A NOTE ON TAMIL RELATIONS WITH SOUTH THAILAND AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF PTOLEMY'S TACOLA

by

J.J. Boeles

Western historians have warned time and again against an exaggerated view of early Indian influence in the Far East. They make their point by reminding us that none of the countries in this area have ever been under colonial rule by any Indian Power;¹ that each of the countries in the Far East has developed its own identity whilst incorporating outside influences compatible with its national character. In this light, let us briefly discuss—as have many before us, an aspect of Tamil relations with South Thailand. The epigraphical evidence available consists of two Tamil stone inscriptions: one found in district Takuapa, province Phangnga, on the west coast of peninsular Thailand: the other at Vat Mahādhātu in the town of Nakorn Srinthamarāj (Ligor) on the east coast of peninsular Thailand. Both inscriptions have been published by Coedès² who says that the only document on the Malay Peninsula which may be attributable to the first half of the ninth century is the Tamil stone inscription found at Takuapa. This mentions that a tank or pond named Avaninārayaṇam, dug by the chief of Naṅgūr, was placed under the protection of the members of the Maṇigrāman, residing in the military camp. Coedès points out that Avani-nārayaṇa, being a surname of the Pallava King Nandivarman III who reigned from A.D. 826 to 849, may indicate an approximate date for the inscription³—one of the few documents found

¹ Coedès, G., Les peuples de la péninsule indochinoise, Paris 1962, p. 54.
² Coedès, G., Recueil des Inscriptions du Siam, Ile Partie, 1961, stone inscriptions XXVI and XXIX. According to Prof. Hultzsch, translator of inscription XXVI, the language is Tamil and the script Tamil of an archaic type. The language of the second face of Inscription XXIX is also Tamil as is the script, though of a later date than that of Inscription XXVI—possibly Chola period.
outside India, in a vernacular of that country. Unfortunately, the Tamil inscription from Wat Mahādhātu, dating from the Chola dynasty, is too damaged to yield much information.

The site of the discovery of the Tamil inscription at Khau Brāh Nārāyana close to Takuapa (takua = lead and formerly also tin; pā = jungle, forest), yielded also three damaged stone sculptures: a standing four-armed Hindu deity, which, as Coedès suggests, could possibly represent Śiva, and a male and female deity. These are illustrated by le May in his Buddhist Art in Siam (figures 41 and 42). The style of the figures being clearly South Indian, more specifically Pallava, these could well date from the same period as the Tamil inscription found nearby. In fact, we may even speak of a Tamil influence in the Pallava style of these three almost life-size stone sculptures now partially covered by a tree. Obviously no longer in situ, the original site of the figures and the inscription has not been established with certainty.

The implications of the inscription and of its position relative to the related Pallava-style sculptures at Takuapa, has been most recently discussed by Alastair Lamb. Following a visit to the site he proposes that the Tamil inscription and the three stone figures were removed from an original location on the plain called Tung Tük (tung = plain, tük = stone [brick] building) on Kakao Island at the mouth of the Takuapa River. Further, from surface finds at Tung

5 A third Tamil inscription known in the Far East, is that of Lobu Tuwa in Sumatra which dates from A.D. 1088. See Krom, N.J., Hindoe Javanesche Geschiedenis, The Hague 1931, p. 304.
6 For the story of the discovery of the three stone figures and the Tamil inscription, see Bourke, W.W., ‘Some Archaeological Notes on Monthon Puket’, Journal of the Siam Society vol 2, 1905, pp. 55-57 with facsimile of a portion of the inscription.
8 Prof. Lamb uses the name 'Kakao Island'. Apparently this is meant to be the name of the island ตกะตะกู (Koh Ko Kao) in which Tung Tük is situated.
Tük, Lamb is led to believe that this could have been the site of 'an entrepôt situated at the mid-point of the sea routes between the ports of the Indian Ocean and those of the Chinese Seas.'9 This is an important conclusion; however, it is one long since arrived at. In 1935, F.H. Giles (Phya Indra Montri), late President of the Siam Society, from information supplied by Scott, an eyewitness, remarked that 'it seems quite clear that Tung Tük was a great emporium or mart where traders met, and it is probable that the gold dust he [Scott] refers to as having been found in the sand amongst the ruins was either an article of trade or the currency used.'10 Giles also indicates why the watershed between the Takuapa and Menam Luang rivers was of importance in establishing an overland route across the peninsula from Takuapa to a site on the Bay of Bandon close to the ancient town of Jaiyā which may have been a centre in the maritime Śrīvijaya Empire.11

The gold dust of Takuapa brings to mind the considerable number of gold ornaments which have been excavated from the Funan site at Oc-Eo in the region of the delta of the Mekong; more particularly in that the beads associated with the Funan civilisation have also been found at Tung Tük. Though Lamb’s surface finds suggest a seventh to tenth century civilisation at Tung Tük,12 we are reluc-
A section of *INDIA EXTRA GANGE M* from Ptolemy’s woodcut map, circa A.D. 1541
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tacola</td>
<td>15° 15'</td>
<td>36° 30'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattigara</td>
<td>15° 15'</td>
<td>36° 30'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ptolemy's reference to Tacola and Cattigara, in Latin, on back of map, circa A.D. 1541.