One of the reasons

international trade was of a minor importance in Angkor therefore could derive from a non-commercial attitude within the leadership here. The Cambodian elite, based on inscriptions and temple constructions seems to have been a religious class (Jacques 1986, 327-8). If the nobility in Cambodia adhered strictly to the religious doctrines this could have been influential in the country's lack of commercial engagements, for both Buddhism and the Hindu religious doctrines rejected blatant profit maximization (Wheatley 1975, 234; Christie 1995, 253-5; Thakur 1972, 307).

The social role trade played in Angkor compared to the insular region could have been different as well. According to one economic historian; agricultural civilizations had naturally developing towns whereas trading towns was created to meet a demand for workers (Bairoch 1988, 15-5). The difference could have resulted in a different attitude to trade within the general population, the one being dependant on trade and therefore developing into cultural melting pots where foreigners were welcomed (Hall 2004, 231; Lieberman 2003a, 18).). For the insular nobility, trade could have played a fundamental role, since the elite attained status from their control of the ports. Without merchants visiting would a trading town collapse, the commerce therefore validated the port and elites status (Baker 2003, 41; Bronson 1977, 46-7). In comparison, it is plausible the Cambodian elite's position was validated through religious doctrines and agricultural surplus instead (Allen 1997, 82, 84; Wheatley 1980, 8), which would have meant less of a socio-economic desire to pursue trade.

Religious and social disinterest in maximization trade seems to have been part of the Khmer identity, in my opinion. Sociologists have suggested people are born into a collective world which determines their cultural conceptions, language, morals, values, feelings and thus creates a mechanical solidarity within the society (Durkheim 1964, in Foster 1977, 4; and in Insoll 2007, 29). Based on the social mechanism, it has been suggested that people differing from the norm could be alienated from the larger group. A successful merchant would need to practice a maximization strategy in their dealings with the community, thereby differentiate themselves (Carney 1973, 72). Trade for this reason often has been in the hands of ethnic subgroups in the past (Boldizzoni 2011, 33; Foster 1977, 16).

Anthropological observations have recognized the above mentioned social mechanism in 'primitive' societies; in this thesis meaning largely self sufficient small groups that is without the market driven and impersonal exchange (e.g. Polanyi 1975). In such societies, the blacksmith, potter, healer or trader sometimes can be differentiated from the larger group (e.g. Larick 1989, 301; Gell 1988, 6-9; Helms 1988, 79). I believe such social mechanism is of note when establishing a Cambodian cultural identity. In Angkor's society were Iron smiting in the period

considered magical and was restricted to the Kuy people; a small ethnic minority (Jacques 2007, 32). Based on the briefly sketched social theories and the historical sources I believe the suggestion of a non commercial identity is supported.

Ethnic explanations can easily end in generalizations, racism or nationalistic views. Like the early theories of the Cambodian adaption of the Indian religion, in which the Cambodian people was lacking inventiveness and being “*receptive rather than creative*” (Coedes 1966, 230).

However, I believe ethnic explanations are a better tool to understand the world and the past, than economic theories. People even today are different with completely different viewpoint on the world (Insoll 2007, 26). The difference cannot be explained through economic rationality, otherwise would all cultures have developed similar (Boldizzoni 2011, 96). I think it is clear that ethnic groups and religion were instrumental in peoples understanding of the world in the past. This was done to such an extent that it would make modern people flinch. For instance is the Chinese ‘barbarian’ term for foreigners, translate as ‘foreign’ and ‘local’ in Peter Harris, Zhou Dagan’s travel account (Harris 2007, 31-2). I believe we should break with the caveat discipline when dealing with ethnicities and state that there seem to be ethnic differences in choice of profession, living and religion, which are much more interesting and relevant than any possible economic rationality.

## **Chapter 5.2. Angkor’s absent currency and trade**

*“There seems to have been an almost conscious effort to prohibit the introduction of a monetary system among the Khmers”* (Wicks 1992, 313).

36 temple inscriptions from Cambodia describe economic values at Angkor, measured in variable sizes such as slaves, cloth, paddy, cattle, silver and metals (Wicks 1992, 191-5). However, the values vary to such an extent that no consistency has been found, suggesting that; “*Cambodia during the tenth and eleventh centuries did not possess a common currency*” (Wicks 1992, 199). Wicks suggest that Cambodia hereafter began using Chinese coins in transactions (Wicks 1992, 206), but as mentioned in chapter 3.4 is this impression deriving from a problematic translation.

If we continue the break with the Modernist and Cliometrics discourses, the lack of a currency could also be interesting to speculate more about. In my opinion can the lack of coins in Angkor support they had little international commerce here. We know Chinese traders visited Angkor from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and especially the Ming dynasty; which Cambodia had close ties with (Baker 2003, 49), encouraged the use of Chinese coins internationally (Heng 2006, 189).



Kingdoms along Chao Phraya Valley in Thailand, Cambodia's neighbor and vassal states in periods, introduced a standardized value in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Wicks 1992, 4). Lastly, several states in the medieval period; China, Burma, Thailand, Northern India and Bengal used cowries' shells as a low value transaction medium (Wicks 1992, 308). The Cambodian society therefore must have been well aware of the concept of money, but possibly from a religious discontent rejected its introduction (Wicks 1992, 313).



**Fig. 20. Cowries shell, originating from the Maldives islands and used as a low value currency on the mainland (moneymuseum.com).**

The introduction of money has through history attracted attention from scholars who attempted to formulate models for its introduction (e.g. Weber 1978; Einzig 1970; Carney 1973; Polanyi 1975). The theories are divided between those who see the introduction of money as a response to developing market exchange (e.g. Hall 1999b, 457; Balmuth 1975, 294-5), and those that see the introduction as a way for rulers to control trade or legitimize their rule (e.g. Deyell 2010, 67; Wicks 1992, 1-2). Either perspective is interesting in regards to the money less Cambodian society.

**Table 8. The four main traits of money (Carney 1973, 23)**

1) It is a medium of exchange.
2) It is a medium for measuring value.
3) It is a value that can be stored.
4) It is a standard by which payment can be deferred.

In Polanyi's model the introduction of money were closely linked to market exchange. Money has certain attributes, as seen in table 8, as object to ease transactions, storing values and facilitate loans (Wicks 1992, 9-10, Carney 1973, 23-4). Due to these advantages, the introduction of money has been associated rationally to a sophisticated market system (Deyell 2010, 65).

However, Polanyi's model has been criticized for downgrading the economic sophistication of non-monetary archaic societies; money and markets could have developed independent of each other (Lustig 2009, 86; Wicks 1992, 10). Angkor's lack of money or

standardized values therefore cannot automatically be equaled with an undeveloped market economy. The Chinese sources describe market transactions in Cambodia along with the enormity of the Kingdom and its temples indicate that the civilization was highly sophisticated.

In the economic deterministic discourse it seems to be impossible to envision a sophisticated civilization, without a matching economic structure. The first approach to make the economic perspective fit is to argue we simply haven't recognized the sophisticated economic structure yet (e.g. Lustig 2009, 91). Upendra Thakur even states, disregarding present data, that

*“One can hardly doubt the circulation of coinage in the progressive economic life of those countries”* (Thakur 1972, 304).

Certain scholars therefore have argued that other non metallic values were used in the kingdoms transactions. Cambodian valuables like cloth or rice have been labeled as a simple form of a value setting (Hall 1999b, 438, Wicks 1992, 6, 14). However, I disagree with the rationale; cloth or rice cannot be equaled primitive cash. Such valuables could be used in barter and large scale direct transaction, but they fail to fulfill three of the basic traits of money in table 7. Meaning that cloth or grain is difficult to store and in such variable qualities that value setting or long distance / period loans would have been next to impossible.

The other approach to explain a sophisticated civilization without a matching economic structure is to downgrade its sophistication. Angkor might not have had tight control of its provinces (Sahai 1977b, 46; Jacques 2007, 35) and would therefore have lacked the power to enforce market control and a standardized value.

*“The monumental give an impression of unity and might lead to non realistic assumptions of power and control in ancient times”* (Oka & Kusimba 2008, 363).

In my opinion, the lack of money suggests the international Silk Road trade was circumventing Angkor. Indian, Middle Eastern, Javanese and Chinese coins could otherwise have been expected found. Introducing standardized values and weights was a way to avoid conflicts in the markets (Foster 1977, 16-8), as well as a way to take a percentage in the transactions (e.g. Metcalf 1994, 205). I therefore believe, that the lack of an introduced standardized value in medieval Cambodia, not only is indicating of a non-commercially identity, but also the limited international commerce here.

## Chapter 6

## Discussion

This thesis set out to reexamining historical sources and archaeological data that has linked medieval Cambodia to the Silk Road trade. The trade generally is perceived as being instrumental in the development and actions in the Southeast region. Through the evaluation of the archaeological data and historical sources it became apparent what little substantial data can support the significant role trade should have had. It is argued that the trade emphasis instead relies on a dominant Modernist discourse.

One of the aims of this thesis has been to examine the actual data the Modernist perspective has been relying on in regards to the Silk Road trade. As the archaeological data from the Cambodian case study showed, the perspective was reduced to a poorly documented Chinese ceramics data and minor independent finds. Nonetheless, the Modernist and Cliometrics discourses have been instrumental in the creation of a trade paradigm in which interaction and development is related to the Silk Road trade.

The inland Kingdoms of Angkor, Pagan and Java seem to have followed a different economic strategy, compared to the trade oriented coastal centers in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines (Allen, 1997, 79; Coe 2004, 68). The difference in economic strategies led to the suggestion that mainland and insular Southeast Asia should be studied as completely diverse regions. However, that suggestion still adheres to the trade paradigm, in that the division was seen as caused by a difference in trade routes (e.g. Sutherland 2003, 4; Hall 1985, 24).

There were different religious interaction spheres at the time; the Muslims and later Christians seem to have been restricted to the insular regions, whereas Theravada Buddhism thrived in the mainland (Federspeil 2007, 2). However, linking the division of religion solely to trade routes is speculative; Indian sailors often were Buddhist, Jain and later Muslim (Dewaraja 1990, 305; Christie 1995, 252) but the religion adapted by the Cambodian nobility was Hindi. Later in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Theravada Buddhism, spread to Burma, Thailand and Cambodia from Sri Lanka (Gunawardana 2001, 136), but the merchants and diplomats sent from Sri Lanka generally were Muslim at this time (Dewaraja 1990, 309). Such observations suggest that trade and foreign merchants might not have been a cultural influence in the region.

The counter argument is that missionaries, monks and Brahmins might have moved within different social circles, but it was trade that established and facilitated the long distance contact (Oka & Kusimba 2008, 350). The arguments easily develop into a ‘hen-or-egg’

discussion, but the basis assumption of the Modernist is that trade was significant and organized enough to facilitate the interaction at the time (Oka & Kusimba 2008, 355).

The economic motives for long distance interaction could be questioned; the interaction could have been motivated by other desires (e.g. Helms 1988). The Buddhist faith was a missionary religion, and that the Hindu courts had a desire for spiritual knowledge and legitimacy from Indian scholars (Kulke 1993, 13; Pollock 1996, 230-1). The religiously driven endeavors could, in my opinion, have been unrelated to merchant activities.

Secondly, this thesis argues that trade and merchants had a periphery role in the society, even insular centers, with extensive Chinese ceramics such as Srivijaya and Satingpra were located inland. Trade and its economic importance might therefore have been awarded too much influence at this time (Leur 1955, 88). Long distance trade was conducted between redistributive economies, which were shipping prestige goods to selected groups. The vast majority of people were farmers who operated within a dense network of social relations and were not interested in trade or wealth maximization (Boldizzoni 2011, 76, 130).

The skepticism of the economic deterministic trade has a wider relevance to archaeology, the economic significant trade paradigm is not only restricted to the Silk Road. Its influence can be recognized in the Classical studies (Boldizzoni 2011, 78), as well in the perception of North European and Middle Eastern, Bronze and Iron Age trade. On an academic field trip, arranged by the University of Copenhagen, to the Baltic countries in October 2011, I was given a chance to voice this opinion.

As the trip was centered on the Baltic Sea, I chose to focus on the Scandinavian Viking Age (8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century), and the trade between the Caliphate and The Baltic Sea region. Like the Southeast Asian trade routes, the economic significant trade supposedly had “*led to the growth of towns*” (Duczko 2004, 62). However, the rising centers in Russia were agriculturally orientated and less involved with trade, when compared to the towns where Viking traders seem to have settled (Martin 2006, 167). In the later medieval period, Russian international trade was mainly conducted by West European merchants. Similar to the Angkor Kingdom, it could appear that trade had been of a limited influence in the country’s population.

## **Chapter 6.1. Thesis archaeological relevance**

The presentation was met with a question of relevance for archaeologist today. The economic motives and social determinacy, which I emphasize as still being dominant in archaeology were claimed to be an outdated problem. I would agree with my colleagues in regard

to the Marxist economic structures, which generally are considered outdated (Boldizzoni 2011, 7). However, although the Substantive school challenged the Cliometrics maximization motives (e.g. Dalton 1975; Polanyi 1975), this criticism has been limited in regards to the Southeast Asian Iron Age and onwards. Trade here is still perceived in economic terms similar to the Marxist tracing of resources, trading at this point in time is awarded a substantial socio-economic significance. The emphasis on trade here seems to stem from an underlining economic bias that has affected Processual and Post-Processual schools alike.

*“Nobody likes having to deal with static situations. Sluggish economies appear tedious, even those that are by no means poor, and are ill suited to being studied using analytical tools that focus on performance”* (Boldizzoni 2011, 82)

The slightly provocative quote suggests that academics might be more inclined to focus on change and growth in the past. A similar suggestion, in regards to the Indus Valley Harappan civilization has been made, which Western scholars perceived as stagnant due to its material homogeneity through 600 years (Miller 1984, 40, 57). It is beyond the scope of the paper to begin such a fundamental theoretical debate, but it seems possible that a homogenous agricultural and religious civilization over 600 years might be an entity that is more difficult to appreciate, when the focus today is on interaction and development.

This thesis argues that ‘trade’ has been linked to Cambodia’s economic prosperity and development from the very beginning of the Iron Age (e.g. Glover 1989, 47-8). Even though the country consolidated power far from the maritime routes, practiced an agrarian economy and the indigenous merchant class never seems to have developed, the Kingdom still is believed to have had an economic interest in trade. Starting from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards (e.g. Hall 1975, 324; Hall 1985, 171) and eventually resulting in the move to Phnom Penh in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century to ease the access (Chandler 1992, 79; Higham 2001, 162).

The economic rational motives behind actions in the past seem to be well accepted in the academic circle. Even Lieberman, who criticizes the Modernist perspective in regards to Burma, accepts the economic rationale and the importance of the Silk Road trade in regards to Angkor’s occupation of the peninsula (Lieberman 2003a, 222)<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Lieberman relies on Higham and Hall’s work in his assessment regarding Angkor kingdom.

The Modernist paradigm appears to be unchallenged in the coming generations as well. PhD. Veronica Walker Vadillo suggest the Chinese shown on the Bayon reliefs represent the privileged position the Chinese had from their control of the international trade and access to luxury goods (Vadillo 2011, 83). Another recent PhD. Eileen Lustig suggests, in her work with the Cambodian internal economic structures, that the empire “*actively pursued foreign trade*” (Lustig 2009, 2). These scholars were respectively chosen to illustrate the trade paradigm’s continued approval, even though there is little archaeological data to support it. The Substantivist / Primitivist inspired criticism made in this thesis is therefore still highly relevant.

## **Chapter 6.2. The Economic Kingdom**

Chapter 5 made the suggestion that economic rationality generally was lacking in the past societies like. The Cambodian population, at least the upper echelons, but most likely all of the society were embedded in a religious and ethnic identity with little possibility or interest in pursuing maximization. The Kingdom practiced an agricultural economy, but I believe it's reasonable to question to what extent it was an actively pursued economic strategy, for the society had developed from the agricultural system. Land and workers were also tied to the temples with a fixed tax for the entire village (Sahai 1977a, 129). Such a feudal system offers little free competition, with most of the work forces tied to the land. The nobility or temples, taxing the surplus would not have had much freedom in formulating surplus strategies or choosing their consumers either (Boldizzoni 2011, 95). It is therefore unconvincing that the system would have been ruled by market rationality and maximization motives.

I suggested that the Silk Road would have been of little influence in Cambodia, engaging only a minor part of the society. The suggestion is supported by a series of observations; the lack of durable traded goods especially from the Indian and Middle Eastern markets. Chinese ceramics restricted to temple compounds (Miksic 2006a, 5-6). The few tribute missions to the Chinese court that only offered local products, suggesting that foreign import was limited in the country. Dagan’s description of a smaller vessel sailing him to Angkor, combined with the almost exclusive depiction of river craft vessels on the temple reliefs, likewise indicate that large ships might have avoided the river trip inland. Finally, the lack of a standardized value in the Kingdom could suggest a simplified economic system or a limited foreign commerce. However, my impressions can be challenged.

There has been put an emphasis on the lacking or limited data, but any new excavation could potentially challenge this assumption. Archaeological excavations are always limited in time, money and extent; the durable materials found are only a tiny part of the used material

culture. For that reason it is dangerous to argue that objects were rarities or restricted; the lack or rarity of a foreign material could derive from unsuccessful excavations.

Daguan reported honey combs were shipped in great quantities and foreign cloth was reported in inscriptions as gifts, which makes the presence in the markets difficult to dispute. Chinese metals also have been found on shipwrecks and are not always prestige objects like gongs and mirrors, but also sometimes raw metal, cooking pots and blades (Wade 2009, 240). It is possible that such objects at the time were traded in bulk to Angkor, but since these materials to my knowledge are undiscovered, the scale and organization is difficult to assess.

The lack of a currency, foreign or domestic was interpreted as a sign of limited commerce or a lack of economic control, argued in chapter 5.1. However, Hall suggested the Cambodian Kingdom had a high level of centralized economic control (Hall 1985, 136). The lack of a currency therefore could be the result of governmental control, in which the Chinese coins were re-casted. Such a structure was known in China where Arab merchants were forced to exchange their silver coins and goods to Chinese money to be able to trade at all (Wade 2009, 226). As with the cloth and metals, such alternative interpretations are possible but completely impossible to verify.

I have attempted to restrict my research and conclusions to the main sources and actual archaeological data. The presence of certain objects like Khmer styled statues and ceramics on the Peninsula document an interaction, but these are too few to constitute an organized large scale system in itself (e.g. Renfrew & Bahn 2000, 352). The lack of Cambodian goods from shipwrecks in fact suggests that the Kingdom not was involved with the Silk Road trade. The only archaeological material group that supports the international trade reached Angkor in a significant scale is the Chinese ceramics. However, its distribution around the temples, mainly in Angkor, makes the import seem limited on present data.

### **Chapter 6.3. The uneconomic past**

The focus on economics in the past was a theoretical break with the cultural historic approach, the economic focus supposedly made history into a neutral and scientific science (Trigger 2005, 252-3). The Marxist economic theories have been disregarded in this paper, since the Silk Road paradigm seem closer linked to the Cliometrics perspective. However, it is my opinion that both the economic schools, with their search for economic motives and rationality to explain developments in the past are ill suited. This thesis does not suggest that long duration outcomes were unaffected by economic forces. Agricultural surplus, raw materials, specialized production and population size does convincingly affect the long term outcomes. But social

actions, motives and choices along the way would in my opinion have been unrelated to rational economic considerations.

The Cambodian history has been influenced by the economic perspective, in which most of the Kingdom's foreign exploits were put into an economic rational frame. The tribute missions to China and the royal gift to the Chola king were linked to economic interests (Jacq-Hergoualch 2002, 354; Hall 1985, 198; Higham 2001, 114). Cambodia's military exploits of raiding and occupations, likewise has been situated as part of an economic strategy (Hall 1985, 171; Lieberman 2003b, 218). Finally, the religious choices and temple constructions made by the nobility in Cambodia have been interpreted as a way to legitimize power both internally and externally (Kulke 1986, 7; Higham 1998, 175; e.g. Bloch 1977, 82, 87; e.g. Hodder 1982, 119-22).

I cautiously suggest that the search for economics behind political decisions today has created a perception of an economic rational leadership in the past as well. The economic frame presents the rulers in the past as cynics or without emotions (Boldizzoni 2011, 67). The impression seems flawed and far removed from what I believe would have been the rulers own awareness. Not even today are pure economic calculations made in politics, maybe because these would be socially unacceptable (Kopytoff 1986, 73). Decisions even today rely on cultural and social determinations, which makes it less unconvincing that the rulers in the past should have been more aware of the economics.

I believe the rulers in Angkor were just as embedded in the religious and ethnic identity as everyone else. Using alternative social sciences could support such a suggestion; sociologists propose that peoples' identities are formed in a social context. The social expectations, demands and roles awarded people is instrumental in shaping their behavior (Mead 1934 in Kapferer 1979, 116-7). Most people today have different social roles depending on the context (Barth 1969, 132), but would this also have been the case for medieval religious ordained leadership (Chandler 1992, 61). In my opinion, the actions of leaders in Angkor would have depended on many things such as rights, status, religion and pride, but not on rational economic calculations (Boldizzoni 2011, 26).

The military campaigns into Thailand for instance might not have been part of an economic occupation strategy. The idea of occupations motivated for land, people and resources could be a Western-conceived idea enforced onto the foreign past (Jacq-Hergoualch 2002, 400). The borders of the countries we know today, might create a diluted image of the land borders in the past, which probably were a lot more arbitrary (Southerland 2003, 7).

The construction of temples in new territories has been (rationally) perceived by archaeologists as a way to legitimize the rule on the new occupied territories (DeMarris *et. al.*



1996, 15-6, 18-9; Kulke 1986, 8). However, Phimai, the most studied area in regards to the Cambodian expansion, based on inscriptions were sharing religion, ethnicity and traditions with Angkor before the 'occupation'. It is therefore likely that the new regions were absorbed into the Kingdom and not forcefully occupied (Welch 1998, 208).

These perceived rational economic motives rest more on a discourse than archaeological data, and I believe we should be skeptical when economic resources or trade routes are used to explain change and development in the past. As the Cambodian case illustrates is there little data to support organized and economic significant trade. I believe the organization of trade at this time still was of such a limited extend that its social significance was limited.

## Chapter 7

## Conclusion

This thesis scope was to examine the medieval Cambodian Kingdom's participation in the international trade route, termed the Silk Road. The capital was for 600 years located around Angkor, half a month sailing inland. The thesis addressed the entire period attempting to create a diachronic picture of the trade participation. This was done by researching the relevant historical and archaeological sources available. Select economic and anthropological theories were also used to further increase the understanding of the commercial structure and interests in the Kingdom.

It was found that the data supporting the Modernist theoretical perspective, which argued for close economic ties with international trade, relied on outdated translations and obsolete archaeological data. The suggestion of Chinese coins used in the Cambodian market was relying on a wrong translation; at present no Chinese coins dating to the period has been found in Angkor, and the translation instead was of Chinese 'goods'.

The Modernist perspective through the 1970s, 80s and 90s and today, solely relies on Chinese ceramics estimates as its archaeological data, collected before the Cambodian civil war. These estimates suggested that Chinese ceramics from the 10<sup>th</sup> century started to replace the local production, becoming 70-80% of the total ceramics assemblages in the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century. Aedeen Cremin observed that no recent excavation could support those estimates, which was closer to 3-10%. I illustrated with referring to a thorough stratigraphic excavation of a 13<sup>th</sup> century temple, that the imported ceramics through the three phases remained low in comparison to the local ceramics. The excavation is presently the best diachronic data in regards to Chinese ceramics import there is, but more excavations are needed to document the trend. This thesis made suggestions on potential sites that could prove interesting in this regard.

This thesis compared the Chinese ceramics in Cambodia with other sites along the Silk Road. Even the royal compound in Angkor had a lower ceramic percentage and quantity compared to other regional centers. John Miksic recently observed Chinese ceramics remained restricted to temples and royal areas in Cambodia, even in the later periods, when it became more plentiful. The thesis suggests that the distribution and low percentage, when compared to the insular regions, indicate a lower availability here, which suggests Angkor not was a regular part of the Silk Road trade.

Other observations supports the Silk Road circumvented Cambodia. I illustrated that Cambodian specialized products found beyond the borders were too few and uncertain to be interpreted as a sign of organized trade. Further, there have been no foreign coins found, which

could be expected to have traveled along the foreign commerce. The Kingdom never introduced its own currency or even standardized weights and values. Commercial centers along the Silk Road in comparison did introduce such economic measures, which supports the impression of a Cambodian lack of involvement in commercial activities.

I presented the lack of commercial involvement as more than simply a lack of foreign business visiting. Inspired by Fredrik Barth's work with ethnic identities, I suggest that the Cambodian people had been non-commercially orientated. The people were farmers and the elite religious ordained, neither of the groups would have had much interest or possibility in developing and pursuing commercial interests.

This thesis illustrated how temple reliefs and inscriptions mentioning wars and trade all have been used in a rational economic reconstruction of the society. I instead argued that the economic deterministic perspective generally is inapt for the study of the past, but in particular is unsuited for the non-commercial Cambodian civilization. This thesis suggested how ill prepared current academia is to appreciate a homogenous, non commercial orientated civilization, when the focus is on (economic) change, development and trade. The reaction has been to downplay the sophistication and organization of the society or exaggerate the economic importance of the data.

The most extensive source regarding the Kingdom is Zhou Daguan's travel descriptions, recently translated by Peter Harris, and this paper has made great use of his work. The description of Chinese goods in the markets, Chinese merchants and the ease with which to trade in the country is what generally is referred. However, I drew attention to other parts in this book; sailing to the capital was done in smaller boats and the men did not travel far. Daguan also described recent Chinese immigration problems, which I correlate with the Yuan presence in Southeast Asia at the time. Finally, Daguan was informing that trade was done by women, and not for a full day, which suggest that the locals were not indulged in economically significant trade.

Many of the above mentioned observations have been known by the academia for over a decade now. Yet, the Modernist's perspective on the economic importance of the Silk Road trade has remained unchallenged. Recent papers and PhDs still acknowledge the social and economic importance of international trade in this period, even though there presently is no convincing archaeological data to support the theory.

This thesis is therefore a preliminary attempt to challenge the significance the academia places on economic data. A sophisticated civilization in the past does not demand an economic sophistication; I believe the medieval Cambodian kingdom illustrates this well.

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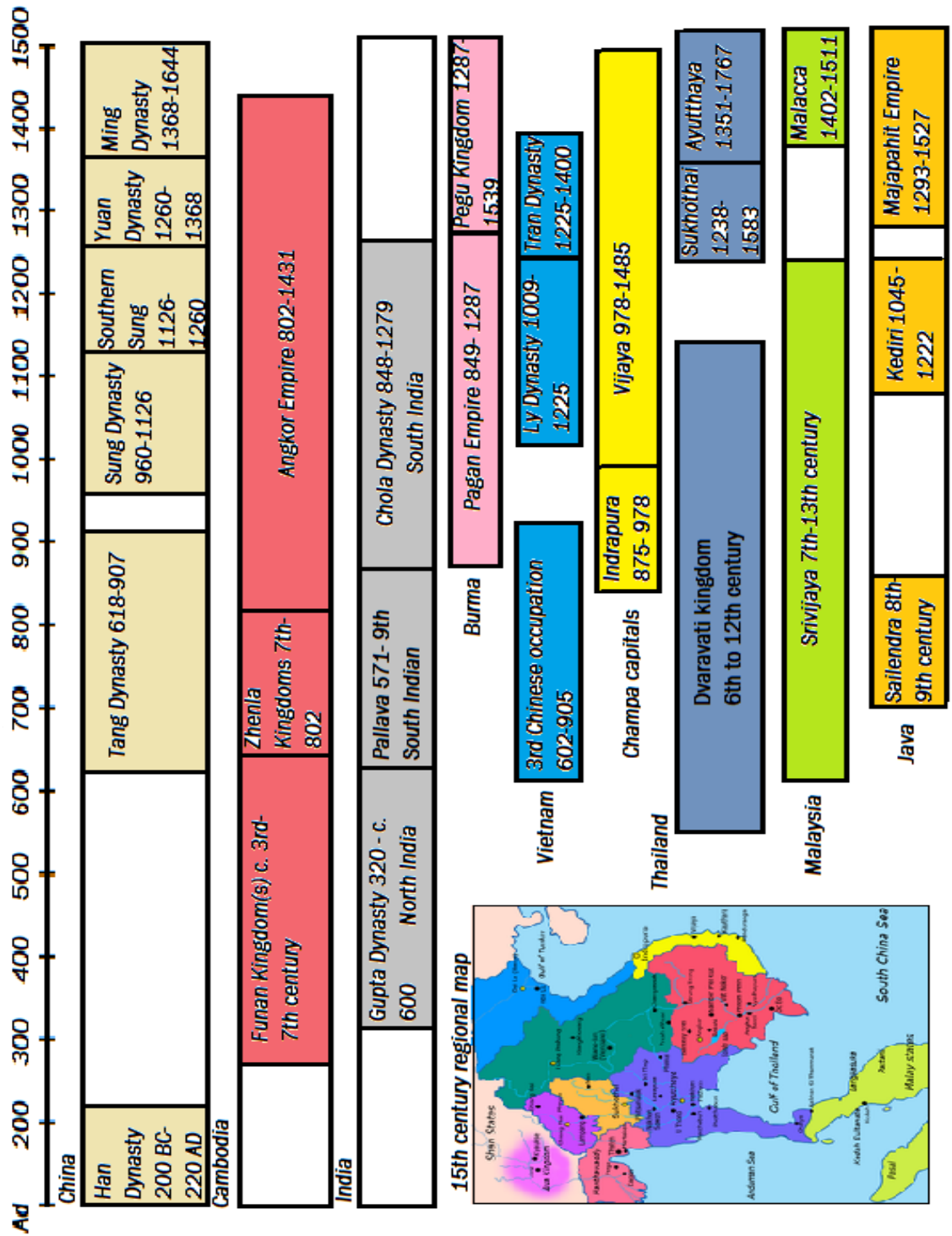
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Appendix 1. List of civilizations mentioned in thesis, and with relevance for the period, Map from Wikipedia, authors design.







**Appendix 3. Khmer kings list, with proximal reigns, dated inscriptions, tribute missions and Chinese dynasty. (data from: Jenner 1982; Stark 2004; Higham 2001)**

Ruler	Year	Temple construction and capital	Tribute missions A.D.	Chinese dynasty
Bhavavarman II	639-657		651	Tang dynasty 618-907 AD.
Jayavarman I	c.657-681		682, 698	
Jayadevi	c.681-713		707, 710 (Wet Chenla)	
Unknown			717 (wet and Dry Chenla), 750 Wet Chen-la. 753 Dry Chenla. 771 Dry Chen-la	
Jayavarman II	802-c.835	Kulen, Rolous (Hariharalaya)	813 (still labeled Wet Chen-la). 814.	
Jayavarman III	c.842-877			
Indravarman I	877-889			
Yasovarman I	889-910			Five dynasties and 10 Kingdoms 907-960 AD.
Hashavarman I	910-c.922			
Ishanavarman II	c.922-928			
Jayavarman IV	c.921-940	Koh Ker		
Hashavarman II	940-944			
Rajendravarman II	944-968	Angkor city (Yashodharapura)		Northern Sung dynasty 960-1127 AD.
Jayavarman V	968-c.1000			
Udayadityavarman I	1000-1001			
Jayaviravarman	1002-1010			
Suryavarman I	1002-c.1049	Phimeanakas temple	1012 mission to Vietnam. Mission to Chola, India, 1020-21 AD.	
Udayadityavarman II	1050-1066			
Hashavarman III	1066-1080			
Jayavarman VI	1080-1107			

Dharanindravarman I	1107-1113			
Suryavarman II	1113-1150	Angkor Wat temple, Chao Say Tevoda	1116, 1120, 1129 AD. (1131 a letter was sent to China, possible along with a mission). (1147 special favors were given to Cambodia)	Southern Song dynasty 1127-1279 AD.
Yasovarman II	c.1150-1165		1155 vassal to Cambodia sent a mission	
Tribhuvanatiyavarman	1165-1177			
<i>Champa occupation</i>	<i>1177-1181</i>			
Jayavarman VII	1181-c.1210 (or 1218 argued by Jacques 2007)	Bayon temple, Preah Khan, Angkor Thom	1200 vassal to Cambodia sent a mission	
Indravarman II	1210-1243		Chau Ju-Kua describes Cambodia 1225 based on merchant accounts	
Jayavarman VIII	1243-c.1295 or 1270- c. 1295 as argued by Jacques 2007		Cambodia possible became a vassal state of China 1278-1294	Yuan Dynasty 1271-1368 AD.
Srindravarman	1295-1307		Zhou Dagan visits 1296/7,	
Srindrayavarman	1307-1327		1320 Chinese mission visits to buy elephant	
Jayavarma Paramesrivara	c.1327-?		1330 possible mission to China	
Nippean Bat	1340-1346			
Lompong Reachea	1346-1352			
<i>Siam occupation</i>	<i>1352-1357</i>			
Preah Paramatha-Khemaraja	c. 1357			
Suryavamsa Rajadhiraja	1357-1377		12 missions to China from 1371-1419	Ming Dynasty 1368-1644 AD.
Paramaraja	c.1377-c.1380			
Dhammasoka Rajadhiraja	c.1380-1393			
<i>Siam occupation</i>	<i>1393 (5 month)</i>			
Barom Reachea II	1393-1463			

## Abstract

This thesis examines the medieval Cambodian Kingdoms participation in the international trade route between China and India A.D. 802-1431. The period saw a massive growth in the international commerce, while at the same time; the Cambodian capital center remained far inland. Although the Kingdom is perceived as largely an agricultural state, its social and economic developments still are linked to the waxing and waning of the international trade routes. The Kingdom is even perceived as actively pursuing trade from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

Inspired by the Primitive perspective and the Substantive economic direction, this thesis evaluates the main archaeological and historical sources that support the trade assumptions. The Cambodian archaeological data is generally found wanting, only Chinese export ceramics arriving from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards, provided a substantial dataset to support international commerce. However, with a closer examination of the Chinese ceramics the data appeared less than convincing. It seems to have arrived to the Cambodian capital, Angkor, in far smaller numbers than what is documented around contemporary insular centers.

Through an evaluation of other archaeological data, such as shipwrecks in the region and Cambodian specialized products, this thesis found little archaeological data to support the assumption of the international trade routes should have held any socio-economic importance.

The historical sources seem to have supported the trade assumption far better. However, these sources are open to interpretation and so sporadic that they cannot present a coherent representation. Instead, the impression of a Cambodian Kingdom actively pursuing trade seems to rely on a dominating paradigm.

The paradigm seems embedded in an economic deterministic mind frame; the background for the discourse is suggested to having its roots in Marxist and Cliometrics economic determinacy theories. An added emphasis on trade was introduced with the Post-Processual school, which has created the current paradigm for Iron Age and Medieval Southeast Asia.

The Cambodian history is positioned in this paradigm, but the thesis argued that this has been done with little reason. The people were not merchants nor, it was argued, were they interested in pursuing that professions. The trade at the time was neither organized nor economic significant enough to have motivated or inspired developments and change. This thesis should be seen as a call to question the significance historians and archaeologists place on trade and resources in their reconstructions of the past.

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