

MMAP Team ABSTRACTS - 2009 IPPA Conference- Hanoi

BOONLOP, Korakot

Department of Research, The Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre – SAC, Bangkok, Thailand

BUBPHA, Sureeratana

Cultural Management Programme, College of Innovation, Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand

MEKONG RIVER: CONNECTING CULTURES AND PEOPLE ON MIDDLE MEKONG ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT – MMAP

The Mekong River originates on the Tibetan plateau, its flow connecting China and Southeast Asia physically and archaeologically. So, this river is considered as one of the most important and as the twelfth longest river of the world. Each span of the river basin supports a unique part of the Mekong culture. However, even It has also long been considered as an ancient crossroad for peoples and cultures, but very little is known about its prehistoric human, especially, along the middle range of the river. The Middle Mekong Archaeological Project (MMAP), conceived in 2001, aim to investigate human settlement of the Mekong Valley with a research program beginning in high land Luang Prabang, northern Laos. Since 2005, MMAP has conducted a groundbreaking collaborative research program of international researchers from both oriental and occidental parts of the world, including surveys and excavations that have identified 69 archaeological sites and excavations at three cave/rock shelter sites. This archaeological fieldwork has yielded numerous kinds of artifact, e.g. thousands of stone, ceramic, human skeletal remains, faunal remains, as well as other evidence from over 11,000 years of human habitation in this region. Initial descriptions of this paper from the Late Pleistocene archaeological/geological context have emphasized its mosaic cultural aspects, based on a comparison between the artifacts uncovered from both left and right river banks(in particular of the boundaries of Laos and Thailand) along the middle span of the Mekong.

BOUASISENGPASEUTH, Bounheuang

National Museum, Vientiane, Laos

HOW DOES THE MIDDLE MEKONG ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT WORK WITH LAO CULTURE HERITAGE MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION? NATIONAL AND LEGAL PERSPECTIVES

The Middle Mekong Archaeological Project in Laos is a joint research and training program between the Department of Heritage, Ministry of Information and Culture and the University of Pennsylvania Museum. MMAP brings together an international team with a variety of backgrounds and interests. We are archaeologists, students, culture heritage managers, and volunteers, some of whom participate for several years. We work under a national legal framework that prioritizes national capacity building along with culture heritage management. This paper explains how the Middle Mekong Archaeological Project is an example of a long-term western organized research program that complies well with Lao law and government objectives to manage, develop, and protect cultural heritage resources.

KEOPHANHYA, Sengphone

National Museum, Luang Prabang

HOW DOES THE MIDDLE MEKONG ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT (MMAP) WORK WITH LAO CULTURE HERITAGE MANAGEMENT? MUSEUM, CONSERVATION, AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

My paper will discuss what MMAP has done with Lao cultural heritage management at the local level in Luang Prabang, Laos. There are two main points: (1) Training of local government officials who are involved in cultural heritage conservation and management. (2) Public communication to promote the idea of cultural heritage conservation and management, and to indicate the importance of prehistoric culture to the local people.

LEWIS, Helen

University College Dublin

USING SOIL MICROMORPHOLOGY TO UNDERSTAND CULTURAL DEPOSITS IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN CAVES: SOME RESULTS FROM STUDIES IN MALAYSIAN BORNEO, THE SOUTH PHILIPPINES AND NORTHERN LAO PDR

This paper looks at some ways in which the application of soil micromorphology has changed our understanding of certain cultural deposits in caves in Southeast Asia, including deposits sometimes considered to be speleothem layers, along with how certain cave deposits have challenged typical soil micromorphological interpretations developed from open-air sites, for instance of 'trampling' deposits. Examples are shown from a variety of studies, mainly in press, including the Niah Cave complex in Sarawak; Ille and Tabon Caves, along with caves in Bataraza, all in Palawan; and cave sites in Luang Prabang province, Lao PDR.

MARWICK, Ben

University of Washington, USA

THAM SUA ROCKSHELTER: IRON AGE ARCHAEOLOGY AND SITE FORMATION PROCESSES IN THE LAO PDR

Recent excavation at Tham Sua Rockshelter (Luang Prabang Province, Lao PDR) by the Middle Mekong Archaeological Project (MMAP) recovered a wide range of iron age archaeology. Radiocarbon dating of organic material in the deposit combined with analysis of physical and chemical attributes of the sediments give good insights into how site formation processes have contributed to archaeological content of the deposit. The results from this analysis are presented in context with other MMAP sites to offer generalizations about prospecting for and interpreting iron age archaeology in Laos.

SONETHONGKHAM, Souksamone

National Museum, Vientiane, Laos

VARIATION IN CORE SIZES AND MATERIALS FROM THREE STONE AGE SITES IN THE MIDDLE MEKONG REGION

The Middle Mekong Archaeological Project (MMAP) has conducted test excavations at three rockshelter sites along three Mekong tributaries in Luang Prabang Province. All three sites have flaked lithics broadly attributable to the Hoabinhian industry. These three excavations undertaken with the same team and excavation methodologies provide an opportunity to examine intersite variability in Holocene flaked lithic technology. This paper compares flaked cores from the three sites using several variables, including rock/stone type, size, and flaking strategy to assess variation within the Hoabinhian in this part of northern Laos.

VORASING, Phousavanh

World Heritage Centre, Xieng Khouang Province, Laos

AN ETHNO-ECOLOGICAL COMPARISON OF SHELLS FROM EXCAVATIONS IN THE LUANG PRABANG AREA: IMPLICATIONS FOR STONE AGE OCCUPATION OF THE MIDDLE MEKONG REGION

Mollusks have frequently been recovered in association with Hoabinhian cave and rockshelter sites. Except for Nguyen Viet's work in Vietnam, little effort has been made by archaeologists to analyze the variability in shell remains from these sites in mainland Southeast Asia. Yet variation in mollusks has potential to shed light on Hoabinhian environment and resource usage over space and time. Using shell data excavated by the Middle Mekong Archaeological Project from three rockshelter sites in northern Laos, this paper begins inter-site comparisons of mollusk assemblages using ethno-archaeological methodologies. This approach provides first level evidence that inhabitants of each rockshelter exploited different mollusk resources.

WHITE, Joyce

University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia, USA

THE MIDDLE MEKONG ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT: INTERIM SUMMARY OF A REGIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAM

The Middle Mekong Archaeological Project (MMAP) is a crossing-borders regional research and training program designed to investigate the prehistory of the Mekong basin in northern Laos and northern northeast Thailand. So far surveys along several Mekong tributaries in the Luang Prabang region have found nearly 70 archaeological sites. Test excavations at three rockshelters demonstrate human occupation of this area throughout the Holocene. A range of specialists have participated in the research program and conducted trainings in geology, archaeobotany, GIS, and other disciplines. The research program to date promises to illuminate regional interaction in the middle Mekong basin particularly during the Hoabinhian and iron age periods.

