

SPAFA Affairs

SPAFA Convenes Workshop on Early Maritime Trade



Additional areas of studies relating to maritime shipping and trade networks were recommended by participants to the SPAFA "Consultative Workshop on Research on Maritime Shipping and Trade Networks in Southeast Asia" conducted at Cisarua and Banten in West Java, Indonesia, from 20-27 November 1984.

Among the topics for studies suggested to be taken up in future SPAFA workshops and seminars were the following: terminology of ships; shipwreck site archaeology; iconography of ships; protective legislation; megalithic culture as related to seafaring people; ports, harbours and human resources; vocabulary of trade goods, local tradition and old maps; and more on recoveries of trade commodities, from ceramics to metalcraft, from nautical archaeological sites.

The participants to the workshop

The workshop was attended by delegates from Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, consultants and observers from Australia, France, Great Britain, USA and the SPAFA Member Countries. The papers presented disclosed results of respective researches with a few advancing re-interpretation of data.

Country reports from Indonesia were prepared by Mrs. Satyawati Suleiman and Dr. Hasan M. Ambary, Senior Research Officer and Head of the Islamic department of the National Research Center of Archaeology, respectively, and Mr A.B. Lopian, Assistant Director of the

National Institute of Cultural Studies. Mrs. Suleiman talked on the "Maritime Routes in the Classical Period" where she stressed the need to study further the problem concerning the identification of toponyms from historical sources. "The Maritime Network in the Indonesian Archipelago in the 14th Century" was the subject dealt with by Mr Lopian which reflected the process of procurement and distribution of trade goods as well as trade alliances. Dr. Ambary, on the other hand, concentrated on the maritime trade commodities found in archaeological sites of Indonesia.

The Philippine delegation composed of Dr. Jesus Peralta, Chairman of the Anthropology Division; Mr Wilfredo Ronquillo, Senior anthropologist; and Mr Rey Santiago, Senior Researcher, all from the National Museum in Manila, prepared a joint paper entitled "Pre-historic Maritime Trade in the Philippines." Their paper presented a chronology of underwater archaeological activities conducted in the country.

Thai Reports

The Thai country reports were prepared by the following members of the delegation: Dr. Suebsang Promboon, Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts of Thammasat University; Mr Vidya Intakosai of the Underwater Archaeology Project, Fine Arts Department; and Prof. Chusiri Chamoraman, Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University. Prof. Chusiri summarized the historical and archaeological evidence of the existence of trans-shipping routes, ports and other trading centers in Peninsular Thailand in her paper entitled "Notes on Some Place-Names in Peninsular Thailand during the 12th and 14th centuries A.D."

The paper of Dr. Suebsang, entitled "The Siamese Maritime Trade A.D. 1351-1511", traced the development of Siamese commercial activities starting from tributary trading to direct trading with China which led to the rise of the Ayuthaya reign.

Mr. Vidya spoke on the underwater archaeology project of Thailand covering eight sites on the Gulf of Thailand: Ko Kram, Ko Kradat in Trat Province, Samae San, Prasae, Ko Talu, Rang Kwian, Samudngan and Ko Samui.

Aside from the papers presented by the official delegates, supplementary reports prepared by consultants to the workshop were discussed. Following were the subjects and authors of these additional papers:

Dr. R.P. Soejono, Director of the National Research Center of Archaeology and concurrently, Director of the SPAFA Sub-Centre for Archaeological Research in Indonesia, spoke on "Maritime Shipping in Prehistoric Times in Indonesia". He mentioned that, so far, archaeological evidence of maritime shipping is available only from the Neolithic Period. Cave paintings support the evidence of early maritime activities according to Mr Kosasih, a researcher of Puspan, whose paper was entitled "The Role of Ships as Illustrated by Cave Paintings."

Trade Goods

The study of trade goods from different perspectives was the theme of four papers. Dr Pronchai Suchitta, Head of the Department of Anthropology, Silpakorn University, focused on ancient artifacts of foreign origin, especially the Dongson style drums and beads and other ornaments of stone and glass found in Thailand in his paper

"Evidence of Early Contacts Between Thailand and Neighboring Countries." From Dr. Anthony Reid of the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, came the reminder that foodstuffs such as rice, salt, sugar, etc., formed the bulk of the trade items followed by cloth, ceramics, metalware, spices and slaves. He also paid attention to the trade routes used in the shipment of these goods in his paper "Trade Goods and Trade Routes in Southeast Asia, 1300 - 1700."

The impact of trading of textiles on the people along the maritime trade routes of Indonesia was emphasized by Ms. Paramita R. Aburachman, researcher at the National Institute of Cultural Studies, in her "Observations on the Impact of Trade Goods." On the other hand, Mr. Abu Ridho, Specialist, National Museum of Indonesia, attempted to trace trade routes through a comparative study of ceramic assemblages from coastal and riverine sites believed to be old shipping harbours. His paper was entitled "The Meaning of Ceramics Found in the Sea of Tuban, East Java, for Tracing the Sea Route in the Archipelago."

An overview of archaeology of shipwrecks in Asia and Southeast Asia was presented by Mr Jeremy Green, Head of the Department of Maritime Archaeology, Western Australian Maritime Museum. He emphasized the need for more studies of shipwrecks to resolve problems on maritime trade, the problem of identification of ceramics by provenance and attribution, ship construction and others.

Meanwhile Dr Pierre-Yves Manguin, Charge des Recherches, EFEO, in "Sailing Instructions for Southeast Asian Seas (15th - 17th Centuries): A Virtually Untapped Source", described the kind of technical literature he was referring to and discussed its usefulness as a source

for Southeast Asian historiography. He stressed the importance of working on a historical atlas of Southeast Asian sea routes.

A researcher of EFEO, Dr. Viviane Sukanda-Tessier presented some insights on the role played by Sunda in maritime relations in her paper "Notes on Sabrang, i.e., Country on the Other Side of the Sea" which was based on the study of classical Sundanese literature.

The excavation at Fort Canning, Singapore, was the subject of Dr. John N. Miksic, Project Specialist in Archaeology, University of Gajah Mada. He gave a preliminary account of the background of the project and the archaeological work being done.

Other Participants

The other consultants and observers to the workshop were as follows: consultants-Mr. Uka Tjandrasmita, Director, Directorate for the Protection and Development of Cultural Heritage; Dr. R. Soekmono, Faculty of Letters, University of Indonesia; Mrs. Soejatmi Satari, Head of Classical Department, National Research Center of Archaeology; observers - Mr Bastomi Ervan, SPAFA Governing Board Member for Indonesia; Ms. D.D. Bintarti, Head of Prehistory Department, National Research Center of Archaeology; Dr. J. Dumarcy, EFEO; Dr. Aurora Roxas-Lim, Asian Center, University of the Philippines; Dr. Noerhadi Magetsari, Dean, Faculty of Letters, University of Indonesia; Mr. Santoso Soegondho, Researcher, National Research Center of Archaeology and Mrs. Esperanza Gatbonton, formerly of the Intramuros Project, Manila, Philippines.

The workshop was co-ordinated by Dr Rosa C.P Tenazas, Assistant Co-ordinator, SPAFA Co-ordinating Unit, Bangkok, Thailand.