

century Fu Nan, tell us of settlements enclosed in wooden palisades, palaces, and dwelling houses raised on piles, with thatched roofs.

Similar settlement sites, with chronological sequences pointing to the first three or four centuries A.D., have been revealed by excavations carried out on various mounds (*go*) of the Oc Eo floodplain, on the slopes of neighboring Mount Ba The, and would seem also to be found on many sites all over the Mekong delta. Some ceramic pieces found in various sites around the Oc Eo site complex appear to be true imports from India (as opposed to local wares made with Indian techniques): they are polished wares, with shapes, colors (black or orange), and a fine fabrication directly comparable to finds of the second to fourth centuries A.D. in Indian sites such as Arikamedu.¹¹ As in other contemporary sites of Southeast Asia, a rich array of artifacts that came from across the Bay of Bengal, or even farther west, may belong to this historical phase (only a few, however, have been found in controlled excavations); dozens of Indian inscribed gems, intaglios, cameos, and two Roman medallions dated to the second century A.D. all attest to the remarkable cosmopolitanism of sites in the Mekong delta. Oc Eo, in terms of imported goods, appears to be the delta's richest site, which may be explained by its position only some twenty kilometers off the coast of the Gulf of Siam. Together with the near coastal site of Nen Chua (known in Malleret's time as Ta Keo), to which it would soon be linked by a canal, Oc Eo may well have provided the avenue for international trade of the emergent polity known to the Chinese as Fu Nan. The Oc Eo/Nen Chua outlet faced the eastern coasts of the Thai-Malay peninsula, where a large number of ill-studied contemporary sites are known to have existed. Some are known through Chinese sources to have comprised harbor cities frequented by merchants from all over the Indian Ocean. By the third century A.D., the same Chinese sources tell us that Fu Nan had sent its fleet to take control of some of these cities on the isthmian tracks of the peninsula (specifically, the one known as Dunsun). At this point, whatever the origins of the Fu Nan polity, whatever the share of revenues derived from agriculture and/or maritime trade, international commerce had no doubt become a crucial component of its economy.

So far, no significant remains of brick buildings and no religious statuary have been found in these early archaeological levels, in any of the excavated sites at Oc Eo, or elsewhere in the Mekong delta. There are as yet no indications of the adoption of the Indian religions of Buddhism or Brahmanism by those people of the Mekong delta who created the Oc Eo culture, which would become so popular in the next centuries. Despite persistent exchange with Indian culture and Indian Ocean trade networks, no evidence is yet perceptible of the process known as Indianization, during which large segments of Indian culture would be adopted, in Fu Nan as in many other contemporary Southeast Asian sites.

CONTROL OF THE FLOOD PLAINS AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

As early as 1931, interpretation of aerial photographs revealed an extensive ancient canal network radiating from Angkor Borei, in Cambodia, and connecting this site to the area not yet known as Oc Eo, some seventy kilometers to the southeast.¹² Other canals radiated from the latter end of the network, and one of them led to the coast of the Gulf of Siam (toward the site known today as Nen Chua). In the 1950s, Louis Malleret worked with new sets of aerial photographs; he was able to confirm these early discoveries and significantly expanded the canal network, showing that other sites in Viet Nam, such as Da Noi (east of Oc Eo) or Canh Den (farther