Indianization, Foreign Relations, and Trade: A Preliminary Study of the Ancient Kingdom of Funan

together with the disscusion of the changing of international maritime trade route in South China Sea in 5th-8th century CE

by

Ho, Sin Hang (Daniel)

Dr. Ho, Wai Kit (Vincent)

Department of History

Master of Arts in History

September 2013

Department of Social Sciences and Humanities
University of Macau

Copyright 2013 by HO, Sin Hang (Daniel)

University of Macau

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in this topic could trace back to last year when I was a first-year student still taking courses. It was during Prof. Paul van Dyke's course that I got a chance to read an article on maritime trade route and ancient kingdoms in the Southeast Asian region (I still remembered this article focus on Srivijaya and Majapahit). During presentation, Professor van Dyke asked me, “Where did the merchants travel before the use of the Strait of Malacca?” This question, of course beyond my knowledge at that time, could not be answered. Yet I kept it in my heart. Here I would like to thank Prof. Paul van Dyke for making me interested in maritime history.

During second semester of last year I took Prof. Akiko Sugiyama’s survey course on Southeast Asia. This was the first time I ever came across the history of Southeast Asia and I felt very excited in learning those ancient kingdoms which I had never heard of before. It was during this course I got to know something about the ancient kingdoms of Funan and Zhenla, which I decided to do further research on. So by the end of this course, I chose Zhenla as my research topic for my final assignment. It was natural to touch on the history of Funan when studying the origin and establishment of Zhenla. After reading several articles, I realized that there was a very closed relation between Funan and the early maritime trade route before the Strait of Malacca. I would like to thank Prof. Akiko Sugiyama for introducing me the history of Southeast Asia, as well as providing me with enough materials on the research of early Southeast Asia and giving me support to go on this study.

Yet, the most important person who I should give thanks to is my supervisor Prof. Vincent Ho. It was his advice that I finally decided to write about Funan as my MA thesis. I still remember that he once said to me which I will never forget, “Choosing a topic to write should not base on imagination, but base on the materials you have!” During that

time, most of the sources I have were on Zhenla, Funan, and early Southeast Asia, and that's why I decided to choose this topic. I would also like to thanks Prof. Vincent for giving me advices and supports on various matters, especially regarding to my future. Moreover, he also acknowledges me further about history as a professional matter.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Prof. Billy K.L. So and Prof. Wang Gungwu. Although they do not recognize me, their books and articles inspired and encouraged me writing in the direction of early Southeast Asian history and the Nanhai Trade.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents and my wife. Without their supervision and encouragement, I am afraid that I cannot even finish this thesis by this year.

UNIVERSIDADE DE MACAU
仁義禮知信
澳門大學

ABSTRACT

Due to the insufficient nature of indigenous sources, the research of Funan relied on ancient Chinese sources as a major part. Together with recent archaeological reports, inscriptional source, and studies by previous scholars, this thesis attempts to reconstruct the history of Funan in an interdisciplinary perspective.

Funan was a thalassocrat state dominating the Southeast Asian region from the 1st to 6th century CE. It was also a place where Indian or West Asian merchants would first arrive and then made their transit to China or other SEA countries before the Strait of Malacca route was widely used in the 7th century.

Although there was strong Indian influence existed in Funan, this thesis argues that Funan was not an Indian creation at the beginning but an indigenous SEA civilization. Moreover, this thesis also stresses on the importance of the hybrid population with both Indian and Southeast Asian lineages on helping to promote Indian culture to various part of SEA. Overall, the process of Indianization, in the case of Funan, did not refer to any kind of forceful imposition of Indian culture to the Funanese society; yet suggests that it was a learning process with which the indigenous population took their own initiative to study and adopt Indian culture for their own interest.

Moreover, this thesis also argued that the fall of Funan was not the result of the shifting of maritime trade route from the Malay Peninsula route to the Strait of Malacca starting from the 5th century CE; rather, it suggests that the conquest of Funan by Zhenla was the exact reason for the shifting of maritime trade route in the 7th century CE and an indirect consequence of the rise of Srivijaya and He-ling.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements
Abstract
CHAPTER I: Introduction 1
CHAPTER II: From Prehistory to 3rd century CE 6
Climate 8
Agriculture 9
Origin and Legend 11
Development and Conquest 25
Founding of Oc Eo 35
Bridge that linked China and India 37
Lu Dai promoting Chinese Civilization to the South 40
Mission to India 42
Indigenous Belief 44
CHAPTER III: Prosperity and Indian Influence 47
An Indian King 48
Funan mentioned in "*Taiqing jinye shendan jing*" 51
Indian Influence through Archaeology 54
Ancient Canals 55
CHAPTER IV: Embracing the Indian System 59
King Jiao-chen-ru 61
Nagasena and the Business Delegation 63
Rebel from a Funan prince 65
Two "Funan" Inscriptions 67
Indian System 68
Last Phase of Jayavarman 72
Reign of Rudravarman 75
Rudravarman and Angkor Borei 77
The Rise of Zhenla 79
CHAPTER V: Fall of Funan and Change in Maritime Trade Route 85
Causes for the Decline of Funan 88
Ancient Coinages found in Funan and SEA 91
Maritime Trade Route after the Fall of Funan 96
CHAPTER VI: Conclusion 101
APPENDICES 106
BIBLIOGRAPHY 108

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1. Farming season and the monsoonal climate 9

Table 2. Comparison of terms about the legend of Funan in Chinese sources 15

Table 3. Transformation of the ceramic style discovered at Angkor Borei 54

Table 4. Official contacts between SEA countries and China, 5th century CE 61

Table 5. Official contacts between SEA countries and China, 6th century CE 76

Table 6. List of selected Buddhist monks coming from India/SEA to China 96

Table 7. List of selected Buddhist monks coming from China to India during 7th and 8th century CE 97

Table 8. Official contacts between SEA countries and China, 7th century CE 99

Figure 1. Immigration of the Yue people 22

Figure 2. Canal system in Funan 58

Figure 3. Ancient coinages with conch motif discovered at Oc Eo 93

Figure 4. Distribution of ancient coinages in early Mainland Southeast Asia 95