

BOOK REVIEWS

Connecting Empires and States: Selected Papers from the 13th International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists

Edited By Mai Lin Tjoa-Bonatz, Andreas Reinecke, and Dominik Bonatz
2012. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press. 392 pp.

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The widespread looting of artefacts in the Southeast Asian region and the lack of archaeological researches in the area is the basis for the biannual conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists on Southeast Asian Archaeology which “summarize(s) current fieldwork and studies on Southeast Asia” (p. xv). It is divided into four parts: 1. New Insights into the Archaeology and History of the Indonesian Archipelago; 2. Multi-directional flows of Buddhist Art in Southeast Asia; 3. Art and Architecture of the Khmers: Centre and Periphery; and 4. Traditions and Actions.

The 1st part of the book, **New Insights into the Archaeology and History of the Indonesian Archipelago**, talks about the people and culture of Indonesia and its link to neighbouring and other countries/polities.

The article *The Peopling of Nias, from the perspective of Oral Literature and Molecular Genetic Data* by Ingo Kennerknecht *et al.* discusses the possible origin of Indonesia’s current population. It makes use of the genetic data from individuals from select indigenous groups to compare it with those from other Austronesian countries. The results show relatively stronger genetic links with Taiwan and the Philippines, suggesting direct peopling of Indonesia by populations coming from the two aforementioned countries.

More than 3400 Years of Earthenware Traditions in Highland Jambi on Sumatra by Mai Lin Tjoa-Bonatz tackles the pottery tradition of highland Jambi since 1400 BC until the early 20th century. It presents findings from the Highland Jambi Research Project since 2003 until 2008, specifically the Bukit Arat site in Serampas. Analysis of the excavated pottery and current ethnographic work show that pottery wheel technology was never introduced in the site, rather the paddle and anvil technique was employed. The presence of potting tools and the nature of the source of clay in highland Jambi affirms that Indonesia has another pottery workshop site.

Agustijanto I. talks about the conditions of a pre-Srivijayan coastal community in his article: *The Pre-Srivijaya Period on the Eastern Coast of Sumatra: Preliminary Research at the Air Sugihan Site*. The paper seeks to answer whether the pre-Srivijayan site in Air Sugihan was part of the polity of Ko-ying, former entrepôt to India in the China-India maritime trade. Archaeological surveys and excavations produced evidence that prove the extensive settlement in the said site and engaged in trade activities with sites outside Indonesia. The artefacts found in Air Sugihan allows for a number of inferences such as it was linked to Oc Eo, probably through trade as evidenced by the similarity of artefacts in the same period, and that it imported commodities like gold ornaments and glass beads. The paper concludes that present Air Sugihan was a possible entrepôt in the China-India maritime trade known as Ko-ying as is written in 3rd century AD Chinese documents.

Budi Istiawan summarises the information gathered on recent archaeological remains from the 12th to 14th century collected from West Sumatra in the article: *New Finds of the Classical Period in West Sumatra*. Recent archaeological remains include architectural complexes in Pasaman and Kampar River, among others, sculptures from Dharmasraya and inscriptions from Tanah Datar.

An extensive description of *Benteng Puteri Hijau* (Fort of the Green Princess) site located in Northeast Sumatra is given by Erond L. Dam anik and E. Edwards McKinnon in *Traces of Early Chinese and Southeast Asian Trade at Benteng Puteri Hijau Namu Rambe, Northeast Sumatra*. The site is surrounded by man-made fortifications made of earth. The artefacts recovered from the site are indicative of links to external polities coming from China, Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, and later on Europe, and possibly the hinterlands of Sumatra.

The article *The Kota Rentang Excavations* by E. Edwards McKinnon *et al.* presents results and findings from ground penetrating radar, magnetometer surveys and archaeological excavations in the Kota Rentang site. These revealed three important points: 1. Kota Rentang is possibly associated to the polity of Aru of the 13th century mentioned in Chinese documents; 2. Excavated ceramics from the site are indicative of external connections with India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam among others; and 3. Kota Rentang is an early Islamic site as evidenced by the presence of a large number of simple slab-type grave markers.

The 2nd Part: **Multi-directional flows of Buddhist Art in Southeast Asia** focuses on the origins, meanings and transitions of some Buddhist iconographies in the region.

Serpents and Buddhas by Peter D. Sharrock argues that the predominant Buddhist icon, “Buddha seated on the coils of a giant multi-headed serpent with a raised cobra hood (p. 118)” of ancient Angkor was not a representation of the Mucalinda episode in Sakyamuni’s biography as is popularly accepted. He infers that the Buddha in the said icon refers to Khmer Vairocana, based on information obtained from epigraphs and past records he used in his iconographic and contextual analyses, and is therefore detached from Mucalinda.

Nicolas Revire traces the spread and possible origin of the Bhadrāsana Buddhas in Southeast Asia in the 7th – 8th centuries CE. It traces its origin to a Buddha icon from India and looks into Central and East Asian models as possible links to Southeast Asian images.

The relationship of the *Shwe-gu* and *khayaing* of Kyaukse is discussed in *Ta Mok Shwe-gu-gyi Temple: Local Art in Upper Myanmar 11th-17th Centuries AD* by Elizabeth Moore *et al.*. The different art works and iconographies in the recently uncovered two-story temple in the Ta Mok temple complex in Pan Laung, Myanmar are also tackled, as well as these artefacts’ changes and transitions through the Bagan, Pinya and Inwa periods.

Cladistic analysis’ reliability in studying the history of Thai Buddha images is tested in Ben Marwicks article: *A Cladistic Evaluation of Ancient Thai Bronze Buddha Images: Six Tests for a Phylogenetic Signal in the Griswold Collection*. It aims to demonstrate and provide a means for a quantitative comparison of variation in objects and a systematic illustration of said variation over time.

Woven Text, Woven Images: The Iconography of the Sazigyo by Ralph Isaacs describes woven motifs and pictorial images. It provides information on the relationship of the images and the woven text, and the images’ meaning and symbolisation, among other things.

In the next part, Part Three: **Art and Architecture of the Khmers: Centre and Periphery**, interpretations of iconographies in Khmer structures in and architectural history of the region is presented. Khmer inscriptions played a significant role in the analyses of most of these papers.

Eileen Lustig and Mitch Hendrickson support the claim that the building of the Khmer road system was not a sole effort of Jayavarman VII in the paper, *Angkor’s Roads: An Archaeo-Lexical Approach*. Data from 6th to 14th century Khmer inscriptions integrated with archaeological records are used in the analysis.

The concept of “water artefacts” is introduced by Terry Lustig in

Linking Downstream to Upstream in Landscape Archaeology – Two Southeast Asian Examples. Lustig describes water artefacts as “the marks of cultural changes to the movement of water” (p. 222). The use of hydraulic and hydrological analyses, along with other archaeological techniques, is pushed for in the paper. The aforementioned analyses can aid in better understanding human behaviour and provide a means for testing dates and associated circumstances related to movement of water. Sites from Cambodia and Yunnan are utilised to illustrate such an approach.

The results and interpretations of an extensive ground-penetrating survey of the western part of the Angkor Wat enclosure is presented in Chapter 17: *Discovery and Interpretation of a Buried Temple in the Angkor Wat Enclosure* by Till F. Sonneman. Sonneman concludes that underground surveys are essential in the understanding of the architectural history of the Angkor Wat.

Adalbert J. Gail argues that the face towers from the Bayon period are iconographies representing the great king, Jayavarman VII and his parents in *The Face Towers of the Bayon Period in Angkor*. He supports this through negating other interpretations based on inconsistencies with iconographic features in the face towers and known attributes in the suggested identities and presenting similarities between the details of the face towers and descriptions of the royal family based on inscriptions, portraits and statues of Jayavarman VII, his father, Dharanīndravarman II and his mother, Sri Jayarajacudamani around the Angkor Wat.

In *K.227 and the “Bharata Rahu” Relief: Two Narratives from Banteay Chamar*, Ian Lowman argues that the Old Khmer inscription and a bas-relief panel, popularly known to represent the same story, are distinct narratives from one another. Lowman provides new interpretation of the inscription grounded on more recent data. Having a different meaning for the inscription he then focuses on translating the said bas-relief panel free of the biases connecting the two documentations. He also tries to analyse it in relation to other surrounding bas-relief panels as part of a coherent narrative.

Chapter 20: *The Lintel of Vat Eng Khna, Cambodia: Image, Text and Precedent* by Kirsten Southworth talks about the connection between religious imageries from South and Southeast Asia. It criticises established beliefs on the spread of ideas and images between the two regions.

Susanne Runkel *et al.* present an overview of the different decorative paintings and polychromy examined in 19 selected Khmer brick temples in *Interior Polychromy and Wall Paintings in Khmer Brick*

Temples of the 9th and 10th Century in Cambodia. The wall colourings are either directly applied on brick walls or on a base coat whereas paintings with pigments of clay and cinnabar are done on backgrounds without a base coat. These interior decorations are slowly deteriorating due to humidity, salt contamination from bat excrement and micro/macro-biological colonisation. The article ends with a reminder for the study, documentation and preservation of these remains.

Joachim K. Bautze's *Émile Gsell (1838-79) and Early Photographs of Angkor* is about Émile Gsell and his photographs of the Angkor. Gsell's views of the Angkor are significant enough that it was either plagiarised or reproduced but without credit to the photographer. The history of Gsell's photographs is presented in the paper along with appeals for him to be remembered. The 4th and last part of the book, **Traditions and Actions**, looks at the relationships between and within groups of people across borders in a specific region.

Data on the findings from a shipwreck dated to the 1st century CE in Godavaya is presented in *The Taprobanian Revolution and the Paradigm Shift Away from the Ptolemaic Model of Asia – Archaeology and History of Ancient Seafaring in the Indian Ocean* by Oliver Kessler. It focuses on elements of trade such as a supposed "tax office", trade goods, and coins from land and underwater archaeology. It also discusses the role Sri Lanka played in international trade.

A Look at Settlement Patterns of 5th – 16th-Century Sites in Myanmar by Goh Gyeok Yian presents possible settlement hierarchies in Myanmar and their possible chronologies based from "their relative sizes, their locations, proximity to resources and each other, probable population sizes, and the shape of their walls" (p. 349).

Tai Potters across Borders: Tracking Ceramic Technology in Southern Yunnan and Northern Thailand by Leedom Lefferts and Louise Allison Cort demonstrates a new way of understanding relationships between groups of people in a region: ceramic production technology. Ethnographic data gathered from Southern Yunnan and Northern Thailand is used to discuss two types of ceramics, red and black earthenware for ritual. Similarities and disparities in the production of these ceramics are tackled which shows possible links and movement of said technology in the area.

Henry Dosedla gives a glimpse of the fired and unfired clay traditions of Papua New Guinea in Chapter 29: *Clay Flutes and the Question of Ceramic traditions in the Central Highlands of Papua New Guinea.* The article revolves around unfired clay vessel flutes and includes information on the musicology in the region which may aid in the study

of prehistoric migration movements in the Melanesian Archipelago.

The book, **Connecting Empires and States: Selected Papers from the 13th International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists, Volume 2** is an interesting and useful read for anyone studying the tangible and intangible heritage of Southeast Asia. Its articles are encompassing of a wide variety of topics as it draws from archaeological, anthropological, and art history, among other disciplines for information. The book contributes to the knowledge on Southeast Asia's and its surrounding regions' prehistoric and historical periods. It is not a coherent book, as a whole nor in part, as most of the articles is not the least related. The only thing which binds these papers together is Southeast Asia, the region being studied.

Connecting Empires and States is halfway in its goal to address the widespread looting in the region through the presentation of summaries of archaeological projects and interpretations. These summaries will hopefully open the eyes of fund-giving bodies and researchers to the rich cultural heritage of the region and entice individuals to conduct more archaeological work in the land. For researchers to simply get to the sites first is already a big deal in the fight against looting as we are able to keep the archaeological context and artefacts for analysis. However, looting is not the only problem archaeological sites encounter as in the case in *Benteng Puteri Hijau* in Northeast Sumatra. The site is threatened by the development projects of the National Housing Agency of Indonesia. When a site is under threat the best thing to do about it is to conduct archaeological excavations and surveys while engaging with institutions who can aid in the site's protection and preservation.

However, not all sites are fortunate enough to be preserved as populations are growing and development is inevitable, hence you do what you can and hope for the best. Proper documentation of archaeological sites is integral in the preservation of cultural heritage. This enables us to retain a part of cultures and allow researchers to conduct studies even when the tangible aspect of it is lost. Site reports are accompanied by scientific analyses and historical studies in the book. New approaches are introduced in Ben Marwick's cladistics analysis and Terry Lustig's water artefacts. It is useful to know that cladistics analysis can also be used to analyse artefacts like what Marwick did in his study of Thai Buddha images. Lustig's water artefacts offer a new means of understanding the relationship of people with their environment.

A significant part of the book if not most of it however, tackles the same sites, i.e. Angkor Wat. Also, majority of the book discusses studies on mainland Southeast Asia. The lack of diversity in the localities discussed is evident even in the titles of parts of the book which mentions Indonesia and the Khmer. I hope the conference would be successful in its goal and attract more researches and papers from island Southeast Asia and more sites from the mainland.

*Of Gold, Spanish Conquistadors,
And Ibaloi Generational Memory*

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2011. Baguio City: Cordillera Studies Center,
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With the general aim of seeking an ‘understanding of the early peopling of southern Benguet (and the role of the Ibaloi in the foundation of the earliest settlements in the area)’(p. 16), *Of Gold, Spanish Conquistadors, & Ibaloi Generational Memory* is a heroic work on ethnoarchaeology. A spin off from his master’s thesis in archaeology, Michael Canilao’s book serves as a valuable consolidation of knowledge on Benguet settlements and the Ibalois as a result of various research activities here and abroad.

Canilao’s insightful interactions with scholars and meaningful mentoring from specialists greatly contributed to the simple yet successful narrative of the book as it attempts to answer these important questions: (1) *What justifiable inferences regarding the early Ibaloi can be consolidated from prior ethnohistory as crosschecked with oral traditions?* and (2) *What can archaeology contribute towards a plausible and reliable reconstruction of Ibaloi ethnohistory?* (p. 16) Other equally important questions raised by Canilao include (1) *What are the locations and characteristics of possible archaeological sites;* (2) *Which methods, heuristics, and equipment are needed?;* and (3) *What material artefacts do we expect to find in relation to an archaeological reconstruction of early Ibaloi settlements?* (p. 16).

In the foreword, National University of Singapore Department of Southeast Asian Studies’ Dr. John Miksic emphasised that this book’s major virtue is ‘that it brings back to the attention of a wider public the importance of this topic’(p. 13). He further recognised the work’s use of a