

topography. This volume illustrates the importance of new archaeological data in beginning to unpick some of these complexities.

Paul D. Wordsworth
University of Oxford

BÉRÉNICE BELLINA (ed.):

Khao Sam Kaeo. An Early Port-City between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

(Mémoires Archéologiques 28.) 675 pp. Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2017. ISBN 978 2 85539 427 5.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X20002736

This volume presents the results of excavations at Khao Sam Kaeo (KSK), one of the most important sites connected to early maritime trade in the South China Sea in late prehistory. Lying on the east coast of the Kra Isthmus, the narrowest part of the Thai–Malay Peninsula, KSK likely benefitted from its position on the land bridge between two vibrant spheres of maritime trade and activity, the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea. It was inhabited between *c.* 400 BCE and 100 CE – a period of growing Indian Ocean interaction, yet one for which few sites have been studied in any detail. For these reasons alone, the reader can guess at the archaeological significance of the site. This comprehensive and authoritative report not only details the findings of investigations at the site, but also sets a new standard in the archaeological examination of early ports and settlements in Southeast Asia.

The book begins with an engaging contextualization of the study in scholarship on the Indian Ocean and globalization, as well as the historiography of cultural exchanges between South and Southeast Asia. In doing so, it positions the report extremely well in terms of its contribution to our understanding of Indian Ocean exchange and associated societal developments. It is made very clear at the outset that an overarching aim is to elevate the study of craft products and technologies beyond the usual fixation on commodities of trade; and instead take into account their wider sociopolitical and cultural dimensions.

There follow 22 chapters written by 26 authors, arranged into four parts. Part 1 focusses on the geographical and environmental setting of the site. Three chapters (on the geoarchaeology, archaeobotany, and identification of plant resins respectively) expertly reconstruct the physical geography of the upper Peninsula, the taphonomic processes that have affected the site, and the past ecological system and agricultural practices that took place. The latter two are well supported with detailed appendices presenting their data.

In part 2, we turn to the settlement of KSK. This is very much the core of the archaeological site report. It begins with an account of the complex morphology of the 35 hectare site spread over four hills on the bank of the Tha Taphao River. This is followed by a report of the ways space was found to be used across the site, the density of occupation, and how activities were organized within it. This builds on the results of archaeological investigations, which included 135 test-pits and numerous surface surveys of accessible areas. It is disappointing that the detailed results (section drawings, site plans, finds catalogues, etc.) are not presented or made openly accessible. Yet the report is clear in the way it presents the methods that were used, and the cumulative results. This is particularly evident in the ways the dating and spatial analyses of the site are articulated.

Part 3, on the socio-technological systems evident at the site, comprises 12 chapters on the various craft products that were found. These include a variety of ceramics (local, regional, South, Southeast and East Asian), worked stone, metal and glass. Specialist artefact studies are usual in a site report, but it would be a mistake to think of these chapters as mere presentations of typologies and corpora of material. These are all presented, and to a very high standard (though again, the reader may note a lack of detailed datasets). Yet each chapter goes further than this, embedding artefacts in their wider material worlds and considering how results of analyses contribute to answering wider questions of technology, social relations and interactions. Particularly worthy of note is the meticulous detail with which the ceramics, metallurgical industries and glass are presented, and the various connections they are shown to evidence.

Following this extensive treatment of the archaeological material, we are treated to a discussion that reflects on where KSK stands within the wider narrative of cities and states in Southeast Asia. This begins with an excellent review of the idea of the city and city-states, and of previous scholarship on cities and trading sites; before then assessing the evidence from KSK in relation to other settlements elsewhere in Southeast (and to a lesser extent South) Asia. In doing so, Bellina convincingly puts forward the suggestion that: (a) KSK was a cosmopolitan city, home to numerous cultural groups; and (b) because there is clear evidence of political centralization and the organization of activities and resources within the settlement to satisfy the economic and political networks of the city – features that would usually be used to define city-states in scholarship on Southeast Asian trading polities from later periods – KSK can be seen as an incipient city-state. Indeed, as it is pointed out, this may mean that KSK was some sort of a cradle of early city-state culture in the western Southeast Asian region.

It is here, in the situation of the site within this scholarly framework, that we are perhaps left with a nagging sensation that something is missing. There is certainly nothing amiss in anything that is written or suggested. The synthesis of wider scholarship is sound and insightful. Rather, it feels as though the extremely high standards of excavation and quality of scholarship presented in this volume mean that its significance goes beyond existing (increasingly semantic) debates about whether, when and how we define “cities” and “states” in later historical periods. Such is the quality of this study and the investigations it reports, we now have ample opportunity to start thinking about early urbanism, maritime trade and interaction and the sociopolitical and cultural dimensions of society in later prehistory with reference to the archaeology of this period – for which this site is and will remain a key reference for years to come. Overall, this work is far more than an excavation report; and is of essential value to both archaeologists and historians working on themes of urbanism, networks, globalization and Indian Ocean studies in Southeast Asia and beyond.

Jason D. Hawkes

Institut Français de Pondichéry

SOUTH EAST ASIA

ALICE VITTRANT and JUSTIN WATKINS (eds):

The Mainland Southeast Asia Linguistic Area.

(Trends in Linguistics.) xxii, 712 pp. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2019.

ISBN 978 3 11 040176 9.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X20002876

Southeast Asia is a region of high linguistic diversity and dynamic multilingualisms. The complex histories of language contact and the associated processes of convergence