

## 10

## From Funan to Angkor

### Collapse and Regeneration in Ancient Cambodia

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The cyclical quality of ancient states (Adams 1988; Feinman 1998; Marcus 1998; Yoffee 1988b) is abundantly evident in mainland Southeast Asia, where multiple and overlapping histories of collapse and regeneration characterized the region from the first millennium AD onward (Hutterer 1982:562; Stark and Allen 1998). Many areas experienced this first pulse of state formation, from the Irawaddy River valley of Myanmar and the Chao Phraya delta of Thailand to the Bac Bo region of northern Vietnam. The archaeological record of early Southeast Asia involves nucleated settlements and religious monuments that suggest a close articulation of religious ideology and sociopolitical organization (see also Hagesteijn 1996:187).

The very monumentality of the ninth–fourteenth century Angkorian empire may explain why scholarship on ancient Cambodia continues to focus on the latter period of ancient Khmer civilization rather than on its earlier periods. Yet the Angkorian state represents the endpoint in a 1,500-year developmental sequence, the beginnings of which lie in the late prehistoric period. From the mid first millennium AD onward, Khmers constructed brick, stone, and laterite monuments with dedicatory stelae bearing Khmer, Sanskrit, or Khmer and Sanskrit inscriptions; these constitute the primary indigenous documentary source. Conventional historiography (e.g., Briggs 1951; Coedès 1968; Wheatley 1983) depends inordinately on Chinese documentary evidence rather than on indigenous inscriptions to reconstruct ancient Khmer history. Resultant reconstructions are problematic (Jacques 1979:371; Stark 1998), as Chinese dynastic annals describe “kingdoms” that emissaries encountered, while most indigenous inscriptions record the beneficence of aspiring elite individuals.

While the Chinese documentary record focuses on periods of political consolidation and dissolution through time, indigenous documents

emphasize long-term political unity and continuity. Beginning no later than the mid first millennium AD, individual Khmer states rose and fell for more than nine centuries. External documentary sources misrepresent the region’s actual history, which counterpoised conflict and power struggles of individual rulers against persistent social and ideological institutions for many centuries (Vickery 1998; Wolters 1979).

If Khmer states were inherently fragile, then what accounts for the persistence of the Khmer civilization for more than a thousand years? And, following George Cowgill (1988:275), how closely was the Angkorian longevity connected to degrees and kinds of economic, political, and social integration?

This chapter examines the nature of collapse and regeneration in ancient Cambodia by identifying points of continuity and discontinuity in the sequence. Sociopolitical change in ancient Khmer civilization appears to have assumed two primary forms: (1) collapse and regeneration of economic and social institutions that mark the life spans of individual “states” (some of which the Chinese described), and (2) some continuity in elites’ practice of Indic religious ideologies to legitimate their claims to power, which ordered the political organization of the first- and second-millennium Khmer states.<sup>1</sup>

That continuity in the “cultural matrix” (Wolters 1999) characterizes the ancient Khmer civilization through time is becomingly increasingly clear as research on ancient Cambodia accelerates. This syncretism melded aspects of Indic ideology with an emergent Khmer cultural identity and was embodied in elite practice and temple construction. It proved instrumental in regenerating Khmer states during the turbulence that characterized Cambodia’s early history.

#### Historical Sequence

Cambodia’s ancient history is among the least known in Southeast Asia, owing to decades of civil war and a parochial, colonialist tradition of historiography that has only recently been challenged. Most scholars have relied on external documentary sources such as Chinese annals, contemporary inscriptions (in Sanskrit and Khmer), and retrospective Angkorian period allusions to the pre-Angkorian period to reconstruct a dynastic history of Khmer civilization. Problems are inherent in taking either the inscriptions or the Chinese sources literally or privileging one source over the other (Jacques 1979, 1995; Vickery 1994, 1998). Both sources probably sought to elevate existing polities to king-

dom status: the former out of self-aggrandizement and legitimation, and the latter out of self-promotion.

Archaeological research has played a secondary role in studying the Cambodian historical sequence, for political as well as historical reasons. Yet archaeological research in neighboring Thailand documents a continuous trend toward increasing complexity in the first millennium BC and the emergence of relatively stratified societies by the time of contact with South Asia (Higham 2002:193–212).

The name “Funan” was applied to the earliest state in the Mekong delta (fig. 10.1), which emissaries visited during the third and sixth centuries AD (Coedès 1968; Pelliot 1903). Chinese annals and indigenous inscriptions (in Khmer and in Sanskrit) also document a successor state to Funan in the lower Mekong basin that materialized in the seventh century AD along the banks of the Mekong River in central Cambodia. The third polity appeared two centuries later in the northwestern region of the country and is known as Angkor. Its florescence after the ninth century AD and collapse six centuries later created the Khmer empire, the largest territorial entity in mainland Southeast Asia. A growing body of archaeological and historical research on these polities is forcing scholars to revise their conventional models of political structure and process.

### Cultural Chronology

The following periods demarcate the political history of ancient Cambodia (table 10.1): (1) the early historic period, which straddles the boundary between the Iron Age and the historic period; (2) the pre-Angkorian period, a term that Cambodian scholars have used for nearly a century; (3) the early Angkorian period, to designate the period during which the Angkorian polity was established and developed; and (4) the mature Angkorian period, to identify the period of the Khmer empire’s greatest expansion. The Khmer empire did not collapse until some point during the mid fifteenth century, but the period after AD 1250 is excluded because this era involved a gradual decline in the political and economic prominence of the region from which the Khmer state never recovered.

The term “state” is used here to refer to a polity characterized by at least two classes of social strata, in which the government is centralized and specialized (following Feinman 1998). Determining scalar differences between successive Cambodian states is essential to understanding their structure, where scale refers to the extent of territorial integration (follow-

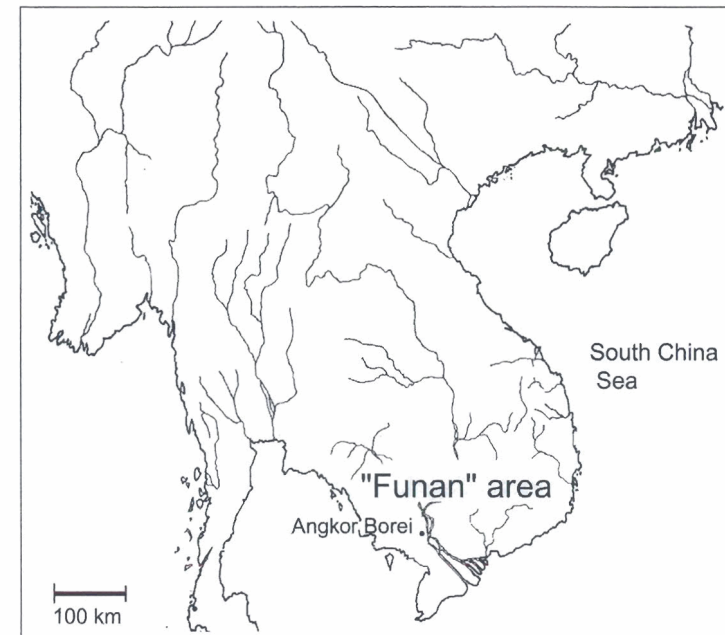


Figure 10.1 Mainland Southeast Asia during the early first millennium AD (after Hall 1985).

Table 10.1 Temporal framework for Southeast Asia

Time period	Date range	Cultural development
Early Historic	~500 BC–~AD 500	Origin of earliest state and development of international maritime trade
Pre-Angkorian	AD 500–~800	Adoption of indigenous writing and expansion of early states
Early Angkorian	AD 802–1000	Founding and expansion of the Khmer empire
Mature Angkorian	AD 1001–1250	Florescence of the Khmer empire

ing Adams 1988:23). Lack of systematic archaeological survey precludes the construction of standard site distributional maps. The following maps instead combine well-documented sites with dated inscriptions to indicate the geographic extent (but not the precise configuration) of each of these periods of time.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Early Historic Period and the Rise of "Funan"

One of the earliest and most important polities in this process emerged in the rich alluvial lowlands of the Mekong delta of southern Cambodia and Vietnam. Described in detail by visiting Chinese emissaries (Pelliot 1903) and linked intimately to the international maritime trade network that circulated goods from China to Rome, the Mekong delta formed an economic and administrative hub in the region from the early to the mid first millennium AD. This was a time of international maritime trade, with overland and ocean routes that linked Han China with the Roman empire through South and Southeast Asia (Ray 1989, 1994; Smith 1999).

South Asian religious and political ideas also diffused eastward into Southeast Asia during this period. Indic statuary, Sanskrit-derived scripts, and brick monuments are materializations of this trend that vary in form from one region to the next. As one example, pre-eighth-century Vishnu sculptures have been recovered from a broad geographic region that begins in the Mekong delta, extends south along peninsular Thailand and Malaysia, and ends in western Java (Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998:106–7; Lavy 2003). Despite regional variation in Vishnu sculptures, the shared iconography partly resembles fourth-century Pallava styles from the Andhra coast of eastern India (Ray 1989:53) and reflects a widespread economic and ideological network.

South and Southeast Asia formed critical interstitial zones for this interaction. Archaeological evidence suggests that complex polities that might be described as early states emerged by the early first millennium AD, after a protracted period of internal political development that involved intra-regional trade networks (Christie 1990, 1995; Higham 2002:168–227). These early states appeared during a time when economic relations between South and Southeast Asia seem to have become regularized (Bellina 1998, 2003; Glover 1996).

After a six-decade research hiatus caused by the Indochinese conflict and subsequent civil war, archaeological research in both Cambodia and Vietnam has begun to document occupational sequences between circa 500

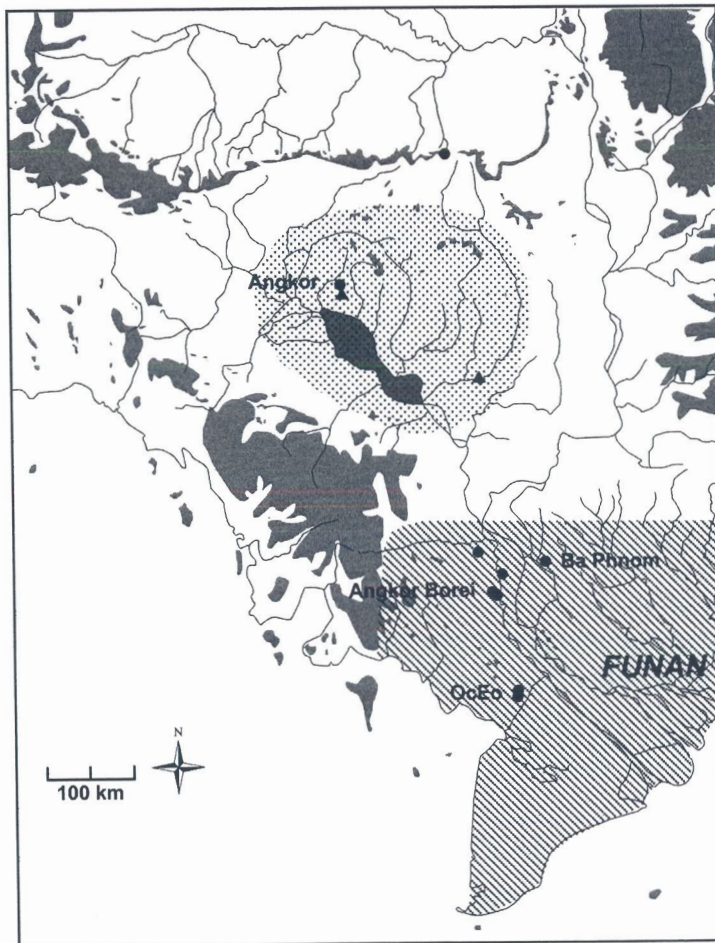
BC and AD 500, or the early historic period (Stark 1998). Since 1975, archaeologists have documented a substantial number of archaeological sites dating to this period throughout the Mekong delta (Dao Lin Côn 1998; Ha Van Tan 1986; Trinh Thi Hoà 1996). The indigenous documentary record for this period is thin; only three to four inscriptions, all in Sanskrit, predate the seventh century in southern Cambodia and southern Vietnam (Vickery 1998:37).

Figure 10.2 uses well-dated archaeological sites and inscriptions to provide the approximate boundaries of these early historic polities, which extended east into Vietnam and perhaps as far west as the Chao Phraya river basin (Thailand): the area traditionally known as Funan is hatched. Knowledge of "Funan" derives almost exclusively from Chinese dynastic histories that were written during the early to mid first millennium AD (Ishizawa 1995; Pelliot 1903).<sup>3</sup>

The only reliable histories for Funan date from the third and sixth centuries, when Chinese records describe Funan as a polity with protourban centers (Pelliot 1903; Wheatley 1983:123). Chinese emissaries described multiple and competing capitals that housed substantial populations, arable lands, large walled and moated settlements that housed elites in their wooden palaces, and libraries that were filled with documents. The annals recorded the existence of sculptors and scribes who worked in stone as well as the presence of sumptuary goods such as precious metals and pearls (Cœdès 1968:40–42, 46–47; Malleret 1959, 1962; Pelliot 1903).

Evidence from archaeology and art history suggests that these early historic polities were centered in southern Cambodia and Vietnam (Ha Van Tan 1986; Stark 1998; Trinh Thi Hoà 1996). At least ninety "Oc Eo" period complexes have been recorded throughout southern Vietnam's Mekong delta (Vo Si Khai 2003); contemporary sites have been reported along the coasts of peninsular Siam with similar material culture. This peninsular region served as an important point in the Asian maritime route as early as the fourth century AD, and many trading settlements were established along its eastern shores, which faced the Mekong delta (Manguin 2004:296).

The Mekong delta's inland settlements, which today lie in Cambodia, are found along the edge of floodplains whose inundation each year lasted approximately six months and formed a natural irrigated agricultural system. Over several centuries, populations reaped great yields from the land (Pelliot 1903). Canal networks cut across the delta to link settlements and facilitate the movement of goods have now been documented in both Cambodia and Vietnam (Bishop et al. 2003; Bourdonneau 2003).



**Figure 10.2** Proposed minimal geographic extent, based on extant distributional information on archaeological sites and inscriptions, of the Funan polity (marked with hatching) and a possible Tonle Sap polity (marked with dot pattern), early historic period. Gray areas indicate mountain ranges or islands, except for the area southwest of Angkor, which demarcates the Tonle Sap lake. Circles mark sites; triangles mark inscriptions.

To the south were probable coastal centers (ports) that negotiated maritime trade with foreigners, funneled sumptuary goods to the north, and received agricultural goods in exchange to feed traders and coastal populations whose local environment was not amenable to agriculture. Indian sources from the first millennium AD reported the Roman empire's demand for Southeast Asia's aromatic woods, camphor, and cloves (Ray 1989:47). China also sought these goods—among others—as well as western products that were transshipped through Southeast Asia (Hall 1992). With the collapse of the Han empire in the third century AD, Asia's maritime trade route via Southeast Asia became even more important (Manguin 2004:292).

The recovery of watercraft dated to the first millennium AD suggests that Southeast Asians had the maritime technology and seafaring knowledge to participate in the international maritime trade network. They may have even controlled commercial traffic in the South China Sea at this time. Remains of at least four traditional Southeast Asian sewn-plank watercraft have been recovered that yield radiocarbon dates from the first millennium AD (Manguin 1996:186).

Funan rulers were diplomats, warriors, and privileged trading partners with the Chinese. At least twenty-six embassies were sent from Funan to the imperial Chinese courts of the third century Wu and sixth century Sui dynasties (Ishizawa 1995:17). Each brought tribute or quasi-tribute with them.<sup>4</sup> Chinese annals also describe the battles that Funan rulers fought and the conquests that they made. These included expansion of their territories in the third century AD to include coastal trading settlements along the Gulf of Thailand and peninsular Malaysia, ensuring direct access to the Chinese markets (Pelliot 1903; see also Manguin 2004:297).

Most Funan rulers' names are lost to history, but one name that the Chinese recorded was the first (Kaundinya) Jayavarman, who ruled by or before AD 478 (Coedès 1968:57–58; Vickery 1998:70) and began what was to become a thousand-year Khmer rule of the region. Rudravarman, the last king of Funan, declared Angkor Borei his capital in AD 514 (Coedès 1968:60–61; Vickery 1998:45). Archaeological field investigations at Angkor Borei suggest that this settlement had already been occupied nearly a thousand years before Rudravarman came to power (Stark 2003; Stark and Bong 2001; Stark et al. 1999).

Chinese documentary evidence, indigenous inscriptions, and an emerging archaeological record suggest that the Mekong delta in the early first millennium AD comprised multiple competing polities rather than a single unified kingdom (e.g., Jacques 1979:376–77, 1990:257; Vickery 1998; Wheat-

ley 1983:125–27). In frequent comparisons to a mandala structure, scholars argue that each polity was headed by a charismatic leader or “man of prowess” (following Wolters 1999) whose entourage constituted the core of a sociopolitical unit (Bentley 1986:292–93; Higham 1989; Tambiah 1976, 1977). This multicentric political configuration may represent an extension of heterarchical dynamics that structured polities of the mid to late first millennium BC throughout much of mainland Southeast Asia (Bronson 1979:320; Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998:104–5; Manguin 2002; White 1995; White and Pigott 1996). While such “polycentricity” characterizes many early states worldwide (Adams 2001:350), more systematic archaeological survey is needed in both Cambodia and Vietnam to find its signature in the delta’s archaeological record.

#### From Funan to Chenla and the Pre-Angkorian Period

Chinese dynastic descriptions of the Funan state disappear in the mid sixth century AD, Tang dynastic records report the conquest of Funan by “Chenla” in the early seventh century AD (Ma Tuan-lin 1883), and archaeological evidence from the Funan port town of Oc Eo suggests that the settlement was abandoned by the mid seventh century (Manguin 2004:300). Population settlement, however, persisted throughout the Mekong delta: religious shrines in the hills above Oc Eo were probably used for five or six more centuries, and substantial settlement associated with brick shrines continued in the Angkor Borei region to the north (Stark and Bong 2004). This reported conquest of Funan may merely have been a dynastic dispute (Coedès 1968:68), and perhaps the “collapse” the Chinese describe was instead a geographic shift by Funan rulers to the north in response to declining trade returns as they sought to capitalize on newly opened trade routes to central Vietnam (Vickery 1998). The “end” of Funan corresponds closely with a southward shift in maritime trade networks to Sumatra and the rise of the trading empire of Srivijaya. The termination of Funan is also contemporaneous with a shift in overland trade networks that occurred when the Chinese gained control of trade routes across central Asia (Hall 1982, 1985); dating to this period as well is the first well-documented appearance of Indic statuary and architecture that scholars associate with “Indianization” in Southeast Asia (Manguin 2004:292).

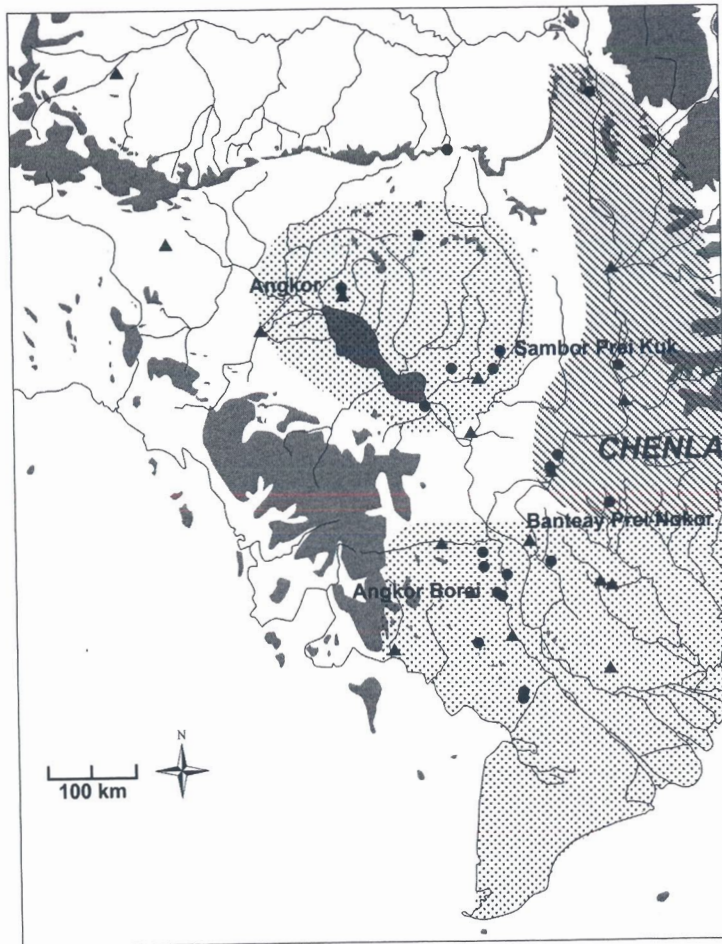
In this period, large walled settlements containing ritual brick architecture appear farther north in the middle Mekong region of central Cambodia, but archaeological research has yet to date the construction and occu-

pational histories of these sites. The subsequent kingdom of Chenla probably covered most of modern-day Cambodia (Vickery 1998:43). Approximately 150 inscriptions from the sixth through eighth centuries have been translated; of these, 76 were written in Khmer, 46 contain both Khmer and Sanskrit sections, 27 were written exclusively in Sanskrit, and 1 was written in the Pali language (Vickery 1998:91–92). Since Angkorian descendants of the Funan population spoke Khmer, some scholars (notably Vickery 1994) argue that the Funan population also spoke Khmer. In this scenario, Sanskrit served primarily as a liturgical language.

Figure 10.3 illustrates the distribution of archaeological sites and inscriptions dated to the sixth through the eighth century throughout modern-day Cambodia; the area traditionally recognized as Chenla is hatched. This pre-Angkorian period is poorly known from all viewpoints: archaeological, art historical, and historical. Almost no systematic archaeological research has been undertaken on pre-Angkorian sites, the period is not ushered in by distinctive art styles, and few indigenous inscriptions inform directly on political developments during this period (Vickery 1994:202–4). To reconstruct the Chenla period, previous historians (Briggs 1951; Coedès 1968:65–66) relied on Chinese annals, particularly the History of the Sui, or *Suishu*, which covered the years AD 581–617 and was compiled from AD 629 to 636 (Wilkinson 2000). They placed the Chenla capital to the north, in southern Laos at the site of Wat Phu (Coedès 1968:66).

The political organization of this period was probably less centralized yet more complex than French colonial scholars have portrayed it (Vickery 1994). At the least, Chenla was an “overgrown tribal confederacy” (Sedov 1978:113) of a militaristic character; at the most, seventh-century Chenla comprised a series of competing power centers rather than a single unified state. For example, Tang dynastic annals describe missions from “little countries of the Southern tribes” (Wolters 1974:357) that may have included as many as five pre-Angkorian polities in northwestern Cambodia alone. Leaders of these northwestern principalities vied with each other for power and were subjugated by Jayavarman I (son of Bhavavarman) after circa AD 655 (Vickery 1998:343–46; Wolters 1973, 1974). Nearly three decades after his death, his daughter Jayadevi ascended the throne. The political stability that followed remains anomalous in ancient Cambodia’s rather turbulent political history.

Distributional patterning from the limited extant archaeological database provides evidence for ideological continuity from Funan to Chenla. Khmer and Sanskrit inscriptions suggest that local elites built and consecrated shrines



**Figure 10.3** Proposed minimal geographic extent, based on extant distributional information on archaeological sites and inscriptions, of the Chenla polity (marked with hatching) and a possible Tonle Sap polity (marked with dot pattern in the area of Angkor), pre-Angkorian period. Gray areas indicate mountain ranges or islands, except for the area southwest of Angkor, which demarcates the Tonle Sap lake. Circles mark sites; triangles mark inscriptions.

and sanctuaries, inscribing their acts of generosity for posterity. Cambodians embraced both Hinduism and Buddhism after the fifth century AD, but the Vaishnavite and Saivite Hindu cults left a deeper material imprint than did Buddhism. The recovery of mitred Vishnu sculptures from sites in the Mekong delta and throughout the coastal peninsular region (Manguin 2004:303) suggests that Vaishnavism predominated to the south, while Saivism was embraced by populations north of the delta and around the Tonle Sap. The appearance of a fused Vishnu/Shiva deity called Harihara in the seventh century AD may signal ideological and political unification of these regions into ancient Cambodia for the first time (Lavy 2003).

Cambodia's rulers in these inscriptions bore Hindu or Vedic names, reflecting an early and intense assimilation of Brahmanical-Hindu ideology into the local ruling ideology. In their adoption of Hindu deities, pre-Angkorian rulers and elite individuals institutionalized some deeply held indigenous practices of ancestor worship (see review in Lavy 2003). That worship of these Indic deities was more important to the elite than to the commoners is likely, in part because of the elites' desire to participate in the Hindu cosmological world that visiting Vaishnavite teachers (*bhakti*) lyrically described (Wolters 1999:109–11). Sites for the construction of local temples and shrines to house Indic images were selected in part based on the location of ancestral spirits that commoners already worshipped. Vishnu and other Brahmanical deities, then, were superimposed on extant spirits (Aeuvivongse 1976:114–15) to produce sites of spiritual and political potency.

The distribution of dated archaeological sites and inscriptions indicates a shift in the center of settlement gravity northward by the mid seventh century AD. The first king of Chenla, Isanavarman, consecrated Indic images and established his first capital at the walled four-hundred-hectare settlement of Sambor Prei Kuk. Approximately two decades after the death of Isanavarman, his descendant Jayavarman II established his capital to the south at Banteay Prei Nokor (Coedès 1968:98; Vickery 1998:346).

#### The Rise of Angkor

Within a few decades, Jayavarman II moved northwest to the banks of the Tonle Sap. From the end of the eighth to the late ninth century (AD 791–877), almost no Khmer-language inscriptions were produced; vocabulary shifts also characterize this period (Vickery 1998:84–85). Philological evidence, then, suggests a kind of rupture that is poorly understood as yet.

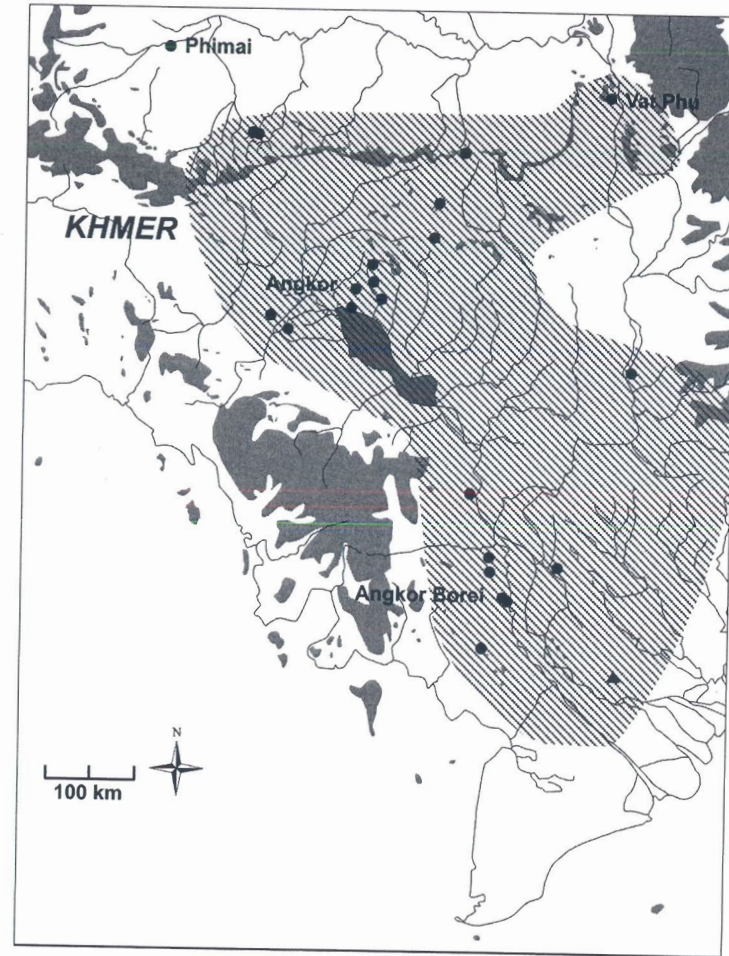
Interestingly, the material record offers evidence for a reconfiguration of pre-existing social and ideological institutions. Notable among these is a shift in political leadership that involved the adoption of the *devaraja* rite and the establishment of a state religion in the form of the Saivite cult of the royal *lingas* on the temple pyramids of Angkor (see Kulke 1978). The direct relationship to the gods, especially Shiva, that this form of statecraft offered to Angkorian rulers gave them substantially more power and legitimacy than their predecessors had.

In declaring himself the Khmer people's *cakravartin*, or universal monarch, in AD 802, Jayavarman II became the first king of the Angkorian period. The dynastic history of the Angkorian state from the tenth century onward is well known and examined elsewhere in great detail (Boisselier 1966; Briggs 1951). Figure 10.4, based on a sample of dated archaeological sites and dated inscriptions, circumscribes the approximate geographic extent of the early Angkorian period (hatched area).

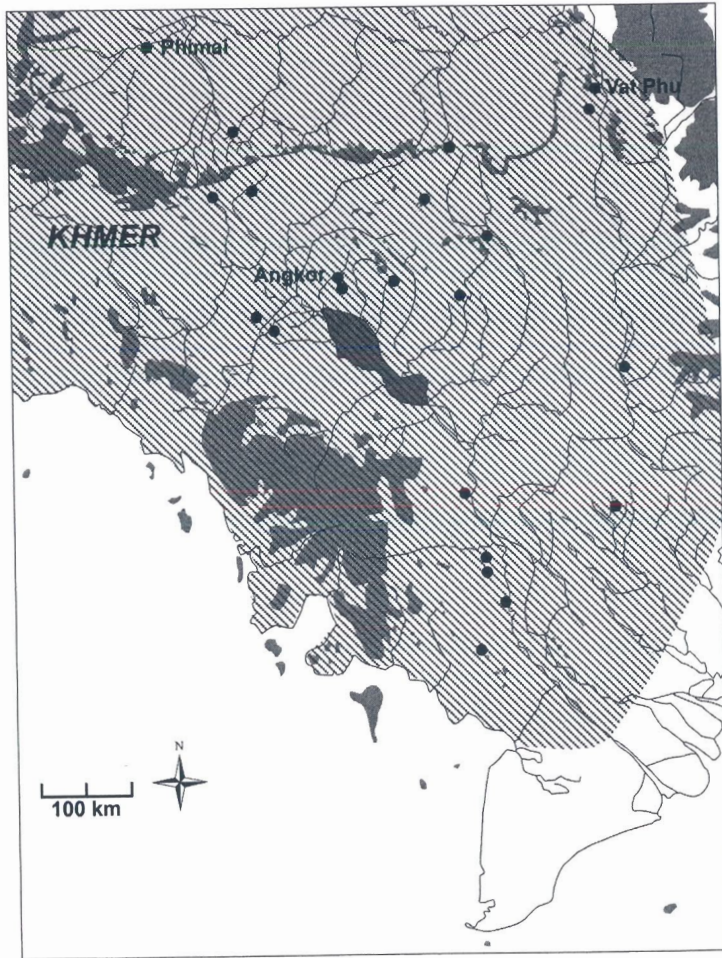
The archaeological record of the early and mature Angkorian periods within Cambodia beyond the capital region in the northwest remains poorly known. Epigraphic research and archaeological surveys in adjacent northeastern Thailand (e.g., Welch 1998) and in the Tonle Sap region (e.g., Pottier 1999; Wolters 1974), however, suggest significant overlap in the dating of sites in northeastern Thailand, in southern Laos, in southern Cambodia, and in northwestern Cambodia. Thus, complex polities may have emerged concurrently in three discrete geographic regions of Cambodia: the Mekong delta, the middle Mekong, and the Tonle Sap region.

Analysis of inscriptions indicates that between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, the Khmer economy increasingly relied on tribute and *corvée* labor to support the state (Sedov 1978:123). Subjects were expected to render tribute in both agricultural and manufactured goods and to serve as labor for construction projects and in the military. In concert with military conquests to the west, regional and international trade became important by the eleventh century under the reign of Suryavarman I (Hall 1975, 1979). During this time, the Khmer empire reached its greatest areal extent (fig. 10.5). That much of modern-day Thailand and some of Vietnam lay within its realm is clear from this distributional map of eleventh- to mid-thirteenth-century archaeological sites and inscriptions.

Despite the importance of this period for its economic and military expansions, little documentary or archaeological information exists concerning the domestic and international economy (but see Ricklefs 1966). Local provincial elites appointed by the Khmer rulers controlled a series of local



**Figure 10.4** Proposed minimal geographic extent, based on extant distributional information on archaeological sites and inscriptions, of the early Angkorian polity (marked with hatching). Gray areas indicate mountain ranges or islands, except for the area southwest of Angkor, which demarcates the Tonle Sap lake. Circles mark sites; triangles mark inscriptions.



**Figure 10.5** Proposed minimal geographic extent, based on extant distributional information on archaeological sites and inscriptions, of the mature Angkorian empire (marked with hatching). Gray areas indicate mountain ranges or islands, except for the area southwest of Angkor, which demarcates the Tonle Sap lake. Circles mark sites.

systems across the Khmer region. The tax and/or tribute that government officials collected from these provincial areas would have been funneled back into the center to support public works such as temple construction. Provincial markets were focal points for local systems, and temples located near these markets linked the Khmer center to its periphery through a series of mutual dependencies. Angkor's participation in international trade with China and South Asia was limited after the eleventh century AD (Hall 1975).

Jayavarman VII was the last great king of Angkor, and successive leaders could not return their country to the prominence the Khmer empire had once held. Warfare became more common in the fourteenth century. After a sustained siege by the Siamese in AD 1430–1431, the Thais sacked the city of Angkor. Multiple factors contributed to the collapse of the Khmer state: structurally unstable relations between the rulers and their elite, economic challenges that an ever-expanding and largely autonomous periphery posed to the center, periodic civil war, and the intrusion of Buddhist ideas into the predominantly Hindu world of Khmer statecraft all contributed (see also Hagesteijn 1987). Cambodia's political center moved south again to the banks of the Mekong River, and the former Khmer capital was left to villagers and monks.

#### **Collapse and Regeneration from Funan to Angkor**

The history of the Khmer civilization is characterized by cycles of fragmentation, collapse, and reorganization. Seats of power shifted across space, rulers alternated in their preference of Indic religious denomination, breaks occurred in royal dynastic succession, and the polity grew progressively more inward focused through time. Embedded within this turbulent political and social history are threads of continuity that Oliver Wolters (1999) describes as a cultural matrix of social and ideological institutions; some threads persist from the late first millennium BC until the fall of Angkor circa AD 1432.

Economic and ideological foundations of the Khmer civilization exhibit substantial continuity through time and counterbalance political discontinuities in the kingly reigns that historians generally study. This pattern might well be called "template regeneration" (Bronson, chapter 9). What accounts for this longevity in the Khmer civilization? Bennet Bronson (1988:212) maintains that one reason for the longevity of the Southeast Asian classical states, including Angkor, lay in the absence of "barbarians" at



their peripheries, in contrast to the case of northern India. But internal factors were equally if not more important—namely, the domestic economic organization of these polities and the ways in which elites embraced Indic ideologies to garner wealth and legitimize their power. The following discussion concentrates on economic, political, and ideological aspects of the Khmer civilization.

### Economic Patterns

Khmer economic organization from the early historic to the mature Angkorian period involved a stable domestic economy of subsistence agriculture and a fluctuating international economy based on trade. Continuity characterizes the agrarian Khmer economy, which perennially relied on locally managed irrigation agriculture, involving flood-recession techniques where possible even during the height of Khmer power from the ninth to the fourteenth century AD (van Liere 1980).

By the Angkorian period, this subsistence economy depended on tribute extracted from the rural provincial population to support the state's administrative and political activities in the core region. In most respects, however, agrarian production remained fixed at the local level. Little evidence exists for a centralized economic system in provincial areas that might have consistently channeled surplus to the center (Welch 1989, 1998).

The only exceptions to this local and regional economic autonomy lay in the support of temples (or "foundations," following Vickery 1998) that formed the core of local communities. These temple estates formed major economic units, controlling farmlands that elites had donated; the produce grown on the estates supported the vast number of attached specialists for the temple. Khmer temple estates absorbed substantial amounts of land, goods, livestock, and labor (field hands, temple assistants, dancers) from local elites and involved local populations.

These local cults (Vickery 1998) or "kin temples" (Hagesteijn 1987) formed an economic and ideological basis of Khmer society by the seventh century AD. Indic notions of karma may partly explain the proliferation of first-millennium religious architecture. Individuals increased their karma for the next life by establishing temples or making donations to extant temples (see also Hagesteijn 1996:189, *passim*). Entrenched and aspiring elite members recorded their temple offerings in stone. Such activity is clear in the earliest dated Khmer inscription (K. 600) from Angkor Borei in southern Cambodia. This inscription lists donations to the temple/foundation by

two elite individuals: nine males, nine females, two children, eighty head of cattle, two buffalo, ten goats, forty coconut trees, and two rice fields (Vickery 1998:277). How much earlier this temple economy might extend back in time awaits chronometric dating of the brick monuments across southern Cambodia and southern Vietnam.

Whereas continuity characterizes ancient Khmer domestic economic organization, discontinuity exists in its international trade orientation. The Funan polities of the early to mid first millennium AD were extensively involved in trade (Hall 1982, 1985; Malleret 1959, 1962), and the most active economic and diplomatic relationships with China occurred before the seventh century AD, during the gradual collapse of the Chinese Tang state (Hall 1979:421–22). Insufficient evidence exists pertaining to Chenla economic organization for scholars to identify points of continuity or discontinuity from its predecessor.

Angkorian period successors to Funan, however, grew increasingly insular. In China's Song dynasty (AD 960–1279), contemporaneous with the period most closely associated with the height of the Khmer empire, records of Khmer tributary missions are scarce compared to missions reported for neighboring polities including Champa (central Vietnam) and southern Sumatra (Wong 1979). During this era, polities in Java and Sumatra developed multiple shipping ports, hosted foreign merchants, and established coinage (Christie 1999). The Khmer empire never developed a standardized currency, instead using exchange equivalents in gold, silver, rice, cloth, cattle, butter, and slaves (Sedov 1978:125), and remained a marginal player in the China–Southeast Asia trade network.

Archaeological research indicates that most successive polities focused instead on the circulation of goods within regions under their direct control (Stark 2004; Welch 1989). The geographic extent of the Khmer empire expanded and contracted according to ruler: selected Angkorian rulers in the tenth, eleventh, and thirteenth centuries had expansionist aims and acquired more land through successful military campaigns. Under these rulers, the Khmer empire controlled more area than did any of its contemporaries in mainland Southeast Asia.

### Political Patterns

The documentary record of ancient Cambodia provides an excellent case study in collapse and regeneration. Documentary accounts record the collapse of Funan, internecine struggles within Chenla, the twelfth-century

sacking of Angkor by the Chams in the chaos that followed the death of Suryavarman II, and the rapid regeneration of the Khmer empire by its last great ruler, Jayavarman VII. For more than five hundred years before the establishment of Angkor, multiple, interacting polities competed with each other for power and access to material and ideological resources (Jacques 1990:257; Welch 1998:218). The establishment of the Angkorian polity in the ninth century AD did not end this competition, since rival successors and usurpers often fought each other to control the throne (e.g., Briggs 1951; Vickery 1985). Between the ninth and the eleventh century AD, Angkorian rulers established new capitals at least six times.

One reason that Angkorian rulership was not stable lay in the bilateral descent rules that structured Khmer social organization (Kirsch 1976). This descent system, coupled with royal polygamy as kings built alliances through multiple marriages, created multiple competitors for the throne. Of the twenty-seven Angkorian rulers from circa AD 802 to 1432, four were recognized usurpers and seven were "second grade relatives" (following Hagesteijn 1987:163) of the king and lacked legitimate claim to the throne. In fact, the Angkorian military devoted substantial effort to suppressing internal revolts and mutinies at various points in history (Sedov 1978:127).

Perhaps another reason for collapse and regeneration in the Angkorian state lay in its lack of professional generals or a hereditary military. Instead, the state relied primarily on labor from its citizens (Chou Ta-Kuan 1993; Sedov 1978:127) and on alliance networks based on patron-client relationships between the center's ruler and provincial elites (see review in Stark 2004:107–11). One clear example of collapse is depicted in a bas relief on the Bayon that commemorates the state's disintegration in AD 1177 under Cham attack; the new king Jayavarman VII reunified Cambodia for its last great florescence. During most of its existence, then, ancient Khmer civilization was both fragile and loosely integrated. Cycles of consolidation alternated with political fragmentation, and only a few rulers were able to wrest control from the provincial level to effectively centralize the state during their reigns.

Chinese annals and indigenous inscriptions record "men of prowess" (Wolters 1999) in the early historic period who emerged as overlords and established their power over principalities throughout the Khmer lands. Throughout the sequence, these leaders attracted followers and commanded political power and respect, becoming essential components of the Angkorian political system (Mabbett 1977). Such elite individuals were also the leading worshippers of the Indic deities (Wolters 1979:433), appropriating

order through practice of Indic rituals, shrine construction, and dedications of these monuments to the Indian deities. Such ritualization and aesthetization of the elite is integral to the process of state formation (Baines and Yoffee 1998:233–36). Pre-Angkorian brick monuments found across Cambodia and southern Vietnam housed Indic images or served as mortuary monuments and materialized elite power through ideology. Such foundations may have been constructed as early as the mid first millennium AD (Vo Si Khai 1998).

Recent analysis of indigenous Khmer inscriptions (Vickery 1986, 1998) suggests that significant breaks occurred in the nature of political leadership from the sixth through eighth centuries AD. Before the eighth century AD, political authority rested in the hands of local hereditary and perhaps matrilineal *poñ*, who were directly responsible for smaller territories. Political transformations during the eighth century AD, however, replaced this leadership structure with a patrilineal descent system of rulers (using the suffix *-varman*).

By the Angkorian era, larger-scale administrative units (including temples) had developed to support their universal monarch/king (*devaraja* or *cakravartin*), and the ruler became responsible for larger and more topographically variable regions. The rules of royal succession may not have changed substantially, however. Elites reckoned descent bilaterally in the pre-Angkorian era (Vickery 1998), and some of the greatest Angkorian kings gained legitimation through the female line (see review in Kirsch 1976).

#### Ideology and Identity

Some aspects of the religious ideological system remained constant from the early historic to the Angkorian period (e.g., the local adoption of Indic religious ideology, writing systems, and iconography), while others changed within, rather than between, Cambodia's political epochs. Indic statuary appeared in the Mekong basin before the end of the sixth century AD (Dalsheimer and Manguin 1998:96, *passim*). These representations of the gods Shiva and Vishnu reflect the establishment of local Indic cults in the region (Coedès 1968; Wolters 1979). Recent revisionist writing on Khmer religion and statecraft have modified earlier assumptions that the region was colonized by Brahmins from South Asia, while still underscoring the Southeast Asian adoption of South Asian traditions (Kulke 1990; Mabbett 1997).

Indigenous Southeast Asians selectively adopted elements of Indic religions that fit their needs, alternating between an emphasis on Saivism and

one on Vaisnavism (Brown 1996). This ideological orientation toward Hindu cults began in the early historic period and persisted into the Angkorian period. The scope of Khmer religious practice transformed from community-based cults in the early historic period to state-based and state-financed religion by the inception of the Angkorian period in the ninth century AD. So, too, did the content, as Angkorian populations turned increasingly toward Buddhism after Suryavarman I, generally acknowledged to be Buddhist, came to power in the eleventh century (Kulke 1978:33). As increased numbers of Khmers turned away from Hinduism and embraced Buddhism, they directed their donations to Buddhist monasteries instead of (Hindu) state coffers and may have substantially undermined the Angkorian economic base (Hagesteijn 1987).

Elites supported early historic and pre-Angkorian local cults by conducting the requisite Indic practices, by obtaining knowledge of sacred Indian literature, and by making vast outlays of capital to finance the creation of stone sculptures of deities and the brick monuments that housed these creations. Through undertaking such responsibilities, the pre-Angkorian elites regulated power and articulated models of cultural and social order (following Eisenstadt 1988:241). They attracted and maintained entourages and allocated bureaucratic titles such as special counselor, president of the royal council, and town governor (Wolters 1979:433).

While other aspects of the Khmer civilization either changed abruptly or cycled in and out of popularity, this thousand-year period was marked by a growing sense of social identity that was embodied in the celebration of an origin tradition, the widespread use of a single (Khmer) language, and the materialization of this language in the Khmer script. The earliest Khmer-language inscriptions date to the early seventh century AD, but some scholars maintain that populations in central and southern Cambodia had spoken Khmer for centuries before then (e.g., Vickery 1994:205). This development and growth of a Khmer ethnic ideology progressively strengthened as populations in the region alternated between repelling invaders from the east and west and expanding their geopolitical boundaries.

By the ninth century AD, a clearly Khmer identity emerged in the Tonle Sap region that was expressed through both militarism and art. When the Thai army sacked the capital of Angkor in AD 1432, they conquered a distinctly Khmer kingdom. In taking the royal Khmer court back to the Chao Phraya region, the Thais appropriated distinctly Khmer traditions of statecraft, music, and art that reflected a well-developed ethnic and historic identity.

### Collapse and Regeneration in Ancient Cambodian Polities

A plethora of publications on Cambodia's ancient history, particularly on Angkor, appears each year, yet the amount of archaeological and paleoenvironmental research undertaken in this region remains modest. Such work is critical to understanding the political ecology of the Khmer empire and of its antecedent political formations and will probably require modifications to our historical reconstructions. However, the outlines of ancient Cambodia's historical trajectory seem reasonably clear. The region witnessed an initial and protracted period of cyclical and contingent power centers throughout the lower Mekong basin. In less than a millennium, political, economic, and ideological power concentrated around the Tonle Sap lake.

Linking multiple Khmer polities into a single, thousand-year-long tradition provides new perspectives on the collapse and regeneration of complex societies in Southeast Asia. Little evidence has thus far been produced for the systematic and sustained deployment of force that characterized some ancient Chinese, Mesoamerican, and Andean empires and that Alan Kolata (chapter 13) describes as "hegemony with sovereignty." Partly for this reason, Cambodia's cycles of collapse and regeneration can be fit within a long-term pattern of resilience and stability (see Adams 1978).

Cambodia's recent geopolitical instability and its deeply entrenched colonialist intellectual traditions have limited the extent to which archaeological research has informed on these long-term patterns of change and resiliency. Both documentary and archaeological data on the Khmer tradition, however, offer intriguing clues to some questions concerning the nature of collapse and regeneration.

Discontinuities are most evident in the succession of political rulership and in geographic shifts in the center of power through time. Yet many aspects of ancient Khmer society remained relatively constant through the centuries and form the Khmer "template" for complex societies. One source of continuity involves the persistence of a rural agrarian economic base, which remained largely unchanged from the early first millennium to the twentieth century. Farming populations provided surplus to coastal communities in the early first millennium AD to support trading ports, and they later channeled surplus to the Angkorian capitals to finance public works constructions. A second continuity lies in the commitment to the local political level; the persistent importance of local (or clan) temples from the Funan to the Angkorian period (see also Sedov 1978) is one expression of this trend. Extant evidence suggests that lower-level administrative appa-

ratures weathered fluctuations in dynastic rule and shifts in power centers. Throughout the sequence, populations supplemented their indigenous animistic religion with an Indic-derived religious ideology and notions of statecraft. Finally, we see persistence in Khmer sociopolitical organization, which specified social relations and emphasized bilateral descent.

Still other aspects of Khmer society, such as its particular form of religious ideology and its international economic orientation, changed in cycles. While changes in religious ideology remain difficult to understand, shifts in international economic orientation reflect pan-Southeast Asian dynamics. The earliest Khmer civilization was integrally involved in an international maritime trade network because trade routes included the Mekong delta. The seventh-century shift in regional trade patterns south to Sumatra and thus away from the Khmer region occurred with the rise of the trade empire of Srivijaya (Hall 1985).

Viewing the Khmer civilization in its regional and historical context helps explain some of the reasons behind the cyclical patterns discussed here. But explaining why particular continuities and discontinuities characterize ancient Cambodia remains impossible without a more finely textured understanding of the archaeological record, which yields insights on local demographic, technological, and agricultural shifts through time. Future work that combines systematic archaeological research and critical documentary analysis can and should illuminate aspects of resilience and change in the ancient Khmer civilization.

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### Notes

1. Debates over the nature and impact of South Asian ideology on Southeast Asian state formation continue to rage (e.g., Bellina 1998, 2003; Brown 1996; Christie 1995; Glover 1996; Kulke 1990; Mabbett 1997; Smith 1999).

2. Figures use published information on inscriptions with calendrical dates employing the Indic *çaka* system compiled in Jenner 1980 and Vickery 1998. George Coedès (1937–1966) recorded a larger corpus of inscriptions that have been dated through pa-

leography (de Casparis 1979); these are excluded from the sample. Archaeological site distributions were taken from summary maps in Jessup and Zéphir 1997:2, 12.

3. Twenty-five officially approved dynastic histories cover China's imperial period (e.g., Wilkinson 2000), and a variety of Western-language translations are available (Frankel 1957). Three of these histories specifically describe "Funan": (1) volume 79 of the History of the Jin Dynasty, or *Jinshu*, covers the years AD 265–419 (compiled in AD 644); (2) volume 58 of the History of the Southern Qi, or *Nan Qishu*, covers the years AD 479–502 (compiled from AD 489 through 537); and (3) volume 54 of the History of the Liang Dynasty, or *Liangshu*, covers the years AD 502–556 (compiled from AD 628 through 635). Additional material is located in the following publications: volume 78 of *Nanshi*; volume 222 (part 2) of *Xintangshu*; related articles and material dispersed throughout volume 36 of the *Shujingzhu*; and volume 347 in *Taipingyulan* (also see Ishizawa 1995:13; Pelliot 1903:275–77; and Wheatley 1961:114–15).

4. Some of the tribute items offered to the Chinese court include gold, silver, copper, tin, gharuwood, ivory, peafowl, kingfishers, fruits, and areca nuts. The "Funan" emissaries also offered tame elephants to the Chinese court in AD 357 and a live rhinoceros in AD 539 (Wheatley 1983:111n147).

# **After Collapse**

The Regeneration of Complex Societies

edited by Glenn M. Schwartz and John J. Nichols

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## Contents

- 1 From Collapse to Regeneration 3  
Glenn M. Schwartz
- 2 The Demise and Regeneration of Bronze Age Urban Centers in  
the Euphrates Valley of Syria 18  
Lisa Cooper
- 3 Amorites, Onagers, and Social Reorganization in Middle Bronze  
Age Syria 38  
John J. Nichols and Jill A. Weber
- 4 “Lo, Nobles Lament, the Poor Rejoice”: State Formation in the  
Wake of Social Flux 58  
Ellen Morris
- 5 The Collapse and Regeneration of Complex Society in Greece,  
1500–500 BC 72  
Ian Morris
- 6 Inca State Origins: Collapse and Regeneration in the Southern  
Peruvian Andes 85  
Gordon F. McEwan
- 7 Regeneration as Transformation: Postcollapse Society in Nasca,  
Peru 99  
Christina A. Conlee
- 8 After State Collapse: How Tumulaca Communities Developed in  
the Upper Moquegua Valley, Peru 114  
Kenny Sims
- 9 Patterns of Political Regeneration in Southeast and East Asia  
137  
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