

kilometer-long wall. It has been suggested that Angkor Borei could have been the capital of Fu Nan, implying a hierarchical status that still has to be confirmed by comparative archaeological work in other sites. The inland position of Angkor Borei and its probable links to earlier societies still farther inland point to the fact that one has to look for growth of agricultural revenues to explain such early social developments.

Indications of late prehistoric activities in archaeological sites farther down the delta, in Vietnamese territory, have been brought to light over the years, most of them along the Vam Co Tay and the Vam Co Dong valleys (the western and eastern branches of the Mekong) or farther north (the Dong Nai culture). Chance finds of prehistoric tools have been made all over the area. Circular moated sites, slab graves, jar burials, and settlement sites have been described; they all date back to the last centuries B.C., a period when Metal Age societies began to reach a notable level of complexity. At the coastal jar burial site of Giong Ca Vo (Can Gio), the archaeological assemblage shows clear affinities with the Sa Huynh culture of central Viet Nam as well as some affinities with later Oc Eo culture ceramic production. Overall, perceptible stylistic links emerge in the decoration of both late prehistoric pottery found in the delta and in later sites of the Fu Nan period.

Based on published data on surveyed or excavated sites, however, it is as yet hard to establish a clear, direct connection between late prehistoric and Oc Eo cultures. Among those sites that can be associated with Fu Nan, only the large site of Go Thap has revealed occupations that have been radiocarbon-dated to the middle of the first millennium B.C. It does appear, at least from the presently available data, that the Oc Eo culture per se started developing in the lower reaches of the Mekong in a somewhat sudden manner, around the first century A.D. One jar burial, however, has been excavated on the slopes of Mount Ba The, overlooking the site of Oc Eo, in a stratigraphical level dating to about the first century A.D.; it contained ashes, one carnelian, and four gold foil beads. This burial practice, in a jar decorated with typical Oc Eo-culture motifs, provides one of the few tangible links available in controlled excavations with late prehistoric Southeast Asian death rituals.

#### EARLY DEVELOPMENTS AND EXCHANGE WITH INDIA

The stratigraphical sequence on the eponymous site of Go Oc Eo presents us with a paradigmatic sequence for this area, and possibly for much of the Mekong delta. Sometime during the first century A.D., a low-lying natural mound in the floodplain was cleared of its vegetation by burning, and a dense settlement, with houses built on wooden piles, was subsequently put up on the site. Few or no traces of habitation during this period have so far been found outside the mounds, in the floodable plain. The assemblage associated with this early settlement, which lasts well into the fourth century, includes the kind of coarse earthenwares, many of them in the shape of large jars with fabric and decoration usually associated with the Oc Eo culture, together with a rich array of buff-colored fine paste ceramic wares of good quality, a large quantity of beads, and terra cotta tiles. The latter clearly indicate exchange with India: the beads, the *kendi* shapes, the quality of the fine paste (with no visible temper), and the model of the tiles may all be matched to techniques developed in India.<sup>10</sup> The people who settled at Oc Eo were therefore no doubt using technological advances that are known to have then spread to Southeast Asia, starting around the last century B.C. Chinese sources, referring to third-