

## BOOK REVIEWS



*Singapore and the Silk Road of the Sea, 1300–1800.* John N. Miksic. Singapore: National Museum of Singapore and NUS Press, 2013. 491 pp. Paper, US\$58.00. ISBN: 978-9971-69-558-3.

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In this comprehensive volume, John Miksic paints a detailed history of Singapore using archaeological and documentary evidence. Over eleven chapters, Miksic describes the historical trajectory of the city, from the first archaeological traces of human settlement on the island, to its fourteenth-century origins as Temasik, to the founding of colonial Singapore in 1819. Throughout this urban history, Miksic explores the wider contexts of Temasik and Singapore, including the relations of the island to other kingdoms and urban centers in Southeast Asia and beyond; the way Singaporeans have always used history to frame their actions and projects; and the central role identity continues to play in Singaporean politics and the shaping of its urban spaces.

Many general readers will be surprised to learn that Singapore has a history that predates the nineteenth-century colonial center established by Sir Thomas Raffles. Miksic provides a thorough and sensitive reading of the documents that describe the founding of Temasik, particularly the various surviving versions of the *Malay Annals*, first compiled around 1436 and copied and edited many times since then. These documents are compared with others, such as Wang Dayuan's fourteenth-century chronicles and the writings of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century

Portuguese chroniclers Tomé Pires and Godinho de Erédia, among others. Miksic deftly decodes these multiple sources, composed within vastly different literary traditions and for very different audiences. Miksic provides new English translations of some of the original texts, such as Wang's entry on Dan-ma-xi (Temasik) in his *Daoyi Zhilue* [A Brief Account of Island Barbarians].

Insights from these early documents are cast against the archaeological record. Here, Miksic provides access to a wide range of archaeological information about Singapore, much of which has not been widely published before, and none of which has been organized so comprehensively. Raffles has been widely acknowledged for his interest in archaeological remains and many scholars attribute the modern origins of archaeological perspectives on the Malay world to him. Raffles consciously chose to locate Singapore at the reputed site of ancient Temasik. Soon after digging for construction projects began in 1819, the physical remains of Temasik were unearthed. These remains were recorded and analyzed by colonial settlers. Miksic integrates these early finds and interpretations with more recent archaeological excavations, a surprising amount of which has accumulated since the mid-1980s. Projects such as the extensive multiyear excavations at Fort

Canning and work at Parliament House, Empress Place, and Saint Andrew's Cathedral are described in detail, with clear figures and summaries of relevant results.

Singapore has always been a trading center. Its strategic position on the Straits of Malacca (a major section of the "Silk Road of the Sea"), combined with the advantages of flat land near a river port, have made this piece of territory desirable for traders and rulers since at least the fourteenth century. As a result, Singapore today has considerable ethnic diversity. Four languages (English, Mandarin, Tamil, Malay) are officially recognized by the government and many other languages and creoles are widely spoken in Singapore. Documents and archaeology show that Singapore has always been a multi-ethnic place, visited and inhabited by traders and sojourners from all over the world. These people have used identity strategically, of course, constructing histories that select certain links over others and expressing these situated identities with a wide variety of material objects.

Miksic dedicates a major portion of this book to exploring the many trade goods that have passed through the city, as a way of understanding relationships and networks linking the city's inhabitants to other peoples and places. In some cases, these artifacts suggest networks that are not well recorded in the documents that have survived. One example is Singapore's relationship to Java, probably oversimplified in the documents as largely antagonistic. Findings of Javanese earthenware in Singapore suggest a more complex relationship. These artifacts indicate the existence of a Javanese diasporic community on the banks of the Singapore River. A lead figurine, possibly representing the sun god Surya or mythical figure Panji, both of which are frequently represented on thirteenth-fourteenth-century east Javanese temples, may have been made in Singapore. This suggests a closer and more entangled relationship between the two places than has been hitherto documented.

Ultimately, this volume is far more than a simple history of the city of Singapore.

Miksic's deep understanding of both Island and Mainland Southeast Asian history and archaeology has allowed him to provide an unusually expansive context for Singapore. For example, he provides a very useful summary of all the major shipwreck research in the region. The book also includes perhaps the most comprehensive archaeological overview currently published in English of major trading centers that interacted with Singapore, including Riau, Sumatra, Java, and Bali in Island Southeast Asia and the Malay Peninsula, Thailand, Cambodia, and Viet Nam on the mainland.

While the book as a whole is a fantastically detailed exploration of urbanism and commerce in Southeast Asia, it is also useful in its individual parts. Chapters and sections are well suited for graduate and undergraduate student course readings. Miksic's clear and accessible writing style will appeal to the nonspecialist general reader. I can imagine taking a series of walking tours of Singapore guided by the book's maps and photographs of historic sites in their contemporary contexts. Specialists will find it to be a useful reference volume, since it is clearly organized and densely cited. The book has over three hundred figures, including photographs of archaeological sites and artifacts, maps, and other historic documents.

I suspect that most archaeologists of Southeast Asia will learn something new from this book. It is my hope that historians also take notice. For far too long, archaeologists and historians of Southeast Asia (as well as other places) have stayed in their disciplinary ghettos, to their mutual disadvantage. Historians have been particularly unwilling or unable to integrate archaeological data into their work. This is not surprising, given the difficulties of interpreting archaeological information and relating it to the very different temporal framing of written documents. In *Singapore and the Silk Road of the Sea, 1300–1800*, Miksic seamlessly integrates these sources of information. I hope it serves as a new model for writing about Southeast Asia's past.

*Settlement Patterns in the Chifeng Region*. Chifeng International Collaborative Archaeological Research Project. Center for Comparative Archaeology, University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 2011. 153 pp, 154 figures, 12 tables. Paper, US\$ 29.00. ISBN 978-1-877812-91-0.

*Reviewed by* JACK N. FENNER, *College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University*

My interest in this volume was stimulated by an earlier publication by the Chifeng International Collaborative Archaeological Research Project (2003) derived from a small-scale pilot project in the Chifeng area, about 300 km northeast of Beijing in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China. That volume described an ambitious follow-on project to assess population level changes over several thousand years across a large area employing survey and analysis methods that are rarely used in Asia, so I was interested to see how it turned out. The results as described in the reviewed volume indicate that it was quite successful, assuming you accept the underlying premise of the work.

Population level changes are commonly hypothesized as key drivers or outcomes of important archaeological models involving subsistence strategies, social hierarchy, environmental impact, and many other aspects of past lifeways. But determining population levels is something archaeology does poorly. In areas and time periods with substantial preserved housing remains, ethnographically based floor-space correlations with household size can provide insight, but they are usually very geographically restricted (due to the need to excavate house remains) and also suffer from uncertainty about the contemporaneity and function of identified structures. Site abundance and size measures do not account for differing intensities of occupation within sites, while surface artifact density variation may be more related to microscale differences in the processes that bring artifacts to the surface than to original occupation intensity. The Chifeng Project cleverly combines these approaches by obtaining artifact abundance data within a collection unit (nominally one hectare in size) and then producing a (very rough) population estimate for each collection unit by aligning collection

unit artifact densities with the range of occupation densities of excavated sites from various time periods in the wider region as determined by house floor-space estimates. Their artifact abundance data was based on the number of ceramic sherds collected in a series of 3 m diameter circular areas randomly placed within a collection unit whenever more than two sherds are found within 100 m of each other during surface survey. Once population estimates are established for each collection unit, various rank-size and neighbor-distance calculations can be performed to combine collection units into settlement units (i.e., communities), each with estimated population sizes and known locations. These settlement units are then available for investigation of issues such as the development of centralization and hierarchy, and the population intensity in specific geographic situations. As each sherd was assigned to a specific time period, each analysis can be carried out for each time period and changes can be tracked through time.

Much of *Settlement Patterns* is dedicated to explaining and justifying this approach. The volume is organized into fourteen sections plus two appendices and includes references to an extensive online, freely accessible collection of illustrations, data sets, and maps. Authorship is attributed for the first thirteen sections, which introduce the project and describe its methods, but, unusually, the authorship of the key fourteenth chapter describing the results is not ascribed. Like the volume itself, that chapter is simply attributed to the project as a whole. In that spirit and to conserve space, I will not attribute authorship within the volume during this review.

Following a brief introductory chapter, the ceramic typology for the Chifeng region is described. Using pottery form, decoration

styles, and production method indicators, the ceramics are divided into eight types, all of which were previously established in the literature: Xinglongwa, Zhaobaogou, Hongshan, Xiaoheyuan, Lower Xiajiadian, Upper Xiajiadian, Zhangou-Han, and Liao. Post-Liao ceramics were not included in the analyses. A subsequent section presents radiocarbon data from Chifeng Project excavations and elsewhere in the region for each type, and assigns precise time periods to each ceramic type. The treatment of chronology is unfortunately the most disappointing aspect of the report. The radiocarbon dates are only shown graphically, using one-sigma calibrated ranges without probability distributions or any attempt at Bayesian analysis. In fact, the radiocarbon dates are largely superfluous, since the ceramic type start and stop dates seem to be taken from the existing literature even when they do not fit the radiocarbon pattern very well (as in the Xinglongwa type or the boundary between Lower Xiajiadian and Xiaoheyuan). While in general they are careful in the volume to discuss populations in terms of ceramic typology periods rather than cultures or historic ethnic groups, it is clear that the ceramic type start and stop dates are neither well understood in all cases nor instantaneous, and that Chinese dynastic historical information played a role in the assignment of some time periods to ceramic types. As the duration of each period must be accounted for when estimating population size based on ceramic types, some discussion about how their results would change if other ceramic typology date assignments were applied is warranted.

While surface survey was the heart of the project, they also performed a series of excavations in two localities. These unfortunately yielded only Lower and Upper Xiajiadian deposits (with an occasional sherd from another period mixed in). Mixing of Lower and Upper Xiajiadian in the upper layers means that even that transition was not clear. The excavations were nevertheless of use in interpreting the Xiajiadian period. Four brief sections discuss the excavation methods and resulting lithics, fauna, bone artifacts, and plant remains. Of most interest is that the identified plant remains were dominated by

domesticated species, mostly foxtail millet, but with significant amounts of broomcorn millet, particularly in unmixed Lower Xiajiadian contexts.

Following brief sections on the current and trans-Holocene environment in the area, the geomorphology (landforms) of the area is reviewed. The authors' main interest here is to argue that there could be few premodern settlements in the river valleys. That would be surprising since most modern villages are in the river valleys, but they convincingly argue that frequent floods, river course changes, and swampy areas would have made substantial occupation of river valleys impractical prior to the advent of concrete foundations. This is supported by a general lack of archaeological remains from modern construction sites within the river valleys. On this basis, the project survey area did not include the river valleys.

For many readers the most interesting segment of *Settlement Patterns* will be its clear, thorough description of the project's sherd collection methods and subsequent conversion of sherd location and quantity data into population estimates and settlement location data. Three sections discuss each of these in detail, including potential weaknesses and the rationales used in selecting particular approaches. A fourth section introduces the specific environmental features that will be used in assessing environmental factors in settlement distribution: distance from river valleys, ground slope, aspect, modern land use, and geology.

The results of these analyses are discussed in the final chapter. For each sherd type time period, the authors present the distribution of sherds, density surfaces showing occupation locations and relative amounts, histograms of community sizes, and a rank-size graph of communities. These are discussed in terms of their implications for the degree of centralization in the region and the agricultural landscape. There is some discussion of cross-period change, but surprisingly there is only a very brief subsection that ties the time periods together into a long-term social development narrative. Perhaps this has been or will be developed more fully in other publications (e.g., Drennan and Dai 2010).

While no editor is credited, the volume has clearly had extensive editing; despite multiple section authors, the writing is clear and concise and the arguments are presented in a straightforward and methodical manner throughout. Color versions of the figures are available on the web site, along with full data sets showing sherd counts, density calculations, excavation data, and site sketches. The website also provides GIS maps (in AutoCAD dxf or GeoTIFF formats) produced during the project. All of this website data is remarkably well documented, with good metadata that makes it easy to understand and incorporate into other projects (although the combination of dxf files and the use of a Chinese UTM system is incompatible with the World Geodetic Survey datum, so may make the GIS data difficult for some scholars to use in wider contexts).

The entire settlement analysis rests on a single premise, that “larger populations leave more garbage on the landscape than smaller populations do” (p. 57). While this is likely for garbage in general, when it comes to ceramic sherds, it is less clear. One wonders whether the ceramic concentrations identified as ancient population centers instead were kiln sites or disturbed cemeteries. While the team apparently recorded archaeological architectural and grave features when en-

countered (p. 54), no use is made of this information nor is it included in the website data. This seems a lost opportunity, as it would be interesting to see whether settlement patterns detected by sherd analysis corresponded with structural features, at least for later time periods.

In sum, this is a volume of the sort one might think would be very common but in fact is vanishingly thin on the ground: a detailed explanation of the use of archaeological survey to address an academic (as opposed to strictly heritage management) question. As such it is of interest not only to those exploring the social development of northeast China, but to a wide audience of archaeologists concerned with maximizing the knowledge returned from survey work.

#### REFERENCES CITED

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*4000 Years of Migration and Cultural Exchange: The Archaeology of the Batanes Islands, Northern Philippines*. Peter Bellwood and Eusebio Dizon, eds. Terra Australis Volume 40. Canberra: Australian National University E Press, 2013. 254 pp. 141 figures, 32 tables. Color frontispiece in print copy. Paper, AU\$58.00, ISBN 978-1925021271. Free ebook ISBN 978-1925021288, <http://press.anu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/whole9.pdf>

*Review by* GLENN SUMMERHAYES, *Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of Otago, New Zealand*

The monograph is an important one, filling a large gap in our knowledge of this area by providing valuable and detailed data on the archaeology of the Batanes Islands. The monograph presents data from excavations carried out between 2002 and 2007 from sites

located on four islands and covering 4000 years.

The Batanes are strategically located between Taiwan and the Philippines. The data presented here can allow one to assess the nature of colonization and subsequent inter-

actions occurring between these islands and farther afield over the last 4000 years. What better place to gauge the nature of interactions of China and Taiwan with areas to the south, along with the role Austronesians played in those interactions? Yet, as the editors note at the beginning and end of this tome, this book was published as a source of data, not to “place or repeat” statements on Austronesian origins.

Notwithstanding, the Batanes form a bridge of intervisible islands (on clear days) linking mainland China and Taiwan. And we know that contact was made between these two landmasses in the past, despite detractors arguing that the strong Kuroshino current would have precluded sailing from north to south. This monograph demonstrates that purposeful interaction did occur, along with interactions resulting from drift voyages from Japan.

Divided into thirteen chapters and an appendix, this volume provides a wealth of data. Having such a detailed presentation of data and the use of leading experts to cover specialist topics is a strong point. Szabo, Yang, Vitales, and Koppel worked on shell middens (chapter 12); Cameron on spinning tools (chapter 12); Stevenson on palaeobotanical remains (appendix 1); Hung and Iizuka on greenstone (chapter 9); Piper, Amano Jr, Yang, and O'Connor on zoological remains (chapter 9); and Campos on fish (chapter 11). Bellwood, Dizon, and de Leon worked on pottery (chapter 6) and Bellwood and Dizon (the editors) again on portable artifacts (chapter 8).

Another strength of this volume is the wonderful presentation of previous archaeological work, excavations under review now, and the radiocarbon chronology that goes with them. A thorough presentation of more than a dozen sites is covered in chapters 2 through 4 (by Bellwood, Dizon, and Mijares), with radiocarbon chronology making up the fourth substantive chapter (that is, chapter 5).

Chapter 5 establishes chronological phases for each island before setting up an island-wide Batanes sequence primarily defined by pottery and chronology. The first phase, Batanes Islands Phase 1, encapsulates 2500 to

1000 B.C., and covers red-slipped pottery from the sites of Torongan and Reranum, both on Itbayat Island; Reranum also has fine cord-marked pottery. Phase 2, from 1300 B.C. to A.D. 1, covers circle-stamped and red-slipped pottery. Two subphases were defined based on the patterns formed by stamped circles, the older having rectangular meander designs, the younger having lozenge designs. Nephrite is found in both subphases, with circular ear ornaments associated with the earlier subphase (at the Anaro 3 site on Itbayat), and a nephrite workshop found for the latter subphase (at the Savidug Dune site on Sabtang). The third phase, 500 B.C./A.D. 1 to A.D. 1200, is found at numerous sites and is made up of red-slipped pottery with no decoration. Phase 4 is similar to Phase 3, but includes imported glazed ceramics from Asia.

With so much riding on ceramic data, it is important to look at the pottery chapter. Chapter 6 details the Batanes pottery sequence, at least for most of the sites, going into detail on decoration, and pottery subdivisions based on circle-impressed decoration (briefly mentioned in chapter 5). Although the pottery descriptions are well set out, chapter 6 could have been better. First, why not use chapters 2 through 5 as heuristic devices to describe the archaeological materials phase by phase? That is, describe what is happening under each chronological phase rather than take a site-by-site approach, which sort of re-invents the wheel in each chapter (2 through 4). Secondly, chapter 6 is not balanced. There is little discussion on Sunget pottery here, which like the other assemblages was discussed in the site and chronology chapters. Although Sunget was previously excavated by a Japanese team, this chapter would have been the right place for a detailed comparison with other assemblages. Lastly, the illustrations of the pottery in chapter 6 could be enlarged; many of the illustrations are too small to make out details.

Chapter 6 does, however, get into the nitty-gritty of pottery decoration for other major sites, including Torongan Cave, Reranum Rockshelter, and Anaro on Itbayat, Mitangeb on Siayan Island, and Savidug Dune on Sabtang. The sequences from each site are



defined and described in detail. Throughout these descriptions, important comparisons are made with assemblages elsewhere, Taiwan in particular. For example, for the early pottery from Torongan and Reranum, Bellwood and Dizon note similarities with contemporary Middle Neolithic assemblages (2000 B.C.) from southeast Taiwan, such as Chaolaiqiao (2200 B.C.) and Donghebei near Taidong. All have red slipping.

The chapter ends with an important section by de Leon, who undertook fabric analysis of 15 pottery thin sections from the Savidug Dune site and Anaro as part of his M.A. research. He samples plain ware. On the basis of mineral content, de Leon demonstrates that pottery from Savidug Dune and Anaro were both made at their respective islands, and thus similarities between sites over time should be seen as indicative of interactions between the islands and not trade. De Leon's analysis is extremely important and should be extended to cover the complete assemblage. Any information on production is crucial in understanding and assessing socioeconomic modeling based on pottery distributions.

I will not go into detail on each of the specialist chapters, but will make some salient points. First, Cameron's superb chapter on spindle whorls makes a major contribution in explaining the distribution of material culture throughout this region. She notes biconical whorls from Anaro and points out that "these biconical spindle whorls are so specific culturally that they can be used to trace the movement of prehistoric groups into various parts of southeast Asia" (p. 119). Most whorls belong to Phase 2 of the Batanes sequence. This is the phase that has connections with Taiwan such as imported nephrite and slate. Cameron points out that the stamping on the biconical whorls from the Batanes is also found at the site of Tanshishan in southeast China, and the late Neolithic site of Beinan, southeast Taiwan. She concludes by stating: "Had spinning been invented independently in the Batanes, basic whorl types (flat discs) would be represented rather than biconical forms. Because biconical whorls have a higher moment of inertia than basic types, and spin faster than basic

forms, they indicate a presence of spinners with technical knowledge and skill, not novices" (p. 121).

What else is moving around? Most of the adzes found are from metamorphics, which are not natural to the Batanes. They could have come from Taiwan, Luzon; or both? A number of adzes from Sunget and Anaro were made from nephrite and sourced to Taiwan. Stepped adzes can be compared with similar forms found from Fujian and Taiwan. Chisels with circular cross sections are also found from both Savidug Dune and Anaro. These are rare, and Bellwood and Dizon argue that they bear resemblances to chisels elsewhere in Asia including the northern Philippines and northern Molluccas. They also note that hoe-like instruments identified from the assemblages have parallels with Taiwan and the Philippines. Bark cloth beaters were recovered with similarities to Nanguanli in Taiwan and elsewhere.

The most easily identifiable important item moving south into the Batanes is nephrite. Hung and Iizuka (chapter 9) present a brilliant chapter not only on the analysis of nephrite objects from the Batanes, but their research into the distribution of nephrite across Southeast Asia. Using evidence of flaking floors, they argue that the Batanes was importing jade and exporting finished products. Shell artifacts are included in the list of connections to other places. What is important is that these connections occur from the earliest occupation onward.

Also of importance is the identification of pig bone from the earliest levels from the Batanes Islands. These bones were identified and determined to be similar to the eastern Eurasian boar *Sus scrofa* from China and Taiwan (chapter 10). Dog is also found from 2500 B.P. contexts from the Savidug Dune site. A similar date occurs farther south at Nagsabaran (Luzon), although dog is also found from Callao Cave, northern Luzon, dated to 1650–1470 cal B.C. (p. 197). Chapter 10 would be a bit more accessible, however, with the addition of a short introduction on what animals are being measured.

Despite these minor quibbles, I can only congratulate the authors on such a first-rate and very readable monograph. These islands,

as noted above, are located in an important region of the world, and this significant publication covers details normally only dreamt of in archaeological publications. It succeeds because of its focus on archaeological data. *Terra Australis* as a series provides a venue for archaeologists to present data from excava-

tions, something that most journals these days are loathe to do (even those that promote themselves as such). The series has another feather in its cap with publication of this volume, which will be in demand by all scholars with an interest in Asian and Pacific archaeology.