A350-Asia-Thailand-Ban Chiang-Ceramics-Red-on-buff-ca 1500 BCE

 



Figs. 1-3. Thailand-Ban Chiang-Ceramics-Red-on-buff-ca 1500 BCE **Case No.: 5**

**Accession Number: A350**

**Formal Label:** Thailand-Ban Chiang-Ceramics-Red-on-buff-ca 1500 BCE

**Display Description:**

“The red-on-buff painted pottery of northeastern Thailand provides an opportunity to reevaluate assumptions of cultural development in Southeast Asia. This striking pottery is characteristic of the early bronze-using cultures of Northeast Thailand, and is represented at the sites of Non Nok Tha, Ban Chiang, and Non Ban Kho (Bayard 1971: 36), as well as at other sites in the area that have not yet been reported. The excavated sample in the hands of professional archaeologists is not large, nor has much detailed analysis of this pottery been published.

Although the red-on-buff ware is not the only ware at Non Nok Tha, it is

associated with the layers containing the early bronze, stratigraphic layers 20 and 21

(according to Bayard's excavation, cultural level 3). Several vessels and assorted

sherds are similar to the ware from Ban Chiang, a cemetery site northeast of Non

Nok Tha. This site, first excavated by Vidya Intakosai in 1967, and then by other

archaeologists from the Thai Fine Arts Department whose work is still in progress,

is the richest source of this painted ware. The Applied Science Center for Archaeology

at the University of Pennsylvania Museum recently ran a series of thermoluminescence

tests on sherds from Ban Chiang; the following results were reported

(Bronson and Han 1972: 323): sample 104 4630 B.C. ± 520; sample 271 3570 B.C. ± 480; sample 273 3590 B.C. ± 275” (van Esterik 1974).

**(UNESCO) http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/575**

The Ban Chiang Archaeological Site is a large, prehistoric earthen mound located in an agricultural area in the Ban Chiang Sub-district, Nong Han District of Udon Thani Province in northeast Thailand, within the watershed of the Mekong River. It is an oval-shaped mound formed by human habitation 500 meters x 1,350 meters and 8 meters high. The site was first discovered in 1966. It has since been extensively excavated and its remains studied by Thai and international scholars. Since 1966 the dating of the site has been adjusted and refined over time in line with advances in the understanding and techniques of radiometric dating. This research has revealed that the site dates from 1,495 BC .and contains early evidence for settled agrarian occupation in Southeast Asia, along with evidence of wet rice agriculture, associated technological complex of domesticated farm animals, ceramic manufacture, and bronze tool-making technology. The total area of the property is 67.36 ha of which approximately 0.09% has been excavated (as of 2012)

The Ban Chiang Archaeological Site is a prehistoric human habitation and burial site. It is considered by scholars to be the most important prehistoric settlement so far discovered in Southeast Asia, marking the beginning and showing the development of the wet-rice culture typical of the region. The site has been dated by scientific chronometric means (C-14 and thermo luminescence) which have established that the site was continuously occupied from 1495BC until c. 900BC., making it the earliest scientifically-dated prehistoric farming and habitation site in Southeast Asia known at the time of inscription onto the World Heritage List.

The Ban Chiang cultural complex is well-defined and distinctive from anything that preceded it. Through it can trace the spread and development of prehistoric society and its development into the settled agricultural civilizations which came to characterize the region throughout history which still continue up to the present day. Advances in the fields of agriculture, animal domestication, ceramic and metal technology are all evident in the archaeological record of the site. Also evident is an increasing economic prosperity and social complexity of the successive communities at Ban Chiang, made possible by their developing cultural practices, as revealed through the many burials, rich in ceramic and metal grave goods, uncovered at the site.

The Ban Chiang Archaeological Site is also the richest in Southeast Asia in the number and variety of artifacts recovered from the site. As such, the property has been extensively studied by scholars as the archaeological “type-site” for the beginnings of settled agricultural communities and their associated technologies in the region.

**LC Classification:** DS589

**Date or Time Horizon:** 1500 BCE

**Geographical Area: Northeastern Thailand**

**Map:**



**Location of Ban Chiang. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/e/e3/Thailand\_location\_map\_Topographic.png/250px-Thailand\_location\_map\_Topographic.png**

**GPS Coordinates:** [17°24′25″N 103°14′29″E](https://tools.wmflabs.org/geohack/geohack.php?pagename=Ban_Chiang&params=17.4069_N_103.2414_E_type:landmark_region:TH-41)

**Cultural Affiliation:** Baan Chiang

**Medium:** ceramic, red on buff

**Dimensions**: Dia. of lip, 131.43 mm, 5.175 in; H 145.87, 5.743 in  
**Weight: 656 g, 1 lb 7 1/8 oz**

**Provenance: Ban Chiang**

**Condition: original**

**Discussion: (UNESCO) http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/575**

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Ban Chiang Archaeological Site was the centre of a remarkable phenomenon of human cultural, social, and technological evolution which occurred independently in this area of Southeast Asia and began at Ban Chiang around 1500 B.C. and spread widely over the whole region.

**Integrity**

The Ban Chiang Archaeological Site consists of a large, undisturbed earthen mound which, when excavated, was found to cover a prehistoric habitation site of some of Southeast Asia’s earliest farmers. The site, which had been abandoned and buried underground for at least two millennia, has now been substantially and carefully excavated by Thai and international archaeologists. This has revealed an unbroken stratigraphy of human habitation, use, and burial over two thousand years, covering the period when prehistoric humans in this part of the world first settled in villages, took up agriculture and began the production of metal tools. The earliest stratigraphic layers at Ban Chiang date from as early as 1,500 B.C. This long archaeological sequence is divided by archaeologists into Early, Middle and Late Periods all of which are fully represented in the site’s excavated stratigraphy and which cover the beginnings of rice cultivation to its full-establishment as the principal agricultural activity of the region. The evidence for the beginning of rice agriculture is complemented by evidence of the equally early domestication of cattle, pigs and chickens, presenting a full picture of the emergence of a settled agrarian way of life in the early Neolithic period in Southeast Asia. Each stratigraphic layer at Ban Chiang is exceptionally rich in artifacts, especially ceramics, representing a full typology of both domestic and ritual (burial) types, all of which were made locally in the prehistoric farming communities. In addition to ceramics, the site has exceptional and uniquely early evidence of the knowledge of bronze-making by its inhabitants with remains of raw materials, production facilities, and complete bronze tools and ornaments. These early bronze finds make the site known as the metal tools production site in East and Southeast Asia. Later stratigraphic layers of the site contain evidence for the widespread transition from bronze to iron tool making, characteristic of agricultural settlements in the proto-historic period throughout the region.

It is speculated that climate change in the middle of the 1st millennium AD may have led to the temporary abandonment of the site and the sealing of the prehistoric habitation layers, assuring their archaeological integrity.  The area’s ecology however recovered and the site was again occupied in the late 18th century by farmers migrating across the nearby Mekong River who, once again, took up wet-rice cultivation. To this date the area around Ban Chiang retains its environmental and ecological integrity as a traditional agricultural landscape, representative of the rice cultures of Southeast Asia.

The integrity of the property is therefore high and is to be found in the long archaeological sequence excavated at Ban Chiang, which reveals through its stratigraphy of habitation, workshop areas and burials and the complementary seriation of artefacts, an occupation of two thousand years B.P. covering the entire period of the origin and development of rice agriculture, the domestication of farm animals, and associated tool-making technologies within this region of the world.

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