

SPECIAL ISSUE: COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH IN EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

75TH ANNIVERSARY MEETING SUBMISSIONS DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 10, 2009

the  
**SAA**archaeological record

MAY 2009 • VOLUME 9 • NUMBER 3



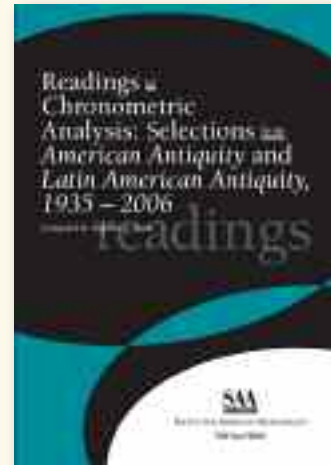
SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

## READERS FROM THE SAA PRESS



*NEW! Archaeological Lithic Analysis: Readings from American Antiquity and Latin American Antiquity.* Compiled by George H. Odell. 432 pp. 2009. ISBN 0-932839-37-1. Regular Price: \$39.95; SAA Member Discount Price: \$31.95.

*NEW! Readings in Chronometric Analysis: Selections from American Antiquity and Latin American Antiquity, 1935-2006.* Compiled by Stephen E. Nash. 480 pp. 2009. ISBN 0-932839-36-3. Regular Price: \$39.95; SAA Member Discount Price: \$31.95.



### Also Available

*An Archaeological Perspective on Ritual, Religion, and Ideology from American Antiquity and Latin American Antiquity,* Compiled by Gordon F. M. Rakita and Jane Buikstra. 272 pp. 2008. ISBN 0-932839-35-5. Regular Price: \$37.95, SAA Member Discount Price: \$29.95.

*Readings in Late Pleistocene North America and Early Paleoindians: Selections from America Antiquity.* Compiled by Bruce B. Huckell and J. David Kilby. 312 pp. 2004. ISBN 0-932839-26-6. Regular Price: \$27.95, SAA Member Discount Price: \$21.95.

*Ceramics in Archaeology: Readings from American Antiquity, 1936-2002.* Compiled by Hector Neff. 384 pp. 2005. ISBN 0-932839-29-0. Regular Price: \$37.95, SAA Member Discount Price: \$29.95.

*Readings in American Archaeological Theory: Selections from American Antiquity 1962-2002.* Compiled by Garth Bawden. 292 pages. 2003. ISBN 0-932839-25-8. Regular Price: \$24.95, SAA Member Discount Price: 19.95.

*Formation Theory in Archaeology.* Readings from *American Antiquity* and *Latin American Antiquity* compiled by Michael Shott. 352 pp. 2006. ISBN 0-932839-30-4. Regular Price: \$37.95, SAA Member Discount Price: \$29.95.

TO ORDER, PLEASE CALL SAA AT 202-789-8200 OR ORDER ONLINE AT WWW.SAA.ORG

# the SAA Archaeological record

The Magazine of the Society for American Archaeology

VOLUME 9, No. 3

MAY 2009

Editor's Corner	2	Andrew Duff
Letters to the Editor	3	
<b>SPECIAL ISSUE: COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH IN EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA</b>		
<i>Edited by Christian Peterson and Ben Marwick</i>		
International Collaborative Research in East Asian Paleoanthropology: Personal Perspectives	5	Christopher J. Norton
How Long can "Long-Term" Collaboration be in China? A Personal Experience in Palaeolithic Research	8	Chen Shen
From Prasats to Phnoms: International Collaborative Research in Cambodia	11	Alison Carter
Life and Death in Old Indochine: Discovery, Camaraderie and Prehistory in Viet Nam	15	Damien Huffer
Working with Japanese Colleagues: Excavation of a Jomon Pit-Dwelling and Storage Pits at Goshizawa Matsumori	18	Junko Habu
Taking Small Steps: Conducting Graduate-Level Collaborative Research in Mongolia	22	Jean-Luc Houle and Diimaajav Erdenebaatar
The Middle Mekong Archaeology Project and International Collaboration in Luang Prabang, Laos	25	Ben Marwick, Joyce C. White, and Bounheuang Bouasisengpaseuth
Harvests for the Hunters: The Origins of Food Production in Arid Northern China	28	Loukas Barton, Christopher Morgan, and Robert L. Bettinger
Lower Xiajiadian Period Demography and Sociopolitical Organization—Some Results of Collaborative Regional Settlement Patterns Research in NE China	32	Christian E. Peterson, Katheryn M. Linduff, Ta La, Robert D. Drennan, Zhu Yanping, Gideon Shelach, Guo Zhizhong, Teng Mingyu, and Zhang Yaqiang
Reconstructing Behavior in Ancient China from Human Skeletal Remains	36	Ekaterina Pechenkina, Ma Xiaolin, Jacqueline Eng, Rachel Shoichet, Wei Dong, Zhang Quanchao, Li Xinwei, Fan Wenquan, and Zhu Hong
The Archaeology of Ban Non Wat, Northeast Thailand: A View of the Collaborative Process	40	Nigel Chang
Where are they Now?	43	Karen Vitelli
In Memoriam: Nathalie F. S. Woodbury	44	Hester A. Davis
In Memoriam: William Timothy Sanders	45	David Webster and Susan Toby Evans
Report from the SAA Board of Directors	46	
SAA Annual Business Meeting	48	
2009 Award Recipients	53	
<b>NEWS AND NOTES</b>	58	
<b>POSITIONS OPEN</b>	59	
<b>CALENDAR</b>	60	



The site of Prasat Thma Dap, Angkor Period. Located on Phnom Kulen mountain, Siem Reap province, Cambodia (Photo Alison Carter).



The *SAA Archaeological Record* (ISSN 1532-7299) is published five times a year and is edited by Andrew Duff.

Deadlines for submissions are: December 1 (January), February 1 (March), April 1 (May), August 1 (September), and October 1 (November); send to Andrew Duff, *The SAA Archaeological Record*, Andrew Duff, Department of Anthropology, Washington State University, Pullman, WA 99164-4910, (509) 335-7828, or email [duff@wsu.edu](mailto:duff@wsu.edu). Manuscript submission via email or by disk is encouraged. Advertising and placement ads should be sent to SAA headquarters, 900 Second St., NE #12, Washington, DC 20002, (202) 789-8200.

Associate editors include:

**Gabriela Uruñuela** [Exchanges, Mexico & Central America]

email: [gabriela@mail.udlap.mx](mailto:gabriela@mail.udlap.mx)

**Jose Luis Lanata** [Exchanges, Southern Cone]

email: [jllanata@filo.uba.ar](mailto:jllanata@filo.uba.ar)

**Anne Vawser** [Government]

email: [Anne\\_Vawser@nps.gov](mailto:Anne_Vawser@nps.gov)

**Susan Chandler** [Insights]

email: [susan\\_chandler@alpinearchaeology.com](mailto:susan_chandler@alpinearchaeology.com)

**Mark Aldenderfer** [Interface]

email: [aldenderfer@anth.ucsb.edu](mailto:aldenderfer@anth.ucsb.edu)

**John Hoopes** [Networks]

email: [hoopes@ku.edu](mailto:hoopes@ku.edu)

**Teresa Pinter** [Public Education]

email: [tpinter@acstempe.com](mailto:tpinter@acstempe.com)

**Jamie Brandon** [The Recent Past]

email: [jbrando@uark.edu](mailto:jbrando@uark.edu)

**Kurt Dongoske** [Working Together]

email: [kdongoske@cableone.net](mailto:kdongoske@cableone.net)

Inquiries and submissions should be addressed directly to them. *The SAA Archaeological Record* is provided free to members and institutional subscribers to *American Antiquity* and *Latin American Antiquity* worldwide. *The SAA Archaeological Record* can be found on the Web in PDF format at

[www.saa.org](http://www.saa.org)

Past issues of the *SAA Bulletin* can be found at

[www.saa.org](http://www.saa.org)

Copyright © 2009 by the  
Society for American Archaeology.  
All Rights Reserved

Manager, Publications:  
John Neikirk

Design: Victoria Russell  
Papertiger Studio • Washington, DC

Production: Peter Lindeman  
Oakland Street Publishing • Arlington, VA



## EDITOR'S CORNER

Andrew Duff

*Andrew Duff is an Associate Professor of anthropology at Washington State University.*

This thematic issue, "Collaborative Research in East and Southeast Asia," includes a group of papers that were solicited and also edited by Christian Peterson and Ben Marwick. The numerous authors of this group of papers reveal the richness and diversity of archaeological research being conducted in East and Southeast Asia, with examples spanning all periods. This issue addresses and builds on a theme developed in a few earlier issues of *The SAA Archaeological Record* related to cooperative international research. The papers highlight the collaborative nature of current research in several different countries, providing personal examples and describing exciting research. Importantly, many of the authors are in the process of competing doctoral projects, suggesting that they have and are continuing to form the long-term collaborations that a few of the more senior authors' papers demonstrate are central to continued success and future opportunities. I would like to again extend my thanks to Christian and Ben for responding to my request to organize this issue, for soliciting a spatially and temporally diverse series of examples, and for their legwork gathering, editing, and getting these submitted.

By the time you receive this issue (a bit late due to the timing of the SAA meeting in Atlanta), those of you working in academic settings will likely be thinking of fieldwork, writing projects, or vacations. For many others, summer becomes the busy season coordinating and executing research that has long been planned. While you are involved in research or writing projects, I would ask that you consider writing an article on your research for publication in *The SAA Archaeological Record*. Papers are ideally briefer than journal articles—1500–2500 words with a few figures, illustrations, and references cited. If you (or your company, agency, or institution) are involved in interesting research this summer, *The SAA Archaeological Record* is an ideal outlet for communicating some of your project's central findings to a broad audience. Write one for *The SAA Archaeological Record* first, and then write the longer, more detailed treatment for submission to one of our premier archaeological journals.

If you have ideas for an article, a small group of papers on a common topic or theme, or thoughts about a special issue, please contact me ([duff@wsu.edu](mailto:duff@wsu.edu)) or one of the Associate Editors, and we would be happy to discuss or plan it with you. If you have an idea for an article, just write it and send it in ([duff@wsu.edu](mailto:duff@wsu.edu)), though I am also happy to talk with you about it. We can only publish material that makes its way to the editors, so consider this your invitation to contribute.

# THE MIDDLE MEKONG ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION IN LUANG PRABANG, LAOS

**Ben Marwick, Joyce C. White, and Bounheuang Bouasisengpaseuth**

*Ben Marwick is with the Department of Anthropology at the University of Washington. Joyce C. White is with the University of Pennsylvania Museum.*

*Bounheuang Bouasisengpaseuth is with the National Museum, Vientiane, Lao PDR.*

In this contribution we describe the nature and impact of our collaborative work as members of the Middle Mekong Archaeology Project (MMAP). We also summarize some of the substantive results of the project and reflect on progress and improvements we hope to make in the future. The MMAP is collaborative research program of Lao, Western, and Thai scholars, students, and heritage management officials codirected by Joyce White and Bounheuang Bouasisengpaseuth. The project has two aims. The first is to investigate the prehistory of the middle reaches of the Mekong Basin, with particular attention to the Middle Holocene (6000–2000 B.C.) during which agricultural societies and later metallurgy came into the region (White and Bouasisengpaseuth 2008). The second aim is to provide archaeological training for Lao, Thai, and Westerners working on mainland Southeast Asian archaeology.

## **Collaborative Archaeology in Laos**

Much of the literature on archaeology and collaboration focuses on fourth-world populations such as indigenous Americans and Australians or with countries that have a relatively long tradition of academic archaeology such as China, India and South Africa. In Laos we find ourselves in a third category, where there is no tertiary-level training in archaeology (though a program will start this year) and a heritage management profession emerging in response to the Lao government's interest in developing tourism. Although most officials involved in Lao museums and archaeology are appointed by the Communist Party, we have observed that the appointments involve people skilled in related disciplines such as history, sculpture, fine arts, and architecture. These skills are present partly out of necessity to manage the most prominent items of Lao cultural heritage—the temples and statuary—and partly as a legacy of French colonial activity that promoted a focus on the art-historical component of Laos' past. Our Lao colleagues also bring to the collaborations legal knowledge, social and governmental networks, and interpersonal skills necessary for effectively conducting

complex projects in one of Asia's poorest and most isolated nations.

One of our collaboration strategies has been to work with these skills to establish basic standards of archaeological research. This would be relatively straightforward if MMAP was concerned with monumental ruins and Buddhist relics since these skills are obviously useful to document those remains, and this kind of work is common in the course of the official work of our Lao colleagues. But MMAP is concerned with Middle Holocene deposits and our archaeological training started with adapting artistic skills for use on stones, potsherds, and dirt. In 2006 we developed a technical vocabulary in Lao, Thai (which is closely related) and English for flaked stone artifacts, photography, and database work. We pioneered new words in Lao and Thai for attributes such as “bulb of percussion” and “feather termination.” Then we engaged with the skills of our Lao colleagues by studying techniques of artifact illustration and photography. The items used for these training exercises were stone artifacts and ceramic pieces collected during our 2005 survey of the three tributaries of the Mekong. This survey was conducted over four weeks with funding from the National Geographic Society, the National Science Foundation, and the Penn Museum. The survey crew consisted of a small team including representatives from the Vientiane Department of Museums and Archaeology, Ministry of Information and Culture; representatives from the Luang Prabang Department of Information and Culture; a Thai archaeologist from the Sirindhorn Anthropology Center; and students and scholars from the University of Pennsylvania, The Australia National University, and University of Leeds.

The illustration and photography exercise was successful at working with existing skills and interests to explain basic details about important artifact attributes. As an act of interpretation, the drawing of artifacts allows the illustrator to attract the viewer's attention to specific details. In the course of explaining what we considered to be important details for



Figure 1. Members of MMAP cleaning, sorting and analyzing archaeological material. Ben Marwick is at the far left and Bounheuang Bouasengpaseuth is second from the left.

artifact illustration, we were also identifying the basic attributes that we later used for data collection and analysis. Our 2005 survey recovered material from 58 sites spanning the last 10,000 years, so the task of drawing and photographing the collected samples was useful for demonstrating the wide variety of material and speculating on how to interpret this variety. In addition, by using these stone and ceramic artifacts as part of the training, we were able to communicate their values as a scientific resource, despite them having few of the traditional aesthetic qualities that define the popular objects of mainland Southeast Asian culture history (Figure 1).

In addition to extending and repurposing existing skills for archaeological purposes, we have introduced entirely new technologies to the project. Our surveys are aided by the use of a mobile geographic information system. These systems, which usually consist of a small rugged portable computer such as a PDA running GIS software such as ESRI ArcPad and connected to a GPS are common in archaeological survey. Although we enjoyed technical advantages including the elimination of paperwork, reduction of data-entry errors and rapid data analysis and map-making, we also found that the learning how to use the mobile GIS—the first time for all of the project participants except one—was a significant bonding experience (Given and Hyla 2006). Most of our Lao colleagues have limited access to and familiarity with computers of any kind. For them, learning how to use the mobile GIS was an unusual challenge and made a strong impression of how technology can assist the organization and analysis of data.

Although the survey was aided by this mobile GIS technology we faced three challenges that made a statistically informed sampling method impractical. First is that Laos still contains unexploded ordnance from the more than two

million tons of bombs dropped by the United States over 1964–1973 and other parties in earlier conflicts. A second reason is that the landscape in Northern Laos is extremely rugged, making systematic walking difficult and hazardous. Third, there is great local sensitivity about corporate ownership of lands by individual villages, and visiting remote locations usually involves attaining a sequence of permissions from the national down to the village level. To address these challenges we conducted an “ask the villager” survey. We visited villages, showed them examples of what we were looking for, and asked them to show us anything similar that they knew about. The mobile GIS equipment also became a focal point that engaged the interest and curiosity of villagers in our activities. It provided opportunities for our Lao colleagues to explain to the villagers what we were doing, what our motives were, and how our work is relevant to the villagers. Members of the project remain divided about whether the mobile GIS provided substantial gains in efficiency, given the relatively small number of sites recorded, but we all agree that it was most valuable for facilitating technology training and building relationships of trust between Western and Lao team members and between the team and the villagers that we met with.

### Substantive Results of Recent Research

With funding from the Luce Foundation, another training season was conducted over six weeks in early 2009 and further survey conducted at that time increased the total number of sites in the MMAP database to 69. These sites contained archaeological material from Hoabinhian periods (Early Holocene–Late Pleistocene) through to historical times. There are two interesting results suggested by the survey data. The first is that a wide range of prehistoric ceramic technologies and styles were documented. This includes incised and infilled designs similar to those found in the lowest levels of Ban Chiang and other early Bronze Age sites in the Sakhon Nakon Basin in Thailand. This indicates that people were active on the landscape in this part of Laos during the major transitions, such as the shift from foraging to farming and the introduction of bronze metallurgy, and these transitions may have occurred as part of changes in the wider region. The second result is a pattern in the distribution of flaked and stone tools. In our sample, sites dominated by flaked stone artifacts tend to be further from rivers and in areas where topographic wetness is lower. Topographic wetness is an index calculated from the upslope area and local slope of a site’s location and gives a summary measure of the likely soil moisture content and a proxy for vegetation species richness. Sites dominated by polished stone artifacts, such as adzes, tend to be closer to rivers and in locations with higher topographic wetness. Although our sample of sites is small, these associations are suggestive of a transition from upland foraging to lowland horticulture during the Middle or Late Holocene.



Figure 2. Excavation at PPKR in 2007. Joyce White is at the front center and Bounheuang Bouasisengpaseuth stands in front of her on the other side of the excavation.

We have excavated test pits at two locations identified during the 2005 survey, Phou Phaa Khao Rockshelter (PPKR) in 2007, and at Tham Vang Ta Leow (TVTL) Rockshelter in 2008. Four radiocarbon dates have been obtained from these sites (White et al. 2009). The dates confirm the survey findings that northern Laos was occupied from the terminal Pleistocene on, with clear evidence for occupation by users of Hoabinhian lithic technology. The dates from TVTL are comparable to previously excavated sites in Laos (Sayavongkhamdy et al. 2000) and compare well with Hoabinhian material from similar latitudes in north Thailand and Vietnam. The Iron Age burials at PPKR are interesting in relation to Iron Age occupation on the Plain of Jars plateau, located further up the same tributary at PPKR. These initial results suggest that further work in the Lao PDR will contribute to substantive topics in Southeast Asian archaeology such as the region's development of early agriculture or hunter-gather impact on subtropical landscapes.

### The Future of MMAP

Our initial strategy of combining collaborative research with training in a gradual way has proven successful in developing and maintaining productive relationships among Lao, Thai, and Western team members. The challenge we now face is to continue research while increasing the number of activities that all members of the team are equally capable of. This includes both involving Westerners in heritage policy development (requiring Lao language skills) and involving Laos in more complex archaeological analyses. Helping Lao team members receive formal archaeological education, not just training, is also part of our long-term strategy.

Practical and technical training produces relatively rapid and tangible rewards for the Lao team members and their superiors, but is only part of our collaborative objective. The second part is engaging our Lao colleagues in the conventions and culture of international academia by creating substantial opportunities to contribute to publications and participate in conferences. Great effort is made to support Lao participation in recent Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association congresses, including seeking financial assistance and help drafting presentations. This is unfamiliar territory even for university-educated Laos since many of them have degrees from China, Russia, and other communist and formerly communist countries. The importance of English as the main language of international academia adds to the challenge of this process of cultivating intellectual engagement.

To conclude, while the MMAP is still taking its first steps toward making major scientific contributions, we consider that we have made substantial progress in two areas. First, our training activities have been successful in establishing mutually agreeable protocols for conducting archaeology in Laos, a country with very little previous modern archaeology. Second, our collaborative activities have made substantial progress in cultivating productive relationships between the Lao and Western team members. Our hope is to continue to work on the collaborative foundations that we have established, improve archaeological training within Laos, and continue to ask new questions of the archaeology of Laos and search for new ways to answer them.

### References Cited

- Given, O., and S. Hyla  
2006 Forging Partnerships in Laos. *Expedition* 48(1):38–39.
- Sayavongkhamdy, T., P. Bellwood, and D. Bulbeck  
2000 Recent Archaeological Research in Laos. *Bulletin of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association* 19:101–110
- White, J. C., and B. Bouasisengpaseuth  
2008 Archaeology of the Middle Mekong: Introduction to the Luang Prabang Exploratory Survey. *Research Nouvelles sur le Laos*, edited by Y. Goudineay and M. Lorrillard, pp. 37–52. l'École Française d'Extrême Orient, Paris.
- White, J. C., H. Lewis, B. Bouasisengpaseuth, B. Marwick, and K. Arrell  
2009 Archaeological Investigations in Northern Laos, and their Implications for Southeast Asian Prehistory. Electronic document, *Antiquity* <http://antiquity.ac.uk/projgall/319.html>.