

*Ban Wang Hai: Excavations of an Iron-Age Cemetery in Northern Thailand.* Jean-Pierre Pautreau, Patricia Mornais, and Tasana Doy-asa. Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 2003. ISBN 974-7551-99-3.

Reviewed by KATE DOMETT, *School of Biomedical Sciences, James Cook University, Townsville QLD 4811, Australia*

The excavation of Ban Wang Hai, Northern Thailand, began in 1996, as part of a Thai-French collaboration titled “The Thai-French Prehistoric Research Project” that had been initiated in 1985 to study the Paleolithic period through to the Iron Age in the upper northern regions of Thailand. The excavation of Ban Wang Hai in Lamphun Province described in this monograph represents the Iron Age period.

This monograph, previously published in French, provides details of the excavation as well as the analysis of the artifacts and the human remains that followed. Contributions from other specialists, such as metallurgists and jewelry analysts, are inserted as appropriate. There are many good-quality color photographs and drawings that significantly enhance the text, although figures are not always in numerical order. A significant addition, which accounts for half of the monograph, is the translation to Thai. Not only is this appropriate, considering that the work defines Thai prehistory, it also makes this work more accessible to Thai archaeologists.

Details of the history of excavation at the site of Ban Wang Hai and descriptions of the Thai-French team excavations are provided after a brief introduction. Archaeological details of stratigraphy are described along with a brief mention of the palynological analysis undertaken and an even briefer comment on the only archaeometrical date from the site—that of a burnt bone sample with calibrated dates of 429–657 C.E.

The human skeletal remains are discussed in some detail regarding the way in which they were buried and the taphonomic processes that have occurred since, so-called “field anthropology.” This, along with other evidence, has led the authors to sug-

gest that some people were interred in coffins. A valuable addition to the discussion of the people would be that of demographics, pathology, and morphology. Only brief comments are provided but acknowledgment is made that this analysis was severely limited by a requirement by the Thai Fine Arts Department that the human remains not be removed from the ground. This is unfortunate as biological anthropology studies can make a significant contribution to the description of prehistoric life as has been shown for such sites as Ban Chiang (M. Pietrusewsky and M. T. Douglas, *Ban Chiang, a Prehistoric Village Site in Northeast Thailand. I: The Human Skeletal Remains* [Philadelphia: Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, 2002]) and Khok Phanom Di (N. Tayles, *The Excavation of Khok Phanom Di, a Prehistoric Site in Central Thailand. Vol. 5: The People*, Research Report 61 [London: Society of Antiquaries of London, 1999]). Some descriptions are presented for dental health and some notes of a few skeletal pathologies are provided, but this type of information limits its comparability with other skeletal collections.

Considerable detail is provided regarding the funerary deposits, all of which were able to be fully excavated. Burial jars from this site are discussed with good photographs provided. The contents of the large burial jars has not been confirmed but burnt bone is a possibility. Burial jars from other sites typically contain human skeletal material either from primary or secondary burial. While burial jars are not uncommon in Southeast Asia, the authors suggest the Ban Wang Hai jars do not have any exact parallels. They also suggest that “In Thai cemeteries, the use of burial jars does not seem to have appeared before the second

quarter of the first millennium" (p. 33), however, previously they discussed the infant burial jars from the "ancient period" of Ban Chiang and fail to mention the extensive use of infant jar burials at the Bronze Age site of Ban Lum Khao (C. F. W. Higham, *Early Cultures of Mainland Southeast Asia* [Bangkok: River Books, 2002]).

Grave furniture is first described in an interesting overview chapter of the funerary deposits and their significance and then descriptions are detailed in a later chapter. Suggestions are made regarding the status of individuals and the presence and type of jewelry with the human remains. Necklaces of glass, stone, and shell beads are predominantly found in infant and child burials; bronze with adults. Much detail is provided in particular for the analysis of the stone beads, predominantly carnelian and agate, including measurements, analysis of composition, and suggestions of possible origin and site of manufacture. It is suggested that the beads were manufactured within Southeast Asia, rather than India.

Iron artifacts were an important inclusion in many graves. Iron knives and agricultural tools are described, and some attempts to infer their function based on their similarity to modern artifacts are a useful addition. Three of the most distinct burials are detailed, including one adult with a disabling ankylosis of the spine,

which the authors rightly suggest questions the significance of the addition of agricultural tools with the body. Another young adult male was buried with an iron sword, purported to be a unique feature, not seen in other protohistorical Thai burials.

The ceramic vessel morphology and decoration are described and many drawings provided. A brief comparison with other Thai ceramic forms is provided but limited by the small sample. Photographs of modern pottery manufacturing in a nearby village suggest a similarity in method and style to the prehistoric pottery of Ban Wang Hai.

Some brief final comments are made before a very detailed catalogue for each burial is provided, including descriptions of the human bones and associated grave goods, photographs, and drawings. This book is predominantly descriptive in nature, providing more of a technical report of the details of this Iron Age cemetery with limited room for discussion and interpretation. The addition of ethnographic evidence (for example, pottery manufacturing and the use of iron tools and spindle whorls) assist in bringing these prehistoric artifacts to life. Overall, this book provides a valuable addition to the study of Thai prehistory and it is commendable that it has been published in multiple languages, making it more widely accessible.

*Water Architecture in South Asia: A Study of Types, Development and Meanings.* Julia A. B. Hegewald. Leiden: Brill, 2000. 266 + xiii pp., 290 plates, 45 figures.

Reviewed by JANICE STARGARDT, *Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge*

This large book is descriptive in approach and the subject is organized on a typological rather than geographical basis. Its five core chapters cover *ghats*, tanks, *kundas*, wells, and water in palaces and gardens. There are also two introductory chapters and a conclusion. The book does not claim

an exhaustive coverage of these types but attempts to present interesting examples of each. The author starts her survey from the premise that all architecture makes statements, and goes on to argue that the water architecture she presents functioned or functions to separate domains: to sepa-