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NEW ENGRAVINGS DISCOVERED AT SANTUBONG, SARAWAK, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

We report on recently discovered engravings at Santubong, Sarawak, an archaeologically rich area north of Kuching. Eleven engraved boulders were documented in June 2010. We suggest that two boulders have traditional indigenous imagery while the other nine have symbols that may be associated with visits to a nearby Indian shrine built between the 10th - 13th centuries AD.

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SANTUBONG ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Santubong, Sarawak (Fig. 1) has long been known as an important location for ancient indigenous sites and others associated with the arrival of many groups from outside Borneo. It is Sarawak's richest archaeological region, with a number of surveys and excavations since 1947 revealing a surprising range of sites. These include a prehistoric iron industry (Harrisson and O'Connor Jr., 1968, 1969; Christie, 1988; Doherty *et al.*, 2007) and sites associated with visits by people from India or those influenced by India between the 5th and 13th centuries AD (Griswold, 1962; Harrisson, 1955; Harrisson and O'Connor Jr., 1967). At some of the major sites, such as Bongkissam and Sungai Jaong (also known as Sungai Santubong), large quantities of Chinese pottery from the Tang and Song Dynasties were recovered. At Bongkissam a Buddhist shrine was built, complete with a ritual offering box containing numerous Buddhist and/or Hindu gold foil figures, and many other Buddhist or Hindu objects. It is believed to date between the 10th and 13th centuries AD (Harrisson and O'Connor Jr., 1967: 220).

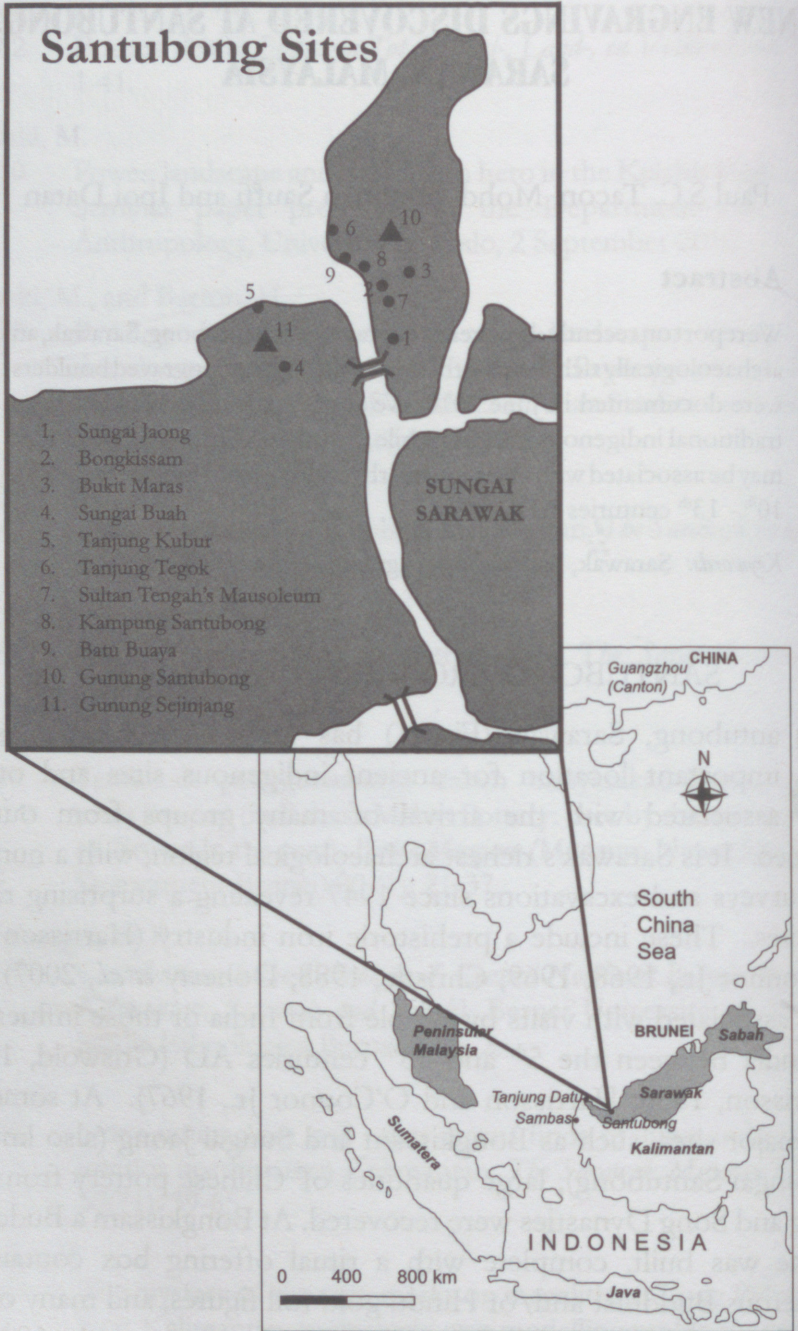


Fig. 1: Map of the Santubong archaeological area with new engraving sites indicated.