
Preface

Archaeology as both a theoretical discipline and a field of practice has undergone enormous growth and change in East and Southeast Asia during the past quarter century. In spite of that rapid development, the larger regional and inter-regional approaches adopted by archaeologists working in many other areas of the world have not been fully implemented in East and Southeast Asia. The reasons for this lag are multifarious, ranging from disparate social science paradigms that underlie archaeological interpretation to the realities of greatly differential knowledge of the basic culture histories of the region.

Historically, China and Japan have dominated most discussions of East Asian archaeology in the West. This is primarily because China's territory comprises such a large portion of the eastern Eurasian landmass and its archaeologists have been very active since the 1950s in exploring the links between material culture and the social theories that might be used to explain human behavior while, in Japan, archaeologists benefitted from the global integration of that country's economy beginning in the 1960s. China and Japan, in particular, were incorporated into the mainstream international academic community arguably faster and more thoroughly than many other sub-regions of East and Southeast Asia, further enhancing their visibility to Western scholars.

On the other hand, many, if not most, areas in the region have either had extremely limited resources with which to pursue prehistoric archaeological research, or their guiding intellectual paradigms have placed little value on such internationalization. In some places, both of these factors have molded the shape of archaeological practice as well as the social theories that underpin it.

In considering the rationale for organizing this volume, we have envisioned a text which addresses not only the facts of prehistory as they are currently known across a very broad swath of eastern Eurasia and the Pacific Basin, but also situates those facts within the polyvalent historical development of archaeology as a discipline of social science inquiry in the region. Thus, we have sought out authors and topics to fill glaring lacunae in our collective knowledge of East and Southeast Asian prehistory while simultaneously giving voice to local scholars with respect to emphasizing topics and interpretive realms that they consider most salient.

We have attempted to conscientiously avoid merely assigning topics to particular authors, and we offered only the gentlest direction by way of recommending themes and topics that we felt had a high probability of being of interest to the widest spectrum of Western archaeologists. Such topics include but are not restricted to: basic culture history and chronology, the historical basis for the practice of archaeology in each sub-region included in the book, discussion of the dominant theoretical frameworks that have guided each scholar's work and reflection about the ways in which each territory's archaeological record might be articulated with that of the region as a whole. In several cases, we have invited non-indigenous scholars to provide integrative overviews of regionally cross-cutting themes to begin to establish the framework of a regional perspective most familiar to archaeologists trained in the West within an anthropological paradigm.

As we approach the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, we believe most sub-regions of East and Southeast Asia have developed sufficiently broad and deep understandings of their own archaeological sequences to merit the production of a volume such as this. As the title implies, the *Handbook* focuses on the archaeology of East and Southeast Asia. In assembling its contents, we were faced with a number of interrelated dilemmas with respect to where and how to draw lines of inclusion and exclusion. As a first-order approximation, we employed modern geopolitical boundaries to determine the scope of the book's contents, further refined by the ethnohistoric distribution of culturally and linguistically distinct peoples (e.g., the prehistory of the Mongols is of interest whether they live in China, Mongolia, or Russia). Simultaneously, practical limitations of space and time also helped determine our answers to questions like (to name just a few by way of example): "If Mongolia is included, why not the rest of Central Asia?", "How come so much of the Russian Far East west of Primorye wasn't included?", "What about the Pacific Basin outside of the territory traditionally included within Insular Southeast Asia?", and "Why not include contributions from scholars in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea?". These specific questions, and myriad similar queries, while perfectly legitimate, could not all be answered from a single perspective or based on one universally applicable rationale. Frankly, some specific areas that we had planned to include were not in the end due largely to the lack of response from the author(s) invited to participate, some of whom assertively promised chapters but never replied to subsequent inquiries. Ultimately, we opted to move forward with the *Handbook's* production, acknowledging the timely contributions of many authors whose completed chapters were in hand by early 2015.

We faced such challenges recognizing the trade-offs with respect to specific areas covered and contributors included. We readily acknowledge having to omit much valuable work and important perspectives. But we also recognize that this text is a *handbook*, not an encyclopedia, and that the useful shelf-life of behavioral interpretations of archaeological data is measured in months or, maximally, years rather than some longer time-frame. Our decision to configure this work as a handbook was based on our vision of the text as a resource for scholars at many levels, ranging from advanced

university undergraduates to peer colleagues with an interest in, but little knowledge of, the archaeology of this vast region. We also hope that the *Handbook* will serve as a catalyst for enhanced communication and collaboration among indigenous scholars in East and Southeast Asia. Nothing would please us more than to tackle the daunting task of overseeing the production of a revised and updated version of the *Handbook* in just a few short years!

This *Handbook* is the result of protracted and intensive interaction between the editors and individual authors. Our editorial philosophy was predicated upon the notion that our sole responsibilities were to establish and maintain the highest academic standards for each contribution and to assist each author clearly express their own perspective on the archaeology of their own regions. With the authors' full knowledge and consent, we have standardized some terminology and edited contributions where English-language competence prevented individuals from clearly and adequately expressing complex ideas. We have taken great pains *not* to alter any author's emphases or the information they impart in order to render as accurately as possible both the style and content of their contributions.

Obviously, one problem inherent in producing a handbook such as this lies in the linguistic realm of common meaning. We have chosen to default to the use of toponyms as well as the names of people, dynasties, etc. that are most likely to be familiar to the widest range of Western English-language dominated users rather than trying to achieve absolute uniformity in the systems of romanization employed.

By way of explanation, editorial policy dictates the use of "BC" (Before Christ) and "AD" (anno Domini) as cross-cultural chronometric markers rather than the less Abrahamic "BCE" (Before the Common Era) and "CE" (Common Era) that are in preferential use in world regions where indigenous religious traditions have either been abandoned at the state level or were never based on a knowledge of or belief in Jesus Christ.

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