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ALTHOUGH ANCIENT STATES EMERGED in several parts of Southeast Asia (Bentley 1986; Coedes 1968; Higham 1989a, 1989b), few of the world's archaeologists look to Southeast Asia to study the development of sociopolitical complexity. One reason for this lack of attention is that other Old World regions, such as the Near East, have dominated research on early civilizations (see also Morrison 1994). Perhaps another reason lies in archaeologists' current focus on prehistoric research: we have made great strides in understanding key changes in the prehistory of Southeast Asia (see Bellwood 1997 and Higham 1989a, 1989b, 1996 for reviews). Our understanding of the archaeology of early state formation in mainland Southeast Asia, however, has developed more slowly (Hutterer 1982). Many long-term research programs on this topic have been initiated only in the past decade (Allard 1994; Glover et al. 1996; Glover and Yamagata 1995; Higham 1998; Moore 1992, 1998; Yamagata and Glover 1994). Nowhere is this gap in our understanding more acute than in Cambodia, where one of the great ancient states of Southeast Asia flourished during the ninth to fourteenth centuries. Cambodia has a rich cultural heritage, but little is known about periods that preceded the founding of Angkor in A.D. 802. French archaeologists visited pre-Angkorian sites throughout Indochina (particularly Cambodia and Viet Nam) and translated inscriptions from these sites between 1920 and 1950. Their work recovered statuary and inscriptions from pre-Angkorian times, and they offered the first theories regarding the origins of Cambodian civilization (e.g., Briggs 1951; Coedes 1968; Groslier 1956, 1961, 1966; Jacques 1990). Soon after 1970, civil war put an end to active archaeological research throughout most of Cambodia. Although several important reviews of Cambodian archaeology appeared after this time (e.g., Higham 1989a: 245-268, 321-355, 1996:208-211; Mours 1977, 1988, 1994), archaeological field research has only recently resumed throughout the country. Now the demand is growing for archaeological studies of the origins of Khmer civilization, which lie deep in the pre-Angkorian period. Such studies not only illuminate our understanding of the origins of Khmer civilization but also provide a comparative example of state formation in the lowland tropics.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE MEKONG DELTA One of the more promising developments in Cambodian archaeology is taking place in Cambodia's Mekong Delta through the Lower Mekong Archaeological Project (or LOMAP), which is one portion of a broader University of Hawai'i/ East-West Center/Royal University of Fine Arts project (Griffin et al. 1996). The Mekong Delta region is famous as the heartland of one of the earliest civilizations in mainland Southeast Asia. Called "Funan" by visiting Chinese dignitaries in the third century A.D., it reputedly contained multiple urban centers between the first and sixth centuries A.D. (e.g., Coedes 1968; Jacques 1979; Vickery 1986, 1998). Brief excavations in the 1940s at the site of Oc Eo revealed an elaborate system of water control, monumental architecture, and rich material culture (Higham 1989a:245-254; Malleret 1959-1963). Malleret's research suggested that this early historic period site was a node in an international maritime trading network, and he argued that Oc Eo was the coastal entrepot for the polity the Chinese referred to as Funan. Malleret's work was truncated by World War II, and stifled during the ensuing three

decades prevented archaeologists from working in the region. Vietnamese archaeologists resumed work in the Mekong Delta after 1975, when the Social Science Institute (Ho Chi Minh City) established a long-term research program to study the early historic period. Vietnamese archaeologists refer to cultural manifestations from this period as the “Oc Eo culture” (e.g., Bui Phat Diem et al. 1997; Dang Van Thang and Vu Quoc Hien 1997; Dao Linh Con 1998; Ha Van Tan 1986, Le Xuan Diem et al.

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