

Built of large bricks, they often rose on foundations made of large river boulders, to prevent their sinking into the delta's unstable soil. These low-lying, modest remains, when compared to later Khmer or Cham stone and brick monuments, did not attract the attention of the first generations of orientalist archaeologists and art historians; as a result, they were further damaged by looters. Only a few of them have been more or less systematically excavated, all in Viet Nam, at Oc Eo, Nen Chua, Go Thap, and at other secondary sites.¹⁹ Malleret had uncovered a few of them at Oc Eo and on the slopes of neighboring Mount Ba The, and he precisely described them after his 1944 excavation. When excavations on these sites resumed at Oc Eo in the late 1990s, little or nothing was left of these brick structures: on the eponymous mound of Go Oc Eo as well as on neighboring Go Cay Thi, excavations nevertheless succeeded in building up a precise stratigraphy of the sites, which confirmed, with radiocarbon dates, Malleret's hypothesis: they were first built about the fifth century A.D. Many other structures brought to light in the Mekong delta have not been precisely dated. Most statues belonging to these temples have either long since disappeared or have found their way into private or museum collections, permanently cutting them off from their archaeological context. Vietnamese excavations at Go Thap have been fortunate in finding two Vishnu statues *in situ* during the excavation of a large brick platform.²⁰ Their style would put them somewhere into the sixth or seventh century, which places them into a late Fu Nan, or Oc Eo culture, phase. Another recent excavation near Oc Eo, at Go Xoai, revealed another brick structure that appears to have been a Buddhist monument, which may explain why many wooden Buddha statues have turned up in the area over the past decades.

It is impossible, considering what little we know of the architecture ascribed to Fu Nan, to elaborate on its features in any detail. From comparisons drawn with the very few contemporary structures found elsewhere in peninsular Thailand or in West Java, it appears that, parallel to the uniform spread of styles in statuary, some building techniques were present all over the region. Temples often took the shape of low-lying terraces, most probably covered with wooden edifices. These structures were not made entirely of whole bricks; regular patterns of boxes filled in with a compacted mixture of earth and broken bricks allowed their builders to economize on expensive building materials and probably also to produce lighter and more plastic structures, well adapted to the often-soft soils on which they were erected.

At Oc Eo, these structures were built on the mounds in the floodplain that had previously been occupied by settlements comprising only wooden houses on stilts. These settlements, dated to the fifth to sixth centuries, now spread into the floodable areas within the moated city, occupying most of the areas around the emerging earthen mounds. This pattern confirms that the floods of the plain were now under control, most probably owing to the digging and maintaining of the canal network. Other settlements were also built on the lower slopes of Mount Ba The. Similar settlement patterns probably also emerged in less intensively studied sites.

Vietnamese archaeologists have also brought to light in most sites of the Mekong delta an odd category of monuments that are contemporary with temple building (fifth to seventh centuries). They were dug into mounds of the floodplain, or on the slopes of outcrops such as Mount Ba The. These are composed of a quadrangular cavity, dug three to five meters deep into the ground, the sides of which are usually reinforced by brick or wooden structures. The bottom of the cavity was flattened and covered with fine sand. In the middle of it was erected a small brick, chim-