



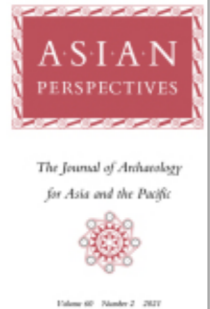
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*Ban Chiang, Northeast Thailand, vol. 2C: The Metal Remains
in Regional Context* ed. by Joyce C. White and Elizabeth G.
Hamilton (review)

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Second, new excavations using modern multidisciplinary methodologies should be undertaken at Khok Charoen and related sites to retrieve full datasets to sort out the local cultural sequence and retrieve associated datasets from faunal, human, and botanical remains in order to expand our understanding of the daily lives of the ancient communities.

In addition to more excavation and study of full assemblages from these new excavations, much could still be gleaned from a proper study of the original assemblage excavated during the 1960s Thai-British-Australian program. These volumes provide an important foundation for future studies of central Thailand's prehistoric past.

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- Reviewed by* Siân E. HALCROW, *Department of Anatomy, University of Otago,*
and Nigel J. CHANG, *James Cook University*
- The third volume of the Thai Archaeology Monograph (TAM) Series on the metal remains at Ban Chiang provides important interpretations of the metal evidence within a regional social context. This edited volume presents substantive contributions from multiple scholars on copper mining and smelting from Thailand and Laos, provenance research on artifacts from the sites of Ban Chiang and Dan Klang, and a thorough regional synthesis of metal technology systems in Northeast and Central Thailand. This corpus of work presented by the authors supports the theory that there was a maintenance of regional economic networks with community-based, nonhierarchical, social organization of production in these metal age societies.
- The introduction (chapter 1) by Joyce White succinctly describes the outcomes of this research showcasing a regional, culturally specific view of metal production, distribution, and consumption. Chapter 2 by Vincent Piggott reviews prehistoric copper mining and smelting in Southeast Asia using evidence from Thailand and Laos. This contribution provides a comprehensive review of the evidence for early copper mining and smelting in Northeast (Phu Lon complex in the greater Loei region) and Central (Khao Wong Prachan Valley) Thailand and Sepon in Lao

PDR. Given the extensive nature of these sites, it is concluded that they were the likely ore sources for these basins, if not for the entirety of Southeast Asia during the late second to first millennia B.C. Using the model suggested by Tucci and colleagues (2014) for the relationship between socio-political power and mining activity, Pigott argues that mining was conducted in these areas following the community-based consumption model within heterarchical contexts, although Sepon mining may have been influenced by dynastic China from as early as the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, throughout the Qin and Han dynasties, and into the remainder of the first millennium A.D.

In chapter 3, T. O. Pryce presents sourcing data from copper-based artifacts from Ban Chiang and Don Klong. Here, provenance information concerning production and consumption is investigated through the geochemical characterization of the metals, using elemental compositional data and lead isotopic analyses for the regions and a range of archaeological artifact types. The results show that prehistoric sites obtained their metals from a number of different networks that are inconsistent with the Phu Lon production signature, as previously thought by White and Pigott (1996). These production and consumption network findings are nevertheless consistent with the proposed general model of riverine metal supply networks in the region (White and Pigott 1996). Sepon is the only identified source of copper used to produce the artifacts at Ban Chiang during its early period, perhaps as early as 1000 B.C. The results of further metalwork sourcing research (currently underway) will help tease out answers to questions about metal consumption across the region.

In chapter 4, Elizabeth Hamilton and Joyce White provide an extensive compilation and synthesis of English language publications on metal production and consumption in prehistoric northern Northeast Thailand. This chapter fully contextualizes this work within the wider regional context of southern Northeast and Central Thailand to assess regional patterns of social growth and interaction. Metal analyses of artifacts from these excavations have revealed that, although the

products are different between the Upper Mun River Valley and northern Northeast Thailand, there are similarities in the casting tradition. For example, the finds of lagged spouted crucible pieces and several metal-working hearths show that such final metal products were cast locally. Although there is little published literature on the topic of metalwork in Central Thailand, the reviewed data suggest there were variable forms and metal compositions, with copper appearing to be the focus of metal production in Central Thailand compared with tin bronze in Northeast Thailand throughout the sequence; the authors argue that this also illustrates the possibility of distinct socio-political systems.

Chapter 5 by Joyce White and Elizabeth Hamilton presents an interpretation of the metals from sites in northern Northeast Thailand including Ban Chiang, Ban Tong, Ban Phak Top, and Don Klong (updated since White and Hamilton's 2019 TAM 2B volume). This chapter achieves this aim by producing a comprehensive survey of 34 sites from Northeast and Central Thailand to understand the evidence for production, consumption, and manufacturing, including early metal technologies, the appearance of iron, and the social contexts in which metallurgy occurs. An investigation of burials of founders shows a region-wide and enduring practice, but with variation in expression. White and Hamilton argue that the iron period sees continuity with the bronze period in settlement systems and diverse social and economic behaviors. The socially engaged synthesis emphasizes localized variation in metal technological systems across space in the region, which supports the theory that there was a system of community level production without overarching hierarchical political control.

Chapter 6, by Joyce White is the paramount chapter wherein all the metal data and reviewed evidence in the volume is interpreted to address archaeological and anthropological theories of production, economics, and social organization in prehistoric Thailand. White rearticulates the New Archaeometallurgy Paradigm, a model that moves beyond the consideration of metal artifacts solely as prestige goods toward an investiga-

tion of production sequences, technological styles, and consumption. This framework allows explorations of alternatives to top-down models of social control to facilitate a consideration of individual and group agency. The use of this framework illustrates that Southeast Asia has undergone community-driven technological change, likely as a result of the abundant and dispersed ore resources in the region. Importantly, this volume articulates this model of Southeast Asian social and economic organization within global archaeological theory.

We highly recommend this volume as a contextualized review of the metallurgical findings at Ban Chiang showcasing diverse narratives of possible social networks and social change in Thailand and beyond. This volume does this through the consideration of a range of evidence for metal consumption and distribution in Southeast Asia. The maintenance of regionally distinctive metallurgy systems highlights local communities and individuals as the drivers of technological adoption and development during the metal ages, a refreshing move away from the technological determinism of other approaches to understanding social and cultural change in prehistoric Southeast Asia. As a theoretically rich interpretive case study and regional synthesis that considers in detail social organization and community agency through the lens of metal analyses, this volume is a must-have for archaeologists and archaeology students working in Southeast Asia and

other parts of the world. It reminds us to remain open to a range of interpretative options and will prompt new and energetic debates in the region. A contextualized and theoretically sophisticated appraisal of socio-economic organization is a welcome addition to the literature, particularly for researchers of prehistoric Southeast Asia, including bioarchaeologists, palynologists, and geoarchaeologists, all of whom will benefit from this robust social background for their analyses and interpretations of data.

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