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S. J. O'Connor + Tom Harrison

"Western Peninsular Siam and Sarawak:  
A Ceramic and Statuary Comparison"

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# א-יהודים בתעלה

(ביצ' לוריא) חילי צה"ל חיל  
ביום על גדת התעלה ישמור וד  
א-יהודים שם עובדי-חיל בקצה  
הדרומי של התעלה.  
מזאכר ריבונות. ובאשק למע-  
הם יחידים יראו נסע בשנת 1928  
מקדונו כש-1500 בודד מודד  
מיה העוברת ליד חצי האי

מסלול דרך זו חוצה את המפרץ  
במפרץ וינדרים וצומת לסיני  
בקצה המפרץ. קרוב לחוף הים  
האדום צינן ריבונות אי בשם גזי-  
רם אל-יהודים כלומר א-יהודים  
רם (ר) מסעות לארץ הקודש  
חלק א' עם 80 במחוזות הגר-  
מניה) נוסע שער בודד ו' כש-  
1828 בשם אהרנברג מספר כי  
המסע במים-הימורים של הים  
נפרא במי תושבי הסביבה דרג  
אל-יהוד (היהודים) ריבונות  
הם רשאל על השם-הזה ולא  
מא-מי-שאשק נאם  
אין לתעלות על הדעת שהשם  
של מוצא ביסוסת ישא' בס'  
בינה מדברית ו' למעלה משלושת  
אלפים שנה אבל יתכן שהשם  
הוא לא כל-כך עתיק ושכן למא  
היא-היא באשק מחזיקים סודים  
והיהודים יהודים קיימו את השם  
זה ביהודים בין מוצרים לבין  
דומם-הזה והוא  
שליש השם שנה לאחר ביקר  
הוא של ריבונות. ובאשק א-יהוד  
דיו חוצה מדינות לספס את המד-  
בו דרך התעלה אבל לא שם  
בא-במפת של מחלקת המדינות  
של מצרים משנת 1910 (גרסה)  
שניה בגרסיו 1915) מופיע האי  
השם תל-עלימות ליד חצי-האי  
אז ועל ידו אי שני גדול ממנו  
ששמו לא צוין במפת נראה ש-  
זו א-יהודים. אולי תחנת מס-  
דיו של יהודים מימי-הביניים.

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Western Peninsular Thailand and West Sarawak —  
Ceramic and Statuary Comparisons

1966.11.16 by

DR. S. J. O' CONNOR JR.\* and TOM HARRISSON

\*(Cornell University, U.S.A.)

I: TAKUAPA, THAILAND (S.J.O'C)

During the period November through January 1963, I visited a number of the centers of early Indianized settlement in Peninsular Thailand while doing research on the early Brahmanical sculptures found in that region. One of these centers, the area around the modern town of Takuapa, on the West coast of Thailand about sixty miles north of Phuket Island, is notable both for its sculptures and for the pottery fragments found on the surface of nearby Kakao Island<sup>(1)</sup>. British Museum curators have recently examined some sherds from this Island, and in their opinion many of them fall within the chronology of T'ang dynasty pottery. At the same time, it appears that the sherds do not extend very much beyond the T'ang or early Sung. In view of the early date of much of the pottery excavated at Santubong and other Sarawak River sites,<sup>(2)</sup> I thought it would be of interest to the Sarawak Museum to examine separately sherds which I obtained from Kakao Island and compare them more precisely to the Borneo typologies established by the long-time orderly excavation of undisturbed sites there.

In order to put these sherds into some kind of context, I will add a brief note on the Takuapa sites. There are altogether three known sites in the vicinity of Takuapa town. There is first the island, Kakao, opposite one of the mouths of the Takuapa River. Lunet de Lajonquiere carried out an archaeological reconnaissance there early in this century.<sup>(3)</sup> He was followed by Dr. Quaritch Wales, who excavated the brick and laterite foundation platform of what he considered to be a temple built of perishable materials.<sup>(4)</sup> In February 1961, Dr. Alastair Lamb, now of the Australian National University, visited the site and he has subsequently published a detailed analysis, especially of the glass beads and the bases of glass vessels which he collected there.<sup>(5)</sup> In addition to the published work of these three scholars, the site has been surveyed and mapped by the Archaeological Survey of Thailand; I am grateful to them for making their maps available to me.

The surface of Kakao is littered with pottery, broken glass, and glass beads. They occur in such profusion, in such a relatively concentrated area on the southern end of the island, that they would far exceed the demand of any local population and were almost certainly part of a commercial enterprise. The ceramics of whatever age and origin are thoroughly jumbled together, Chinese pottery and Middle Eastern blue glazed wares occurring along with earthen-wares of local or Indian manufacture. Even at the time of Quaritch Wales' excavations, the site had been disturbed, apparently by Chinese tin miners. He



found that while the surface was very rich indeed, there was almost no pottery to be found under the surface.

Both Lamb and Wales, while differing on some points of interpretation, are agreed that Kakao Island was the site of an entrepot in the trade between India, China and the Middle East, and it would appear that on the basis of the pottery, the trade was underway by the late seventh century. Whether or not Takuapa was the western terminus of an important trans-isthmian trade route to the Bay of Bandon is an unresolved point. To date there is no record that pre-Sung Chinese ceramics in any significant quantity have ever been found in the ancient sites along the north-east coast of Malaya. While many east coast centers have not been studied by archaeologists, the same can not be said of Chaiya — which is sometimes described as the eastern terminus of the Takuapa route.

Opposite Kakao Island and on the mainland is the ruin of a small sanctuary where a life-size, sandstone, image of Vishnu was found. The sculpture, now in the Bangkok Museum, is considered to date from the sixth century.<sup>(6)</sup> A number of factors would argue for its being the product of a local workshop. First, its weight, which for a stone statue over six feet in height complete with four arms and pedestal, might be well over two tons. Second, it shows some technical differences from other Indian sculptures of the same period. The Takuapa image uses a system of five supports like many Indian images of the Gupta period, but its feet are sculpted in the full round, rather than being treated in relief and backed by a low stele which would be more likely to be the case in India.<sup>(7)</sup> Finally, the relative naturalism of its musculature, especially in the treatment of the deltoid and pectoral muscles and the articulation of the rib cage, all go beyond the interest of the Indian sculptor and suggest local preoccupations. It would thus appear that very assured sculptures were being made *in the vicinity of Takuapa in the sixth century* and that very likely this sculpture had been preceded by others from the same or related workshops, since glyptic sculpture is a highly complex art, and mastery of its techniques is slowly won.<sup>(8)</sup>

The third site is ten miles up the Takuapa River. There a group of three relief sculptures are embedded in the trunk of a large tree. The sculptures are of uncertain iconography and their provenance is in dispute. Unlike the Vishnu figure, these images are so strongly Southern Indian that one could even believe they were done by Indian artisans. They appear to be early Pallava in style. They may be roughly contemporary with a Tamil-inscribed stone nearby, which, according to K. A. Nilikanta Sastri, probably relates to the second quarter of the ninth century.<sup>(9)</sup>

Wales believes these images, together with the inscribed stone, were hauled up the river from Kakao Island. Lamb argues very convincingly that they were removed from the ruins of a small sanctuary which crowns a low hill on the opposite bank of the river.

## II. SOME SARAWAK COMPARISONS (T.H.)

I met Dr. O'Connor while at Cornell University, U.S.A., in April 1964, and was stimulated by his fresh approach during two long sessions (seven hours) of comparing experiences and observations in South-east Asia. These notes are one consequence. The field has lately been scintillatingly covered by my friend Dr. Alastair Lamb, as already cited.<sup>(10)</sup> But unfortunately for all of us he has now left the area; his archaeological collections remain in crates in the University at present, unavailable for immediate study and the fuller comparison which is to be made. This has therefore seemed a good opportunity to make a separate evaluation, albeit sketch, from a new angle. Dr. O'Connor kindly let me send back to Kuching a small but wide selection of sherds taken by him at Kakao Island; so that we could both examine them in detail beside our own very large collections and keep them for future cross-reference until the Lamb material is then fully accessible. The Kakao Island sherds were compared particularly with our abundant Niah Cave and Sarawak River delta series from stratified horizons. All these sites are *undisturbed* (as compared with major disturbance on most mainland sites) and were deposited under an appreciable top soil — except in a few places which we ignore archaeologically. Study, aided by Mrs. Eine Moore and Mrs. Barbara Harrison, gives this picture for the O'Connor items . . .

### 1. White "Ying Ch'ing type" Wares

- (a) Bowls with unglazed foot, straight footrim, fine-grained body; rather opaque, not very shiny glaze, but with none of the usual Ying Ch'ing blue tone in the white. Rare at Sarawak River sites but exactly matched from Kain Hitam, the Painted Cave at Niah, provisionally dated as T'ang and earlier. The type is well described by Lindberg in his article "Hsing Yao" and attributed to T'ang.<sup>(10)</sup> Very similar pieces are illustrated in the Japanese classic "Sekai Toji Zenshu", there attributed to T'ang.
- (b) Bowls with "fold-over" rims of a distinctive type. Kakao exactly matches Sarawak Museum sherds from a T'ang context (? 7th century) at Tanjong Kubor in the Sarawak River, as illustrated in our report<sup>(11)</sup> on that site. Also from Sungei Jaong upriver, and again the Painted Cave at Niah; T'ang inference?
- (c) Lobed bowl found associated with fold-over rims on the same Sarawak sites; Tang and earlier.
- (d) Straight rim bowl, of a sort common to any of the sites mentioned above.

### 2. "Celadons" (Chinese)

- (e) Grey bodied bowl; numerous distinctive spurmarks on the low foot-ring and also inside. Typical of celadons from Tanjong Kubor and Sungei Jaong, with a probable Sung inference at the latter, related to the Yueh wares of the area, some of which are pre-T'ang.<sup>(12)</sup>
- (f) Concave-based dish, glazed in bluish grey, leaving bare patches at edge; an unusual *form* not familiar to us in Sarawak, but the glaze and body resemble some Bongkisam celadons of probably Sung or later?

- (g) Bowl with spreading footring; bevelled unglazed footrim; buff body with light slip inside and traces of celadon glaze. Common at Bongkisam.
- (h) Other celadons, best matched from Bongkisam, Sung and possibly later.
- 3. "Blue and White" Porcelain
  - (i) Light grey ware with blue glaze and a line in *underglaze* blue, rather surprising in this context. Body resembles Y'ing Ch'ing, glaze nearer bubbly later celadons of Bongkisam. It is impossible to match or date this at present, but it can hardly be *earlier* than late Sung? Disturbance and late intrusion?
- 4. Stoneware (Chinese?)
  - (j) A straight-necked stone-ware with horizontal earlugs massively thick and heavy; olive-green uneven glaze. We have whole "burial" jars of this sort, and they are rather uncertainly dated as T'ang; this is confirmed by identical material from the Painted Cave at Niah. There are several from middle Java in the Leeuwarden Museum, Holland.<sup>(13)</sup>
  - (k) (? Jar); very dense, purple-grey sherd; outer side with "candled" splash of thick, glassy highly crackled green glaze over light purple slip; *inside* unusually heavily crazed glassy green. Insufficient material; perhaps T'ang and related to massive "burial jars".
  - (l) Anomolous sherds, insufficient for identification.
- 5. "Middle-Eastern" Ware?
  - (m) Vivid blue glazed ware of a sort *never* seen in Borneo — it did not reach so far south and east?

\* \* \*

The conclusions tentatively to be drawn from this brief comparison are:

- (i) O'Connor's ceramics are close to Santubong (and some Niah) but covering a wider time range intermixed in *one* site there, unlike what we normally find in one Borneo site of this phase.
- (ii) Almost every "Chinese" piece can be exactly matched from one or other Sarawak site covering a period from early T'ang or earlier, to later Sung (Bongkisam); i.e. c.600 to c.1300 + A.D.
- (iii) The inference is of "a mix-up", covering a long period in time; probably much secondary disturbance to confuse dating; but an important *established* long-time trading station, rather than the numerous but mobile depots of Borneo's west coast, few of which seem to have lasted for more than two centuries — largely because of difficulties with anchorages, silting, mangrove extension and erosional changes due to the interception of big flooding rivers and the monsoonal South China Sea.
- (iv) The absence our end of non-Chinese pottery; compare glass beads.<sup>(14)</sup>

#### Buddhas — Santubong to Khmer?

Dr. O'Connor's sherds fit fairly well to his observations on the iconography of the Isthmus of Kra and his suggestions on early dating. The Sarawak inference is constantly towards dating earlier rather than later. A

comparison is at once suggested with the solitary Buddha from Santubong in our delta — the only piece of Hindu or Buddhist iconography so far found in a Bornean archaeological site (though itself not actually excavated). A. B. Griswold has discussed this interesting piece admirably, in the context of other South-east Asian finds, including from Kedah and Peninsula Siam.<sup>(15)</sup> The British Museum dated this "8-9th century"; but the site, Bukit Maras, in generally indicates a somewhat earlier date, comparable to Tanjong Kubor — in sight across the river. Dr. Griswold (p.370) would accept an earlier date, too.

Now Dr. O'Connor draws my attention to the asymmetrical shoulder and hip lines as between one side of the Santubong figure and the other, shown in plates XVI and XVII to Dr. Griswold's study. This "sloping angle style" is very unusual in the area, but is almost diagnostic of some Khmer figures of Buddha about 6th to 7th Century, such as that from Vat Romlok, Takeo, illustrated (plate II) by Jean Boisselier.<sup>(16)</sup> This suggests a line of impact into Borneo which in some respects fits rather better than a more "western" (i.e. "Indian") approach. Dr. Boisselier's discussion (pp. 25-26) should be examined closely in this connection. This author and Dr. O'Connor have convinced me of a Santubong parallel in this case, not equalled with possibly the more directly "Indian" material for the area. But I am indeed inexperienced in this field and place the matter on record here as of some importance for further examination by others.

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