

The map shows the location of Laem Po and Chaiya environs.

Settlement Patterns at Laem Po, Chaiya in the Srivijava Period



Work goes on in the coastal area to gather more data to establish the importance of Laem Po.

The Southern Archaeological project of the Archaeological Division, Department of Fine Arts, Thailand, has undertaken a survey and excavation at Laem Po and Chaiya environs in Surat Thani since early 1981. The research focuses on the settlement patterns including sea-faring, entrepôts and markets of the area during the Srivijava Period in Southern Thailand from the 8th to the 13th century.

Initial findings indicate the possibility of Chaiya being the centre of trading in the early centuries of the Srivijava Kingdom. The archaeological evidence yields T'ang ceramics dating back from A.D. 618 to 906, T'ang cash coins going back

to Emperor Kao Tsu (AD. 618-627) where the Chinese characters "Kai Yuan T'ung Po" meaning current money of the Kai Yuan era were inscribed, Sung ceramics of A.D. 960-1280 vintage, local red painted pottery, glass beads, Roman glasswares and iron wares. These point to the possibility that LaemPo was an entrepôt frequented by foreign merchants such as Arabs, Persians, Indians, Romans and Chinese.

The existence of sea-trading during that period is also supported by traces of a shipwreck found in the vicinity. The wooden boat tail uncovered measures 7.17 metres in length. Its pole is 3.85 metres long.

Signs of Earlier Culture

Evidences of an earlier culture in the area from that currently being investigated were revealed by polished stone implements of late Neolithic or early Bronze Age found near the source of Klong Chaiya or Chaiya River. In addition, a bronze kettle drum shaped like a boat and with symbolic marks was excavated in Koh Samui.

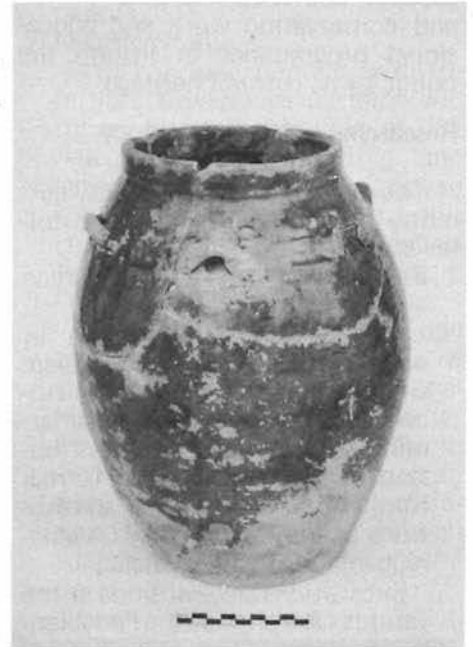
LaemPo is situated in Phumriang village about seven kilometres from Chaiya at the latitude $9^{\circ} 22' 34''$ and longitude $99^{\circ} 16' 14''$. It is on a cape at the estuary of Klong Yai Phumriang or Phumriang River. The mouth is now an open forest grass



fields with a fishing village nearby since the river is wide and deep enough for anchoring.

Surveys and excavations are still continuing to uncover further evidence that will shed light on the significance of LaemPo and its environs during the Srivijava Period. Data forwarded by other scholars who had investigated the place are re-analyzed and compared with recent findings to make definitive conclusions that possibly will change the history of Southeast Asia.

2



1. These sherds presumably of Tang attribution recovered from the Laem Po site.
2. A water jar discovered intact is identified as of the type used as water storage in long journeys.
3. Types of beads and sherds of export ceramics indicate existence of foreign trade.

3

