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Heterarchy and the Analysis of Complex Societies

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Carole L. Crumley,
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The cover illustration, by Thomas G. Lilly Jr., is entitled "Social Metaphors." The autocrat judges from atop a crumbling hierarchical structure (left); the spokesperson assimilates multiple perspectives out of a fluid hierarchical system (right).

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Incorporating Heterarchy into Theory on Socio-Political Development: The Case from Southeast Asia

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ABSTRACT

As archeological research in mainland Southeast Asia progresses beyond the pioneering stage, the emerging data pose a number of challenges to theories of socio-political development. Attempts to apply models assuming nested, conical, hierarchical progressions derivative from the band–tribe–chiefdom–state continuum often seem inadequate and somehow unable to account for the significant socio-political dynamics that are increasingly evident from the data. This chapter proposes that a shift in modeling the region's socio-political trajectory away from a step-progression, hierarchical approach toward a dynamic, heterarchical approach will advance understanding of this region's distinctive social development and will contribute to broadening and refining theory on the formation of states and the development of social complexity.

> *...a conceptual framework determines how social relations are perceived...a shift in that framework can result in a very different impression* (Kemp and Hüsken 1991:8).

Certain commonalities of socio-cultural development are becoming increasingly evident across the core area of mainland Southeast Asia comprised of the drainage basins of the Chao Phraya, Irrawaddy, lower Mekong rivers, and the central and southern coastal zone of Vietnam (Figure 9-1).[1] Two observations are often made concerning the development of states in this core area.

1) The region's *late* development of states (Winzeler 1976) relative to other Old World indigenously generated states. This *lateness* (not until the mid-first millennium AD) seems striking as prehistoric archeology has demonstrated the long term presence of two technological and economic factors sometimes considered important in state formation elsewhere: i) cultivation since the fourth millennium BC of a cereal (rice), probably in inundated permanent fields (White 1995); and ii) specialized production of copper-base metals dating at least from the first half of the second millennium BC (White 1986, 1988; Muhly 1988:16).
2) The overwhelming evidence that, although the players in state formation seem to have been the indigenous inhabitants, Indian conceptual models were massively yet selectively adopted and adapted as an ideological superstructure (Wheatley 1983). If the local forces were so primed for the development of states, why did legitimizing models not develop indigenously? Why was it necessary to borrow so massively from the ideology of another quite distant culture? Wheatley (1979:295) has suggested that the borrowing indicates that the pre-state societies must have lacked the legitimizing models to support sustained institutionalization for supra-village rule. Archeological evidence from the prehistoric pre-state period has yet to be examined with this issue in mind, however.

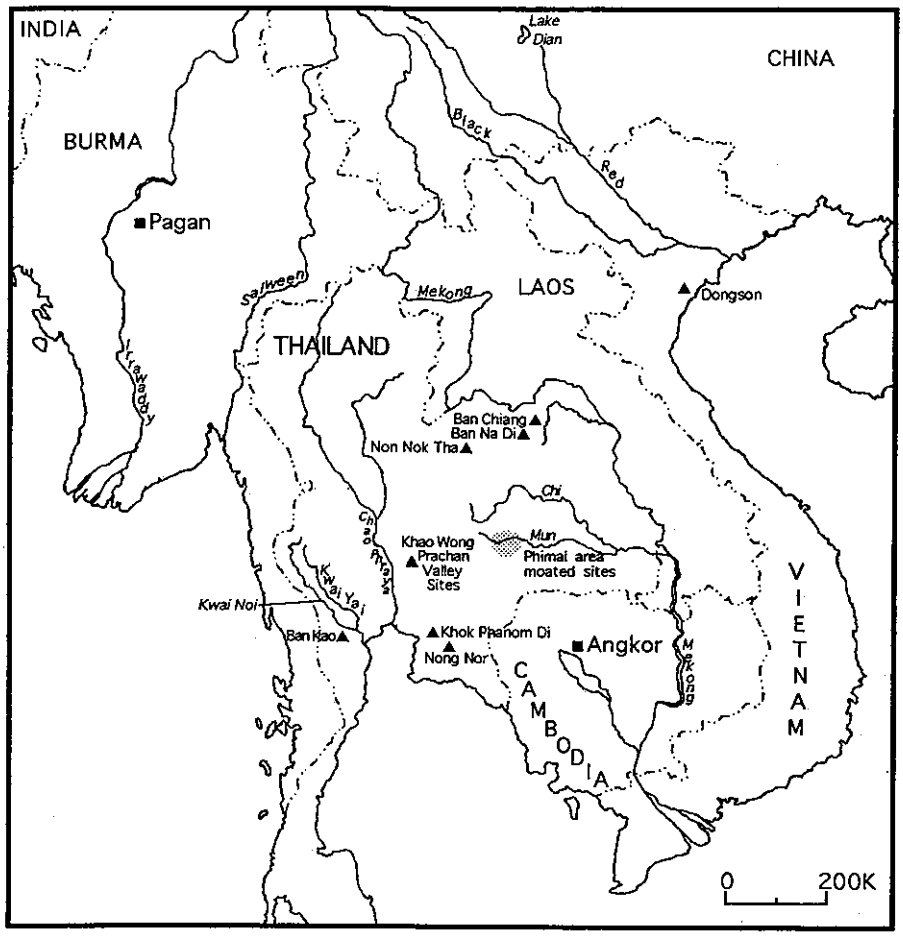

Figure 9-1: *Sites in mainland Southeast Asia mentioned in the text.*

These observations on the pacing, techno-economic background, and legitimizing strategy for indigenous Southeast Asian state formation suggest that examination of the socio-cultural trajectory in the region holds perspectives of interest to general theory on the development of social and political complexity. However, the coincidence of the formation of states with the beginning of the historic period means that archeological evidence from the prehistoric period will be key in addressing the issues raised.

Limitations of the Chiefdom Paradigm

Particular attention is paid in an examination of social complexity to a region's pre-state societies, presumably *chiefdoms* if the *band–tribe–chiefdom–state* model is followed for development of social complexity. The preface of a recent anthology devoted to chiefdoms (Earle 1991a:xii) notes that Asia is not represented in that compendium in part because "the chiefdom concept has been little used" in this region. The lack of a coherent and influential literature applying the chiefdom concept to pre-state societies in Southeast Asia can be attributed to at least four reasons.

1) Disciplinary paradigms—Much of the scholarship on early states in Southeast Asia has been undertaken in disciplines outside of American anthropological archeology. Historians, art historians, and epigraphers of predominantly European training having conducted most of the primary research, data interpretation, and synthesis. Most of these scholars feel little compulsion to frame their discussions in terms of the theoretical paradigm of cultural evolution (Taylor 1992:181).
2) Lack of archeological data—There is a paucity of archeological data for the immediate pre-state period (c. 200 BC–AD 800), which is largely prehistoric.

3) Anomalous data—Those data that do exist for social development prior to state formation, while somewhat sparse, do not *fit* easily into the discussion being defined on the basis of data from other parts of the world (Bentley 1986).
4) Unsuccessful applications of evolutionary models—Attempts to explicitly frame the discussion of pre-state societies in terms of *chiefdoms* and evolutionary models have been judged *inadequate* because either evidence for commonly accepted *correlates* has not been identified in the expected sequence, combination, or context or because the models fail to address many salient aspects of the emerging evidence (Christie 1992; Bayard 1992).

In stating that "[c]hiefdoms are intermediate societies, neither states nor egalitarian societies," Earle (1991a:xi) implies a very general category that encompasses nearly every society between the early neolithic and states. Despite the attempt of Earle's volume to clarify and differentiate the concept, however, *chiefdom* has become a paradigm that assumes the *centrality* of "economic control, military might, and ceremonial legitimacy" in "intermediate" societies (Earle 1991b:14). The centrality of all three variables is difficult to demonstrate in the pre-state societies in Southeast Asia, and economic control and military might are not necessarily central to the region's earliest state societies.

The struggle to apply the band–tribe–chiefdom–state progression by regional specialists is evident in the lack of a clear consensus on which early societies can be unambiguously identified as *chiefdoms*, or even which entities can be considered true *states*. Many of the entities widely labeled as "early states," such as Angkor, have strikingly *chiefdom-like*—even *big-man-like*—qualities, particularly in their irregular succession and emphasis on charismatic leadership (Wolters 1982; Hagesteijn 1986). On the other hand, marked chiefdom-like qualities have been attributed to the much earlier site of Khok Phanom Di (2000–1500 BC). The evidence from this site has been described as documenting a "highly ranked echelon" whose "leaders" assumed "increasing control over the regional distribution of prestige goods" among its "dependent communities" (Higham 1989a:251), even while the site's economy has been described in terms of a hunter-gatherer community undergoing incipient domestication (Higham 1989b:84).

Regional specialists are probably in closer consensus that some chiefdom-like entity developed during the mid-to-late first millennium BC, based on the appearance of settlement hierarchies in areas such as the Mun-Chi valleys (Higham and Kijngam 1982; Moore 1988, 1990; Welch and McNeill 1991). However, concrete evidence for other chiefdom *correlates* (e.g., warfare, sustained heritable social hierarchy, ideological integration, or economic control by elites) is far from overt. Convincing evidence for centralized political power or transformation to stratified society with differential access to strategic resources has been elusive. These examples hint that aspects of the region's development of social and political complexity may differ significantly from expectations derived from other areas.

Incorporating Heterarchy

This chapter argues that the value of the Southeast Asian cultural sequence to larger theoretical issues lies in its challenge to conventional archeological wisdom that stresses predictive and deterministic models of culture change. Southeast Asian data provide an opportunity to evaluate concepts and models developed in other parts of the world: an opportunity to develop new conceptual frameworks rather than shape the region's development to fit pre-existing models (Morrison 1994). As a first step in the evaluative process, this chapter proposes that a central concept has been missing from the discussion of the development of Southeast Asian society and, in turn, from most of the general discussion of theory of social complexity: the concept of heterarchy (Crumley 1979, 1987).

Crumley points out that the discussion of the development of social complexity has focused almost exclusively on the elaboration of structures for hierarchy: evidence for superordination and subordination. A brief glance at the first few pages of the Earle (1991b:1) volume on chiefdoms reveals the critical dimensions concerned in understanding the "evolution of stateless complex societies." "Chiefdom language" is revealed in phrases incorporating words such as *power*, *domination*, *stratification*, *control* (over resources, river valleys, prestige-good trade), *warfare*, *dependent*, *central*, *elite*, and *prestige*. The dynamics examined focus on vertical relationships. Increased complexity has been equated with increasing levels of hierarchically nested conical structures (e.g., Peebles and Kus 1977). While these dynamics certainly

exist and are important, this approach is now recognized as a unidimensional view of complexity (Crumley 1987; Cocoran 1992).

Some theoreticians have realized that complexity might also be examined in other terms (Kauffman 1993), such as the number of dimensions, potential interactions, or the intricacy of interrelationships. Interconnections may be ranked, may not be ranked, or may be situationally ranked (i.e., hierarchical in one context or from one viewpoint but not permanently ranked or ranked differently in another context or viewpoint). A concept of complexity that moves away from determinism and incorporates choice and context could serve to broaden our discussion in useful ways.

Two key elements of heterarchy, namely *flexible hierarchy* and *horizontal or lateral differentiation*, are critical dynamics that have been neglected or under appreciated in the analysis of the evolution of Southeast Asian and probably other societies. Although Johnson (1982) earlier proposed a concept related to heterarchy, namely "sequential hierarchy," his discussion has not had the impact it deserves. This is possible in part because his phrase included the word "hierarchy," which did not differentiate his concept clearly from *normal* hierarchy ("simultaneous hierarchy" as used by Johnson). Nevertheless, his discussion adds significantly to Crumley's argument. In particular, Johnson's (1982:396) discussion of the context and implications of the horizontal elaboration of social organization in response to "scalar-communication stress" (hereafter "scalar stress") has direct bearing on Southeast Asian social evolution.

By examining their data through the hierarchical lenses of the chiefdom paradigm, Southeast Asian archeologists have generally missed the significance of the heterarchical dynamics of flexible ranking and horizontal differentiation in their evidence, which may help not only to define the distinctive social trajectory of the region but also help to frame the region's development in a way that it can be insightfully incorporated into the broader discussion of the development of social complexity.

I propose that there are at least four broad patterns or themes that shall be considered heterarchical among the sustained salient characteristics for social development in the core area of mainland Southeast Asia from at least the second millennium BC:

1) cultural pluralism;
2) indigenous economies that tend to be characterized by a) household-based units of production, b) community-based economic specialization, and c) competitive, multi-centered, and overlapping mechanisms for the distribution of goods rather than monopolies controlled by a single center;
3) social status systems that tend to be flexible in practice and include personal achievement even where ascribed systems exist in theory; and
4) conflict resolution and political centralization strategies that tend to have alliance formation with cooperative-competitive dynamics at their core, and that may be periodically renegotiated (warfare, with controlling, conquering, or other violent dynamics, is deemphasized or secondary).

While not expressing themselves identically in all contexts, these heterarchical patterns I propose can be identified in prehistoric, historic, ethnohistoric, and ethnographic contexts in Southeast Asia. I will focus in the following discussion on evidence from the prehistoric period, when the roots of the trajectory towards the region's states must have been established. Of course, prehistoric archeology is so new to the region that the data are sparse. New research may soon necessitate a complete revision of the perspectives proposed in this chapter. However, I will suggest that my interpretation of patterns in the prehistoric evidence is consistent with evidence for socio-political dynamics from later time periods in the region.

HETERARCHY IN THE PREHISTORIC BACKGROUND OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STATES

While archeological data in Southeast Asia are sparse for the centuries immediately preceding early states (200 BC–AD 800), enough data are starting to be acquired from excavations of sites dating between 2000 and 200 BC, especially in Thailand, to suggest patterns of sociocultural development. Rice agriculture became well established during this period; both bronze and iron production appear; and differentially large sites, some with moats, probably appear around the mid-first millennium BC in the Mun-Chi drainage basin. If the data from this period are examined without focusing through the lens of the

chiefdom paradigm, the following interesting patterns emerge: (1) marked localization in material culture; (2) development of specialized craft communities; (3) individuality in the treatment of graves with an emphasis in unusual graves on referring to the individual's ritual, economic, and/or social roles; and (4) paucity of evidence for organized violence or warfare. I argue that these patterns are heterarchical by stressing flexibility in status definition, political relations, and lateral differentiation in social and economic realms.

Localization in Material Culture: Evidence of Cultural Pluralism?

Excavations in Thailand are producing unexpected site-to-site variability in material culture that are suggestive of small localized cultures (White 1986:337; Ho Chui-mei 1992). While further excavation is required to confirm this observation and develop tighter spatial and chronological control over the data, there is some basis to suggest that there was a marked enduring localism evident in material culture, ritual, and social practices between 2000 and 200 BC.

Surprising differences in nearby sites first became evident when the pottery sequence of the prehistoric site of Ban Chiang was compared in detail with that of Ban Na Di located only 20 kilometers away (White 1986:234). Based on radiocarbon dates, the main cemetery deposit at Ban Na Di primarily overlaps the Ban Chiang Middle Period cemetery dating from the early to the middle of the first millennium BC. The usual archeological assumption that two such close sites would share the same cultural tradition (Higham and Kijngam 1984) proved hard to specify ceramically. Contemporaneous deposits at the two sites had so few stylistically similar ceramics that it was difficult to crossdate the two sites.

One might at first question whether the sites had contemporaneous deposits. The two sites shared one highly distinctive though rare vessel type, however, and this firmly anchored the two sequences to each other. Once the stylistic idiosyncrasy of the two sites' ceramics was observed, other surprising distinctions became evident.

The observation of significant morphological and stylistic differences was supported by technical analyses. The methods of making the vessels at the two sites also differed according to pottery fabrication studies (Vincent 1984, 1988; Glanzman and Fleming 1985; McGovern et al. 1985; White et al. 1991). Although the Ban Chiang studies are only at a preliminary stage, Ban Chiang Middle Period pots overwhelmingly used rice temper while Ban Na Di used grog. Ban Chiang pottery was consistently manufactured with a lump-and-slab technique while over 90 percent of Ban Na Di pots were manufactured with a mold-and-coil technique (Vincent 1984:661; White et al. 1991). In summary, morphological, stylistic, and technical comparisons strongly indicate that Ban Chiang and Ban Na Di had different pottery manufacturing traditions during the mid-first millennium BC.

Pottery was not the only area of material culture where important differences between the two sites were evident. For example, bracelets made from *Trochus* marine shell were common at Ban Na Di, but none were excavated at Ban Chiang—at least not by the Fine Arts Department and University of Pennsylvania Museum excavations. The figurines found in graves at the two sites were markedly different in size, style, and significance. The Ban Chiang examples were small (3-4 centimeters in length) and ill-defined; the Ban Na Di examples were many times larger (most over 15 centimeters in length), more elaborately shaped, and clearly identifiable as cattle, humans, fish, and elephants.

Not only the material culture but social aspects also showed interesting differences, as revealed in the funerary ritual at the two sites. Grave contents and organization revealed that the two sites differed in the range of types and treatment of pots placed in the graves as well as the range of species and treatment of animal remains. The Ban Chiang Middle Period graves were characterized by skeletons overlain by sheets of sherds from deliberately broken pots that, when reconstructed, revealed several examples of the same type per grave. For example, Burial 40 from the second excavation season had seven white carinated pots and two painted-and-incised carinated pots. Vincent (1984:667) observes the opposite at Ban Na Di: each grave included several pots, some of which were broken, some of which were not, and "...the general tendency was to use a variety of vessel forms rather than multiple examples of the same form."

Animal bones in graves also indicated differences in ritual behavior. Ban Na Di graves commonly had entire limbs of ungulates, including cattle and occasionally pig. Ban Chiang more likely had chickens or animal jaws, but no complete articulating ungulate limbs were found as part of a grave assemblage (Kijngam 1979:73).

The noted differences in ritual and material culture are unlikely to represent cultural isolation. Lack of isolation is demonstrated by the evidence for long-distance trade in marine shell, stone, and metals in a regional exchange network extending from the Mekong to the sea (the distance between the Khorat Plateau and the Gulf of Siam is at least 500 kilometers). Long distance cultural connections are also evident in the uniformity of the metals technology and typology over a large area from Burma to Vietnam during the second millennium BC. This also indicates a widespread distinctive technological sphere, called the Southeast Asian Metallurgical Province (White 1988).

While the metallurgy reveals widespread technological communication, specific items of long-distance trade are not so uniformly distributed. If not due to sampling error, the fact that the Ban Na Di excavations produced several *Trochus* bracelets of a marine origin while not one was excavated at Ban Chiang suggests that each community participated differentially in trade in exotics—and probably other locally produced goods as well—although the two sites had basically similar access to interregional trade networks from a physical (time-distance) point of view. Individual communities may, thus, have placed different values on particular exotic artifacts: a heterarchy of values.

This particular example of unexpected local variation in material and ritual culture was discussed in some detail because there is enough published information from two major excavations with overlapping sequences to specify several aspects of intersite differentiation and to give some idea of the dimensions of localized variation. Other examples of nearby areas with marked and surprising differences in material culture have been identified in central Thailand (Ho Chui-mei 1992; Natapintu 1992), showing that the northeast Thai example is not isolated.

Another aspect of subregionalism in prehistoric Thailand is revealed in differential participation in a *bronze age* as a defined phase of some time depth that was distinct from and preceded an *iron age*. Thus Glover (1991a, 1991b) argues that western Thailand, particularly the Kwai Noi and Kwai Yai river valleys, has no evidence of any involvement with the bronze technology employed at contemporary sites in northeast and central Thailand during the second and first half of the first millennium BC. Since the distances in absolute terms are not outside the range of known trade networks, he concludes (1992:13 emphasis added) "...we are starting to recognize more than one 'interaction sphere' in prehistoric Thailand, *where the barriers were as much social as physical.*" Although northern Vietnam is outside the purview of this chapter, it is noteworthy that Ha Van Tan (1991) also observes localized variation in contemporaneous cultures and states that the localization was *salient* there during the pre-Dongson (i.e., pre-iron) period (2000–700 BC). He notes that the localized cultural diversity was evident in pottery styles, stone-tool shapes, and technology, as well as in the differential presence and elaboration of bronze.

An interesting point about the timing of this marked localization, observed by myself in northeast Thailand and by Ha Van Tan (1991) in Vietnam, is its concurrence with the appearance of bronze. In both areas, there seems to be greater similarity in regional material culture (stylistic similarities extending over larger areas) prior to the appearance of bronze. As soon as bronze enters the technological repertoire, material culture fragments into small, highly localized groupings. Hence, while presumably fostering increased interaction (i.e., communication) among communities, the appearance of bronze is also associated with increased material and symbolic horizontal differentiation.

Applying Johnson's (1982) discussion, the widespread appearance of bronze in prehistoric Southeast Asia could have created a context of scalar stress. The response to this stress was horizontal differentiation of community units, recognizable in archeological contexts as localized variability in material culture and funerary ritual. Elaboration of ritual behavior involving expressions of stylistic variability that can signal subgroup affiliation are noted by Johnson (1982:405) as integrative mechanisms that can reduce scalar stress among what he calls "egalitarian" groups. Why differentiation occurred horizontally rather than vertically will become clearer as we look at other aspects of the prehistoric evidence below. Localized cultural variation continued in Thailand into the iron period (second half of the first millennium BC) at least in the Khorat Basin of northeast Thailand (Vallibhotama 1991:7). In Vietnam, however, the iron age Dongson Period witnessed a consolidation of micro-regional cultures (Ha Van Tan 1991).

Horizontal Differentiation in Prehistoric Economic Organization

Elite control over specialized craft production and distribution is often considered a correlate of increasing

social complexity and a means for individuals or groups (e.g., lineages) to accumulate wealth and acquire power. No evidence has yet been found in the core area of mainland Southeast Asia to suggest that control over commodity production and distribution was a major means by which regional elites centralized political power. Furthermore, current evidence indicates that craft specialization and long-distance exchange developed and intensified in a decentralized and multicentric manner that was not conducive to sustained hierarchical controls.

The best example with which to explore this issue during the prehistoric period in Thailand is the production and distribution of copper-based metals (see Pigott et al. [1995] and White and Pigott [1995] for detailed discussions). By its very nature, copper-based metallurgy must entail some degree of specialization because the complexity and effort of production and the nucleated distribution of the raw materials dictate that producers must be fewer than consumers.

Evidence from Thailand dating between 2000–300 BC indicates that metal producers throughout this period were independent specialists (White and Pigott 1995). While the common presence of crucible fragments at village sites far from ore sources indicates that ordinary villages had resident casters, specialists were sometimes aggregated into communities (e.g., Non Nok Tha, Non Pa Wai, Nil Kham Haeng; White and Pigott 1995). Costin (1991:8) has recognized community specialization as a distinct genre of production organization where "autonomous individual or household-based production units, aggregated within a single community, [produce] for unrestricted regional consumption." Within this general concept, evidence from Thailand shows that the intensity of production and the volume of output from these specialized metal-producing communities can vary from a less intense level that could be termed "community craft" to a highly intense level with remarkable output that can be termed "community industry" (White and Pigott 1995). This industrial level of community-based production output is in evidence in copper production sites dating between 1500 and 300 BC in the Khao Wong Prachan Valley of central Thailand (Pigott et al. 1995; White and Pigott 1995).

No intrasite functional differentiation consistent with workshop organization of production has been identified in the central Thai copper production communities with industrial levels of output (Pigott et al. 1995). Instead, the small-scale production equipment, the diminutive cast products, the dispersed distribution of the production debris, and its intermixture with habitation materials points to household production. Each household likely undertook the necessary steps to bring the raw material (i.e., copper ore from nearby deposits) through the various production stages to final cast product. No evidence points to restricted access, hierarchical organization of labor, spatial separation of tasks, or any other evidence suggestive of overarching controls. Pigott et al. (1995) present a model of the technology that suggests how copper production could have been managed by small-scale production units.

The cemetery evidence associated with copper production communities suggests that producers were recognized for their economic roles. Burials at Nil Kham Haeng that were wealthier in terms of numbers and variety of grave goods also commonly had copper production artifacts, such as furnace chimneys, molds, ores, and copper artifacts, often miscast. The distribution of the graves in the site suggests that access to status through copper production was not restricted to any particular segment of society (Pigott et al. 1995). There is nothing to suggest that these producers necessarily accumulated extraordinary wealth or used their specialized economic position to accumulate political or economic power beyond their community at the regional level. The site sizes are modest and in the range typical for prehistoric village sites (e.g., Nil Kham Haeng was 3-5 hectares in size). Furthermore, areas where significantly larger sites were developing in the mid-first millennium BC (e.g., the Phimai area along the Mun drainage system) were some distance away from copper resources and known major specialized copper production communities.[1]

The evidence in Thailand for the development of copper production reveals patterns of intensification and elaboration that are not hierarchically differentiated but laterally differentiated. The lateral differentiation can take different forms. The current evidence from the second millennium BC in northeast Thailand is consistent with a dispersed production system where different stages of the production process may have been undertaken at different sites by different communities (White and Pigott 1995). In contrast, central Thailand has clear evidence for nucleation of production in the Khao Wong Prachan Valley, with individual communities undertaking most of the production steps. Moreover, current evidence suggests that nearby communities were producing copper at the same time but may have employed slightly different technologies and produced somewhat different product ranges. This observation is based on the evidence at Nil Kham Haeng, which had a marked emphasis in the production

of socketed cordiform implements, the function of which is not yet known. At nearby Non Pa Wai, however, the upper deposit of which overlaps with lower Nil Kham Haeng, metalworkers focused on producing ingots and a broader range of implements. The central Thai evidence thus suggests that one means by which economic organization based on specialized community production can intensify without hierarchization is by individual communities further specializing in particular portions of the *market*. This type of lateral differentiation via community focus on a *market niche* may obviate the need for administrative controls or a command economy. As Johnson (1982:404) states "...elaboration of essentially horizontal social organization...decreases the complexity of regulating social relationships...."

Mechanisms of commodity distribution during the pre-state period in the core area of Southeast Asia remain obscure. Given the decentralized and flexible independent production organization and the lack of evidence of the tight control of consumption by an apical elite, however, it seems likely that distribution was decentralized and multi-modal. Strategies may have been similar to those discussed in Bowie (1992) and Stark (1992), who describe the distribution of textiles in northern Thailand and pottery in Luzon respectively in ethnohistoric contexts where much production also occurred in specialized communities. Commodity distribution through complex, multimodal, lateral connections probably served a function in horizontally integrating the larger culturally pluralistic region.

Prehistoric Social Differentiation: A Context for Flexibility

As in other parts of the archeological world, identification of social elites has been a dominant theme in Southeast Asian archeological research for more than a decade. Several prehistoric cemeteries have now been the subject of excavations and, usually conceptualizing from the evolutionary paradigm, Southeast Asian archeologists have tried different strategies to perceive evidence for progressive differential status among graves. Inspired by Peebles and Kus (1977), Tainter (1978), and others, some archeologists have looked for evidence of steps toward hereditary hierarchy—nonvolitional ascriptive ranking—as a key to the development of social complexity (Peebles and Kus 1977:431). Results so far have been unconvincing and, at times, contradictory. The muddled state of understanding structural characteristics of the prehistoric society is partly due to the small sample available; small portions of only a few cemeteries have been excavated. Yet, the theoretical tools brought to bear on the data are proving to be inadequate. Four Thai sites have been sufficiently excavated to reveal prehistoric cemetery deposits of some magnitude and published analyses of enough detail to comment on evidence for social ranking: Ban Kao, Non Nok Tha, Ban Na Di, and Khok Phanom Di.

The cemetery at Ban Kao in west-central Thailand dated to the first half of the second millennium BC and was excavated before differentiating ranked social systems was emphasized in American archeological theory. Sørensen (1967) observed that graves varied in relative endowment of grave goods from one to over 24 artifacts and discussed the selection, placement, and treatment of objects. The variation in wealth and treatment of grave goods crosscuts age and sex, with some of the children having graves better endowed than some adults. Some burials also stood out as unusual. Burial 10 consisted of a 50 year old male with a grave assemblage suggestive to Sørensen of shamanism. What impressed Sørensen more than any evidence for possible status differences is the "extraordinary degree of arbitrariness and apparent informality" of the burials, "their personal-looking equipment" (Sørensen 1967:74), and the absence of "rigid rules for burial" (ibid.: 141).

The cemetery at Non Nok Tha dates primarily to the second and first millennia BC. The excavator (Bayard 1984) concluded that there were two affiliative groups at the cemetery, based on differential distribution of certain pottery types. Bayard then examined the burials for relative wealth in terms of numbers of objects per grave, which ranged from 0-32. It is noteworthy that Bayard used an *arbitrary* boundary as 14/15 items per grave to distinguish between rich and poor within what he acknowledged to be basically a continuum from "rich" to "poor." Both affiliative groups had rich and poor graves, but one group had a higher proportion of the rich graves. Bayard considers this pattern of differential distribution of grave goods evidence for "superordinate ranking." The group that was rich also tended to have more of the exotic artifacts including metals, although this association was apparently not highly significant. Because some of the children's graves were rich, he includes this as evidence for *ascribed* rather than *achieved* status. There was some tendency for some parts of the cemetery to have higher proportions of one or the other affiliative group.

The excavators at the site of Ban Na Di (Higham and Kijngam 1984) focused on a different strategy for examining social ranking. They compared the burials from two excavated portions of the site about 25 meters apart, primarily in terms of the presence of imported objects (e.g., trochus shell, metal). These artifacts were considered exotic "primitive valuables" and indicative of higher "expenditure of energy" for burials in which they were found. The burials that contained the primitive valuables were considered "considerably richer" and were found primarily in one of the excavation locales; certain artifacts were in fact "restricted" to graves from that one area, although bronze was *not* restricted to one locale. The pattern lasted throughout the use of the cemetery, which was 800–1000 years according to Higham and Kijngam (1984:440). They conclude (1984:441) that "[t]he evidence is...unanimous in supporting the presence of hereditary inequality...a moderate degree of lineage ranking...." This report did not compare the two cemetery samples for differences in the numbers of objects per grave, presumably because of the low number of complete interments.

The cemetery at Khok Phanom Di (2000–1500 BC) is a five hectare coastal site in central Thailand that is contemporary with Ban Kao. The excavators (Higham and Bannanurag 1990) have interpreted the majority of the graves from the ten-by-ten meter pit as belonging to clusters that represented separate burial areas for different kin groups. They furthermore claim to isolate a series of generations that crosscut the clusters. Interestingly, the evidence indicates that relative wealth varies over time among the clusters, with wealthy graves being succeeded by ordinary or poor graves within an individual cluster. Some of the earlier discussions of the burial sequence imply a transition toward ascribed status during the later part of the sequence (Higham 1989b:87; although see also Higham et al. [1992:54], which indicates a shift in understanding). Burials from the later part of the sequence included rich infant graves and an outstandingly rich interment of a woman in her thirties (Burial 15). Higham (1989b:86-87) believes that this change in the burial placement suggested a "reserved mortuary area" for well-endowed individuals. Other evidence suggestive of "chiefdom-type" *correlates*, including craft specialization, prestige goods that could be emblems of status, differential energy expenditure, centralization, and differential site size, are attributed to the site. Following wealthy Burial 15, however, subsequent graves were not so richly endowed. Thus, there is no evidence that markedly differentiated status was sustained in future generations.

These brief, oversimplified treatments cannot do justice to the details of each site's data, the richness of each scholar's approach and analysis, the issues of the applicability of the models used, or the issues of sampling and chronology. The capsule summaries serve to draw attention to patterns in past mortuary analyses, however, from which I would like to make some observations and suggest a new focus.

It is clear that each cemetery reflects a broadly related mortuary tradition of primarily supine inhumations with grave goods that commonly include ceramic vessels. Each cemetery differs in many notable respects, however, and the variations in analytical approach reflect these differences to some degree. The data do not fit readily into the models proposed for looking at different levels of ranked societies, and it is not clear that any one approach to analyzing the cemeteries is *better* than any other. While it is clear that these are not egalitarian societies in the sense that every grave is not treated the same and that individual graves vary in the quantity and range of associated grave goods, social differences in the cemeteries are often subtle, not overt, and apparently expressed in a different manner at each cemetery.

The variation among the cemeteries suggests that the available models and their application to Southeast Asian data need to re-examined. Trying to focus the analysis to evaluate primarily the presence and degree of ranking (i.e., if social status was egalitarian, achieved, or ascribed) is not doing justice to the complexity of the data. It is unclear whether the differential wealth assumed in terms of the number of objects in a grave or the presence and absence of non-local artifacts actually implies variation in a formalized system of rank. In my opinion, all the sites discussed above are consistent with Bayard's statement (1984:108; which he gives even while arguing for subordinate and superordinate ranking at Non Nok Tha): "the apical very rich class postulated by Peebles and Kus, containing mainly adult males, does not appear to be present. Moreover there is no evidence for ranking in the restricted sense used by Peebles and Kus in their study...no clearly demarcated boundaries between ranks are apparent, nor are obvious symbols or badges of rank in evidence." The approaches to perceiving social differentiation do not seem to address the available data adequately. This is not to say that differential ranking of

some sort was not present; the question is whether or not the approach to social analysis appropriately conceptualizes how the societies functioned.

What can be considered *salient* about prehistoric Thai cemeteries, if a theoretical position is put aside? Beyond the fact that each cemetery seems to be a part of the common mortuary tradition mentioned above, I suggest there are four salient characteristics.

The first salient characteristic is that the relative endowment of the graves vary at each site in a way that is consistent with a continuum rather than a step progression. Rich graves are rich because they are at one end of a continuum. There is an overall increase of wealth over time in the sense that the graves at the wealthy end of the spectrum may have more objects and a greater range of object types, particularly after 1000 BC, but there is not necessarily a marked increase in *differentiation* of groups by wealth over time. This sense of continuum continues into the Ban Chiang Late Period, which is one of the only excavated cemetery deposits in Thailand that extends into the early first millennium AD and just before the earliest historic evidence on the region and the earliest states. In other words, there is no overt evidence for the emergence of something like a large, obviously poorer group that contrasts with a smaller, obviously richer group with a clear gap in between, which is the criterion proposed by Peebles and Kus (1977) for ranking consistent with a chiefdom.

The second salient feature of the cemeteries is that the criteria denoting social differentiation differ at each cemetery. I am assuming, for example, that the difference in prominence in exotic artifacts at Ban Na Di and Non Nok Tha may very well reflect *cultural* differences and that therefore the set of variables or criteria used to compare graves at one site will not necessarily be appropriate for all of the other sites in the region. This observation is consistent with the observation in the previous section that there is a marked tendency in Southeast Asia toward highly localized cultures expressed in localized material cultures and that this cultural localization will be reflected in localized value systems with respect to burial ritual and social status. Another corollary of this observation is that an individual dimension of social status (e.g., access to certain imports) may be only situationally and not generally relevant.

The third salient characteristic of these prehistoric cemeteries is that the graves of children are often as well or better endowed than contemporary adults. We cannot assume that this implies "nonvolitional hereditary status" (Peebles and Kus 1977). This pattern could also represent parental affection or display of *claimed* parental status in a context where status is a context for negotiation. A sample of graves of individuals in their early teens would assist examination of this issue in more detail.

The fourth salient characteristic is the common occurrence of burials that stand out as distinctive, not so much in terms of great wealth or obvious political power but in the individualized sense noted by Sørensen for Ban Kao. These unique graves usually suggest differentiation in terms of the individual's social, ritual, or economic role. Two graves at Ban Chiang are suggestive of differential treatment: BC B.20 with its unique assemblage of bone artifacts and BC B.23 with its unique assemblage of pellets, adze, bracelets, and a pot. The nearby site of Ban Tong has a grave of a male with over 17 associated deer jaws. Graves with metal production artifacts (hence possibly graves of metalworkers) have been found at Non Nok Tha (Bayard 1980) and Khao Wong Prachan Valley sites in central Thailand (Pigott and Natapintu 1988; Pigott et al. 1995) as well as in Vietnam (Ha Van Tan 1991). These graves indicate that an individual's activities contributed to their role differentiation relative to others in the society. Grave differentiation at Ban Chiang, Ban Kao, Ban Na Di, and Non Nok Tha has not been identified in terms of overtly exclusive placement combined with a degree of wealth outstanding from the continuum (i.e., an outstandingly rich grave in a special location suggestive of a chief or chiefly lineage).

On the other hand, Khok Phanom Di has the best evidence yet found in Thailand for a prehistoric grave that is differentiated by a large quantity of grave goods and special placement. Burial 15, a female, was buried within an unusually large pit (nearly 1 meter deep and 3 meters long) that was placed in a different location and orientation than the earlier graves. She was embellished with 8-10 pottery vessels and tens of thousands of beads, presumably sewn to a jacket. It is noteworthy, however, that included in the grave furnishings were many implements for pottery manufacture, including anvils, burnishing stones, and unfired pottery preforms. She has been interpreted as a highly ranked potter for these and other reasons (Higham 1989b:87). It would seem that this grave, in addition to the high relative-wealth that is measured by number, range, and quality of grave goods, further exemplifies the pattern of differentiation by social and economic function suggested at other sites. The social evidence

from Khok Phanom Di and the nearby later site of Nong Nor (Higham and Bannanurag 1992; revised dating for Nong Nor in Hedges et al. [1993]) shows no sustained or subsequent trend toward elite consolidation. This suggests that the scalar stress that may have spawned Khok Phanom Di's distinctive later developments was not of a degree or nature to push the society into a fundamental shift toward a hierarchical system of integration and control. It might have merely spawned an unsustainable, *flash-in-the-pan*, social manifestation during a brief period late in the Khok Phanom Di mortuary sequence.

Despite earlier claims for "hereditary hierarchy" in these cemeteries, it now seems that the data provide strong evidence of achieved bases for social differentiation in these prehistoric cemeteries in Thailand. However, I feel that to merely conclude that these prehistoric societies had achieved status does not do justice to the complexity of the data. Instead, I propose that the prehistoric cemeteries of Thailand are consistent with the existence of a flexible, complex, multifaceted, multilateral system of status and social differentiation. Personal economic achievements and social functions, as well as variation in family wealth and probably kinship rank, all operated simultaneously and hence combined ascribed and achieved factors. Furthermore, I suggest that avenues toward status were multidimensional and may have varied by microculture, with wealth as only one component of social differentiation. These avenues could probably be negotiated and manipulated by individuals. I propose this multifaceted system in part because it would be consistent with later Southeast Asian historic and ethnographic evidence, which will be briefly reviewed later in this chapter.

Low Levels of Violent Intercommunity Conflict

Another observation for the prehistoric period is that there is very little evidence for significant social energy directed toward intergroup violent conflict. Elsewhere, I have made the point that the *bronze age* period in the core area of mainland Southeast Asia was relatively peaceful compared to areas such as the Mesopotamia and Shang Dynasty China from where the traditional conception of the "bronze age" has been derived (White 1982, 1988). The observation was made in part because most of the prehistoric bronzes seem to be personal ornaments and implements useful in a village context and few bronzes could be unequivocally classed as weapons (northern Vietnam seems to have developed somewhat differently, with more evidence of metal weapons after 1000 BC). The point has been criticized (Higham 1984), but the critique addresses the issue from a narrowly conceived, undifferentiated framework. The issue is not whether some weapons or some conflict were present. The issue is the degree to which warfare was a central organizing focus in the dynamics of the society that motivated the production of metals, the evolution of technology, and the expenditure of significant amounts of social energy in defensive and offensive strategies in both the social (e.g., development of standing armies) and material realms (e.g., building of large, permanent fortifications). All societies need to resolve conflict and intergroup hostility. Feuding and some head-hunting, perhaps even along the lines described for the Nagas (Jacobs et al. 1990:138), certainly could have characterized the prehistoric societies discussed in this chapter. Evaluation of the archeological evidence *in toto*—including the relative rarity of unequivocal weapons for use against humans, the patterns of skeletal trauma that are consistent with everyday accidents (Douglas 1995), and the absence until well after the appearance of iron of any evidence of large, possibly defensive constructions such as earthworks—suggests that the prehistoric societies in the core area of Southeast Asia had very little interest in developing *military might*.

Why might this be? Control over resources has been considered a rationale for developing offensive and defensive capabilities. While some economic resources such as copper and salt (but less so agricultural land) are nucleated in particular regions of the region of concern, they are generally not so concentrated that any individual village might be cut off from a desired or essential product if they were having a feud with another village. We know in central Thailand, for instance, that several contemporary communities were producing copper at the same time. While there may have been competition among communities in the production and distribution of metals, there is no evidence yet for resulting intercommunity conflict. In fact, I would argue that long term interregional exchange without evidence of associated political centralization or control implies a context with little warfare. Dispute resolution may have stressed mechanisms such as ritual and sequential decision-making discussed by Johnson (1982).

A Few Comments on Developments in Later Prehistory

The evidence reviewed above suggests that a horizontally differentiated yet integrated social system with flexible economic and social dynamics developed in Thailand during the millennia prior to the mid-first millennium BC. One probable basis for the long term success of this system was the broadly based, reliable, and localized subsistence strategy (Higham and Kijngam 1979; White 1995). Cultivation of inundated rice in intermediate locations along drainage systems seems to have formed the basis for the region's staple production since northeast Thailand was initially settled by rice agriculturalists in the fourth millennium BC (White 1995). I have argued elsewhere (White 1990; see also Bray 1986) that cultivation of inundated rice in Southeast Asia is best carried out in small land-holding units, of which the household is the natural unit, because of the intimate micro-environmental manipulation over successive years of particular patches of land necessary to produce the best and most reliable yields (Geertz 1963). That horizontal social integration and decentralized, reliable subsistence production go hand in hand is supported by Johnson (1982:404), who suggests that "decision complexity in the realm of subsistence organization is inversely related to resource predictability...[and] the integrative potential of sequential hierarchy [i.e., heterarchical social systems] is directly related to resource predictability." Notably, Johnson (1982:403) implies that he expects the pace of decision-making (which might be related to the pace of political change?) in social systems with sequential decision-making (i.e., horizontal integration) to be *slow*.

As previously noted, archeological evidence from the late prehistoric period is sparse but currently suggests that settlement patterns in the Mun and the Chi river systems of northeast Thailand in the middle of the first millennium BC experienced shifts to include the appearance of moats and differentially large settlements. This evidence has been interpreted as primarily a response to exploiting areas with increased fluctuations in resource predictability due to rainfall variability (Welch and McNeill 1991). Following Johnson, therefore, this might suggest that hierarchical elements, at least in the realms of settlement size and probably labor organization, were introduced at this stage and in this region as a response to the scalar stress provoked by increased unpredictability in subsistence–resource acquisition. The heterarchical elements did not fade away from Southeast Asia's social system, however, but remained fundamental to the region's developmental trajectory, as we shall examine in the next section.

HETERARCHY IN LATER SOUTHEAST ASIAN HISTORIC AND ETHNOHISTORIC CONTEXTS

While archeological evidence from the prehistoric period immediately preceding the formation of states in the region is very sparse, awareness of later outcomes from historic times can put the prehistoric archeological evidence into clearer perspective. A full review of the relevant historical, ethnohistorical, and ethnographical literature is beyond the scope of this chapter. I will note below selected examples that suggest that the heterarchy proposed for the prehistoric period continued into the period of early historic states and more recent times.

Cultural Pluralism in Later Southeast Asian Contexts

Marked ethno-linguistic diversity is a well known characteristic of Southeast Asia with a known time-depth of a millennium or more. Examination of the historical and ethno-historical literature reveals, however, that the region's cultural pluralism is a much more pervasive and complexly expressed quality than can simply be attributed to immigration of groups from southern and western China a thousand years ago or more. The cultural pluralism is not only coincident with linguistic divisions but is also evident within ethno-linguistic groups (Graves 1994).

Ethnicity and cultural diversity were well recognized by the early Southeast Asian states. Wolters (1982:52) has even stated that a most salient characteristic of the earlier historic period is cultural diversity and its highly localized expression. Wicks (1992) argues that one of the interesting manifestations of localization is in the "widely divergent ways of expressing value," resulting in highly diverse means and degrees of monetization of early state economies and the co-existence within individual regions of numerous valuational systems.

Cultural diversity and ethnicity served both integrative and structural functions in early Southeast Asian states. Ethnic groups were recognized to fill certain economic niches, such as providing particular goods or services. The Kui, for example, may have provided iron for the Khmer empire (Bronson and Charoenwongsa 1986:24).

Ethnicity, occupation, and residence at Pagan generally coincided and were eventually legally codified (Aung Thwin 1985:90). The core-area state administrations' approach to cultural diversity notably contrasted with China's approach to the Red River valley, where the Chinese practiced cultural imperialism with considerable success. Imposing the dominant group's culture and homogenizing the diverse conquered groups does not appear to have been a major state goal in the Southeast Asian core area.

While the marked ethno-linguistic diversity of recent Southeast Asia has a known time-depth of only one or two thousand years, ethnic boundary formation in historic times has been considered, in part, a context for choice and manipulation in the region's *political economy* and not merely a given of historical origin (e.g., Lehman 1967). The consciousness of this flexibility of ethnic identity seems to have a strong political motivation.

Graves' (1994) discussion of the Kalinga of northern Luzon of the Philippines provides an excellent example of subgroup formation *within* a single ethno-linguistic group. This example also shows how intra-ethnic group cultural diversity can form within an alliance-focused and fluid regional political context with community economic specialization. A non-rigid status system based on multiple criteria, where "ascribed status differentiation is only weakly developed" is also extant (Graves 1994:15). Of potential relevance to interpreting the localized pottery traditions of prehistoric Thailand is his finding that pottery design systems corresponded to politically defined regions. Graves attributes the regionality of design not only to the learning frameworks formed by regional endogamy but also as deliberate demonstrations by potters of regional affiliation. Potters consciously avoided designs of another region. Graves (1994:48) concludes:

> The Kalinga case illustrates for us that sharply bounded social systems can occur...in the absence of strongly differentiated political or status regimes. This social fact is not well appreciated by archeological typologists, who seem to believe that well-organized or stylistically distinct social systems always imply authoritarian forms of social complexity.

In summary, both historic and ethnographic evidence document ongoing expression of cultural pluralism where social boundaries are defined by various means that may or may not include language differences. The social subgroups provide a means for lateral differentiation and integration of the larger society and a context for flexible ranking and flexible economic and social interrelationships that are not necessarily *controlled* by a recognized higher power.

Heterarchical Dynamics in Indigenous Economies of Later Southeast Asia

Although the evidence available concerning the indigenous economies of the early historic period is sparse and ambiguous, it seems likely that localized, household-based production of food and crafts, with specialized communities producing some commodities, continued in large part to characterize regional economies.

The production of rice, the main source of finance for Southeast Asia's early states in the core area, likely incorporated intensification strategies in some contexts. Hydraulic works are associated with these states, but the degree to which they were built and managed by the political centers or were even necessary to the production of rice is often open to question. For Angkor and other areas, food production may still have been organized by household units with the hydraulic management decentralized and probably community based (van Liere 1980; Stargardt 1990; Christie 1992). For Pagan, which is located in a dry zone, access to a well developed and probably more-regulated irrigation system may have been more integral to rice production (Aung Thwin 1985).

In fact, the temple, or rather the temple network, is the institution frequently mentioned as having a major role in expansion of hydraulic works as well as in accumulating and then redistributing resources (Hall 1992:241-2). It could be argued that the establishment and elaboration of these region-wide hierarchical systems outside of government bureaucracies (which at least in the case of Angkor were notably underdeveloped) and along side locally based landed elites represents another example of a strategy of lateral differentiation at a juncture of scalar stress. In this situation, political leaders needed to finance themselves in a sustained manner sufficient for major building campaigns and the occasional extra-territorial war. The locally focused landed social elites were apparently unwilling to recognize and support continuity of institutional leadership beyond the life of individual charismatic leaders (Wheatley 1979). Thus, the establishment of a *parallel* hierarchical system comprised of a region-wide religion

(where apparently none existed previously) that served to ideologically and financially support the hegemon and his successors could be argued to represent a clever heterarchical political innovation.

Detailed information on the indigenous manufacturing sector (e.g., pottery, salt, textiles, metals; Hall 1992:275) is lacking, although the literature implies some continuity from the prehistoric period of the genre of economic production and exchange posited above: household units of production, community specialization, and a multicentric overlapping distribution system that was not tightly controlled by a small group of elites (Wolters 1982:37; Hall 1985:172,322; Wicks 1992; although see Aung-Thwin [1985] on Pagan for a different picture). While extra-regional exchange was (to varying degrees) subject to elite controls, internal trade was merely "frequently supervised" primarily to limit surplus accumulation (Wicks 1992:310). For Angkor, Hall notes (1985:172,322) that indigenous marketing networks were not centralized or hierarchically organized by the state or a merchant elite. Hall states that the merchants "controlled" the networks, which were the means by which the king and temples acquired goods. Hall seems to imply, however, that the merchants controlled access by the elites to the networks but not necessarily the exchange among the settlements themselves.

There is very little specific information on the production and distribution of manufactured goods, but, drawing from various sources (Suchitta 1983; Hall 1985, 1992; Bronson and Charoenwongsa 1986:13; Bowie 1992; Christie 1992; Wicks 1992), a likely scenario seems to be that *attached* (following Earle's concept discussed in Brumfiel and Earle 1987) workshops or patronized artisans produced some products for royalty, such as fine textiles or religious sculpture. Unattached, unadministered specialized communities also coexisted, however, which produced for both the elite and local consumers either in discrete villages or as sectors in urbanized settings. Elites gained access to the products of independent specialized communities via intermediaries and through tribute and taxation mechanisms. Such a system could have helped to maintain and even stimulate community and regional economic productivity and differentiation.

Multi-modal commodity production and distribution systems that emphasized household production and community specialization also characterized more recent periods. Bowie's (1992) description of the multi-modal character of production and distribution of textiles in nineteenth century northern Thailand provides an excellent example of a diverse, multicentric, and predominantly household and community-based craft production and distribution system in a state context. Different stages of production (e.g., cotton growing, carding, spinning, weaving, dyeing and sewing) could take place in various combinations of both nucleated and dispersed settings ranging from individual households in a village to regions that had several villages specializing in particular products. Distribution of the endproducts of the various stages could be done by means ranging from the individual craftsperson to caravan tradesmen to the consumer travelling to the producer. Producers such as itinerant dyers could also visit consumer villages and perform their specialty away from home.

Production of elite products (e.g., silk for the aristocracy) was more *specialized* in the sense that fewer craftspeople had the requisite skills and capital. Silk, therefore, had higher prestige value and was more expensive, but its production and distribution was also multimodal. A few villages specialized in silk, but it was also woven at the court by war captives, slaves, or even members of the aristocracy themselves. Tribute and slavery were means in addition to the commercial sector by which textiles could be acquired by aristocrats. Therefore *attached* specialization co-existed with but did not replace community specialization, even in the production of elite products.

I propose that this pattern of varying degrees of differentiation within the household/community range of specialization and a multi-modal distribution system with limited attached specialization (probably more to *guarantee* elite access rather than *control* elite exclusivity to prestige products) is the type of scenario that should be envisioned for the development of craft specialization in the prehistoric and historic periods of the core area of mainland Southeast Asia.

Flexible Social Status in Later Southeast Asian Contexts

Rigidly ascribed social rank is not a prominent characteristic of Southeast Asian historic or ethnographic social contexts. Southeast Asian ethnography is full of references to flexible social systems and status structures that do not conform to typical hierarchical models. The flexibility is evident in tendencies toward non-unilineal kinship systems, alliance-focused political systems, ambi-

guity and oscillation in intergroup relations, and leveling mechanisms in status and wealth. There are numerous references in the early state literature to flexibility in social status (e.g., Jacques 1979; Wolters 1982; Christie 1985:17; Hagesteijn 1986; see also Kobkua Suwanna that-Dian [1993]) and suggestions that structures that were hierarchical in theory overlay a much more fluid and flexible reality.

The nature and implications of the flexible social status of Southeast Asian states can be examined with the critical issue of succession. Lineage was downplayed and strategically manipulated in a multilateral fashion. Descent was only one criterion that might be used to legitimize a claim to the position of ruler and was used flexibly: male line, female line, spouse's line, distant ancestor, or even mythical ancestor (Hagesteijn 1986).

> A direct transfer of power from father to son is recorded in nine cases out of thirty-two....In almost as many cases (eight) the power passed to brothers or cousins...or to a wife's nephew, to grandsons or even to husbands of first cousins once removed. The choice among these many candidates was determined 'by their age and virtue' (Sedov 1978:116).

Usurpation by individuals with no royal blood was accepted if *prowess* (i.e., leadership ability) was subsequently demonstrated, as was the case for one of Pagan's most successful rulers (Aung-Thwin 1985:66). Needless to say, succession on the basis of *age* and *virtue* from a broad field of candidates is not what the evolutionary model for state formation predicts.

Historians have commented on the distinctive nature of leadership in Southeast Asia's early states, specifically its charismatic quality, the importance of the individuals' demonstrated *prowess* (Wolters 1982; i.e., achievements), and the individual's personal behavior and track record.[2] An extension of the interpersonal emphasis in leadership is that clusters of patron-client relationships (rather than ranked classes or lineages, laws, or bureaucracies) were the fundamental means by which *government* was administered and power was expressed (Wolters 1982:20).

Social anthropologists have long observed the prominence of non-unilineal forms of kinship organization among Southeast Asian societies (for recent review, see articles in Hüsken and Kemp [1991]). Others have pointed out (Winzeler 1976; Wolters 1982) that the probability that such non-unilineal or possibly bilateral descent systems characterized the ancient period would likely have had a significant impact on the formation and character of Southeast Asian states. While cognatic kinship does not imply a *type* of society or culture with predictable, common manifestations and characteristics, ethnographers have observed that one of the behavioral correlates of cognatic systems observed among several Southeast Asian societies is considerable *individual choice* (Embree 1969; King 1991:18) in responding to jural sanctions and social obligations. Thus it might be considered that cognatic systems provided a *prima facie* basis for flexible response, a product of which may have been the great variety of manifested social forms that have developed in Southeast Asia (King 1991:30) as well as their malleability over time.

That societies vary in the degree to which they proscribe the behaviors and choices for individuals has long been recognized by cultural anthropologists working in Southeast Asia. Embree (1969) discussed this phenomenon in Thai society, noting that although rules of social obligation are articulated in theory, the individual ultimately decides whether or not to abide by those rules. There may be a period of social tension if he or she does not, but the individual is usually eventually welcomed back into the social fold. Embree contrasts this *looseness* with the rigidity of Japanese and Chinese society, where filial piety, for example, is demanded and strongly sanctioned.

Southeast Asian societies also demonstrate flexibility in mechanisms for status definition. Jacobs et al. (1990) provide illustrative examples of the Nagas, whose variegated status could be based on combinations of ascribed and achieved qualities; lineage, marriage, number of heads taken (reflective of prowess), number of different types of feasts sponsored (reflective of wealth) were all employed in status differentiation but could be stressed variously over space and time to produce different degrees and configurations of ranking. Individuals, especially men, even from lowly ranked lineages could strategize to acquire status through their own actions. Status was not defined within a single all encompassing conical hierarchy or fixed value system, rather a multilateral system for determining status in particular contexts resulted in the potential for varying flexible hierarchical arrangements.

Alliance-Focused Socio-Political Systems in Later Southeast Asia

Historic and ethnohistoric political systems in Southeast Asia also reveal common elements in their stress on flexibility and alliance formation. It was critical for successful leaders to demonstrate diplomatic skill through managing interpersonal relationships (Wolters 1982:18) or negotiating peace or external trade (Hall 1985:191). Although many wars were recorded, historians do not seem to regard them as the central organizing activity for the early rulers (Wolters 1982:17), or at least peaceful leadership and alliance formation are also frequently stressed (Hall 1985:6, 138).

A corollary of the charismatic style of leadership is the centripetal as opposed to centrifugal nature of the dynamic between the state and its populace. Attraction of population toward leaders and toward the center outweighed an expanding domination or compulsion by the center over territory (Christie 1985:9). This tone can be seen in a lack of emphasis on permanent territorial boundaries, their fluctuation, fluidity, and even overlap. States were not seen as mutually exclusive bounded entities, and some areas perceived themselves as being parts of more than one state at one time (Winichakul 1994).

A corollary of the centripetal dynamic between the state and its populace is that controlling territory was less the focus than controlling labor and hence people. Hall (1985:4) believes that the struggle to control people, and thus manpower, principally through the formation of political alliances with local landed elite was the primary concern for rulers. Low population density is repeatedly mentioned as "a problem" for Southeast Asian states. Elaboration of patron/client-style relationships formed the basis of labor recruitment rather than defining stratified role relationships. Leaders attracted followers, even entire villages, through providing security, land, prestige, protection, and access to water as means of expanding a supporting populace. The "slaves" or "bondsmen" mentioned in the literature could likely be best conceived as falling into a client-type of relationship (Aung-Thwin 1985:87).

The political and social anthropology of the region repeatedly stresses the importance of political alliance formation and the coexistence of and flexible interplay among hierarchical and egalitarian value systems (e.g., Leach 1954; McKinnon 1991). Graves' (1994) discussion of the Kalinga notes that the regions of settlements were formed on the basis of continually renegotiated *peace pacts*. Leach's (1954) *Political Systems of Highland Burma* provides a classic and richly complex case of what can easily be identified as heterarchy: the ambiguous relations and oscillation (rather than the evolution) between autocratic, hierarchically ordered *gumsa* systems and the egalitarian, factionalized *gumlao* systems. Any individual community may operate in either a relatively hierarchical or a democratic manner and may alternate between the two over time. In addition, the superior relationship of wife-givers to wife-receivers implies a contextual hierarchy in the asymmetrical marriage alliance systems frequently identified in Southeast Asian groups (also discussed by McKinnon [1991] and others) because the lineages marry in a circular pattern. In theory, the asymmetric circle of superior relationships among wife-givers to wife-receivers results in the very paradoxical *dromic* pattern that was the basis of the original discussion of heterarchy (McCulloch 1945).

Jacobs et al. (1990) describe similar systems of structural oscillation (the Thendu/Thenkoh and Sema/Angami) in his book on the Nagas of eastern India. Other Southeast Asian groups display different contexts for oscillatory behavior, such as in ethnic identity or ritual behavior (e.g., Kirsch 1973). In sum, the ethnographic literature provides numerous examples of groups that consider hierarchical relationships in politics and society to be contextual and flexible.

DISCUSSION

This overview of evidence for heterarchy in the prehistory, history, and ethnography of Southeast Asia suggests steps towards a heterarchically aware model for the development of social complexity appropriate to the Southeast Asian context. I thus see two fundamental elements contributing to heterarchical development in Southeast Asia that have had profound implications for the region's trajectory of development: (1) tendencies toward ego-focused social systems that I propose have greater inherent potential for flexibility than unilineal kinship systems; and (2) tendencies to emphasize or at least incorporate lateral solutions to structural problems at points of scalar stress, a quality that may have implications for the pace and style of Southeast Asia's social development.

Evolutionary models that focus on the development of ascriptive ranking tend to assume or be most compatible

with unilineal kinship organization. Yet a tendency toward ego-focused social systems in Southeast Asia is suggested in all three time periods considered: from the individualized treatment of graves in the prehistoric period, to the multiple avenues of succession and evidence for bilaterality in the historic states, to the prevalence of cognatic kinship systems in the ethnographic record.

Likewise, lateralized strategies with increased differentiation occurring horizontally seem to be a frequent response to contexts calling for increased complexity. The fragmentation of material culture after the appearance of bronze in the prehistoric period instead of the more expected increases in vertical differentiation, is one example. The incorporation of the pan-regional temple networks as a context for hierarchical expression in the historic period when perhaps the underlying secular social system was resistant to institutionalized vertical differentiation, can be viewed as a mechanism of horizontal differentiation. In ethnographic contexts, the intensification of ethnic differentiation rather than homogenization and subjugation as different ethno-linguistic groups come into increased contact with lowland state societies (e.g., articles in Kunstadter [1967]) is another example.

Flexible hierarchy and horizontal differentiation may be expressed in different ways among different societies across time, but they provide a basis for flexibility in response to challenges, be they environmental, economic, social, or historical, and alternatives to direct hierarchical mechanisms for regulatory control and integration. That this type of differentiation can serve in various types of societies during various stages of development as an alternative to, or even a component of, vertical differentiation as a mechanism to accomplish complex tasks and reduce social tensions is, I maintain, demonstrated in the Southeast Asian evidence. A potential implication for these underlying dynamics is that *control* and regulatory mechanisms can be dispersed rather than centralized and contextual rather than structural. Cross-group interaction can occur without the need for status to be defined as a stable condition, status defined not at all, or status defined only for the particular occasion or type of occasion (e.g., wife-giving or receiving).

Furthermore, the Southeast Asian data bring clearly into focus the fact that hierarchically based discussions of chiefdoms and state formation have been looking at a number of variables that are actually one side of a number of axes of cultural continua (Figure 9-2). The Southeast Asian data show that the definitiveness and rigidity of boundaries (between classes, lineages, and political entities) implied in the hierarchical models is a quality that should be treated as a variable and not as an inherent component of the process of the evolution of social complexity (a distinction reminiscent of Durkiem's mechanical and organic solidarity). While state societies in the archeological literature have tended to be discussed on the basis of the hierarchical end of the continua, our own society need only be considered to realize that heterarchical principles are not incompatible with statehood.

In a story that makes a point similar to Embree's (1969) comparison of the Thai and Chinese, the reality of variation in rigidity is highlighted by the exploits of a nineteenth century French expedition looking for a route up the Mekong for European trade with China. In interior Southeast Asia, the team encountered *ethnic confusion*, groups differentiated by dress, languages, and dialects. They also described great frustration in trying to get permission to pass certain regions, where local principalities were allied to more than one "state" claiming hegemony (Osborne 1975:94,105). "Sequential decision making" repeatedly held up the team's progress, as they needed permits from many powers and obtaining them was a confusing maze of interpersonal games. The team felt great relief in finally entering a region that bore the "...'stamp of routine uniformity' which China's cultural system imposed on the diverse ethnic groups assimilated to its civilization" (Osborne 1975:126) and in which the lines of authority were, relatively speaking, clearly defined.

Archeological theories have failed thus far to consider the effect that the difference between cultures with relatively rigid rules of structure and behavior and cultures with flexible rules would have on the development of social complexity. The type and functioning of hierarchies in flexible as opposed to rigid societies should differ, with flexible societies giving more play for strategizing and negotiation by individuals or groups. It is also a dimension that potentially has empirical correlates that archeologists might be able to identify to help us flesh out the dynamics of societies emphasizing heterarchical principles.

Figure 9-2 provides a framework to begin to articulate variability within the components of a cultural system along several axes of the hierarchy-heterarchy continua. An individual society need not be characterized by just the right or the left hand side of the table but could have various combinations of hierarchical or heterarchical com-

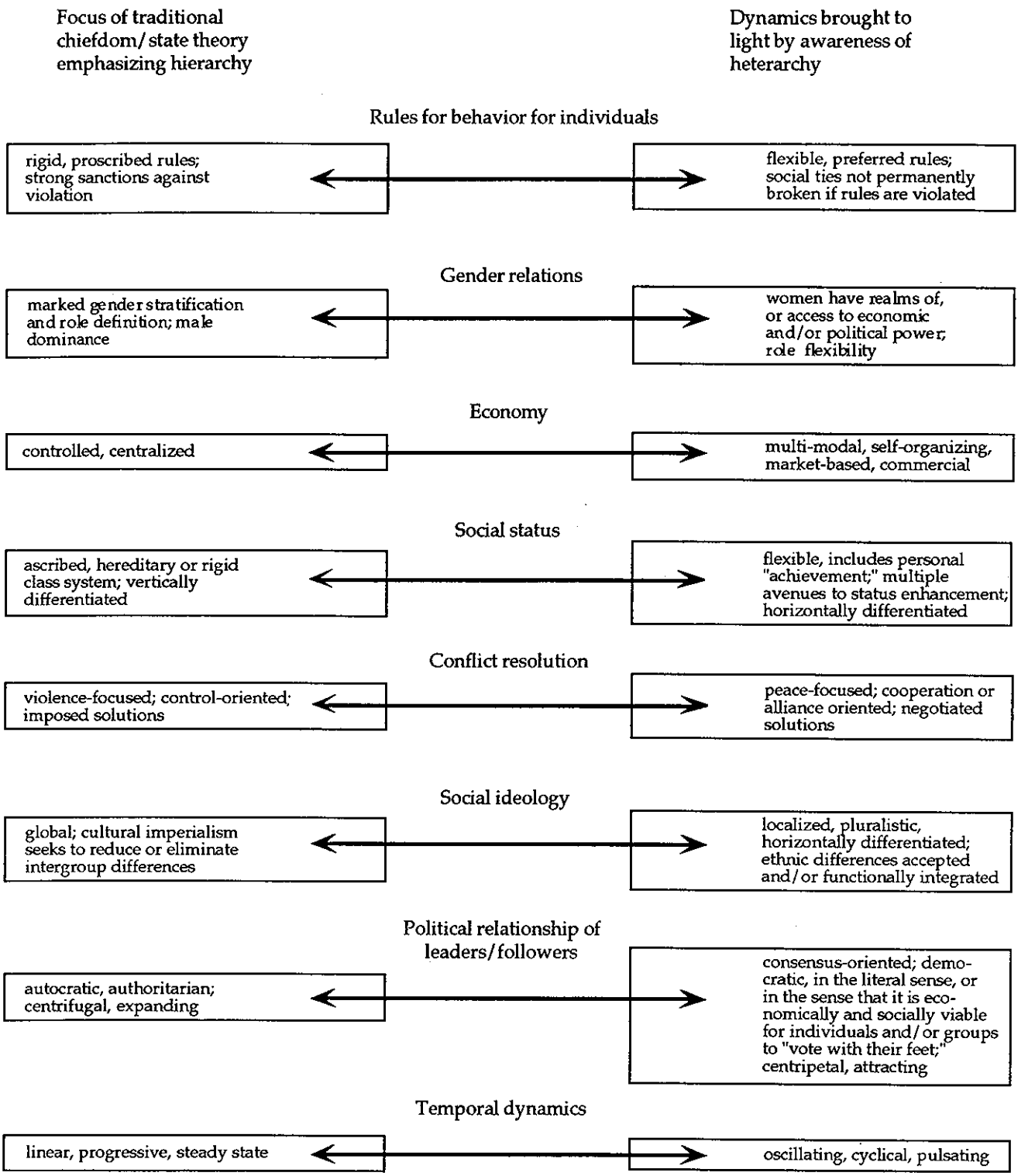

Figure 9-2: *Continua for dimensions of social organization in complex societies.*

ponents. Examination of an individual case with respect to these various dimensions and their structural interrelationships is a means to move beyond a *typology* approach (e.g., in Kristiansen [1991], the "decentralized stratified society" versus the "centralized archaic state") to analyzing components of intermediate or early state societies where the real-life example turns out to have some but not all of the characteristics of the *type* or characteristics of more than one type. Thus, for example, the Maya (Potter and King, this volume) reveal a highly stratified political system but a horizontally integrated economic system.

The potential richness of this approach is evident when considering that the dimensions should be considered continua and not either/or, presence/absence attributes. On individual dimensions, a society may tend toward one extreme, the other extreme, or maybe somewhere between the poles by combining aspects of both. For example, the textile production and distribution system described by Bowie (1992) for northern Thailand was primarily self-organizing but included some controlled or *attached* production of fine fabrics for royalty. Different crafts within the same society may be controlled or dispersed to different degrees with resultant implications for how the individual society functioned and changed. It is suggested that a comprehensive examination of the various combinations of elements in terms of their hierarchy/heterarchy dimensions will go far to flesh out differences among individual complex societies and their character at a particular point in their historic continuum.

Implications for Model Building

If the components of societies are merely placed along various continua, won't we get lost in mounds of particularistic details? How can one incorporate the data into models if one allows for individual and cultural choice, negotiation, and strategy? Including the concept of choice does not fit well with the underlying determinism of evolutionary models. The answer lies, I believe, in adding to our discussions the theoretical orientations being proposed from self-organization science and its subsidiary, chaos science, which are more compatible with heterarchical dynamics (Scott 1991; Kauffman 1993; see also Adams 1988).

While the specifics of the incorporation of these broader theories into archeological theory will be worked out as more archeologists apply the ideas over time, at the present I see several immediate contributions. Self-organization and chaos theories offer the following useful concepts: (1) a trajectory of development viewed as successively bifurcating rather than lineal; (2) the importance of specific initial conditions in determining the system's response at the point of bifurcation (equivalent to point of scalar stress?); (3) the view that the path taken at the point of bifurcation is relatively unpredictable (chaotic) whereas the path leading up to the bifurcation is relatively deterministic; (4) the articulation of fundamental dynamic patterns beyond lineal progressions (of which the oscillating dynamic may have particular relevance for the Southeast Asian context); and (5) the importance of *generic properties of ensembles* in the developmental trajectory of a system.

Up until very recently, archeologists have tended to think in terms of lineal (even if multi-lineal) progression and to discount other dynamic patterns such as the oscillating dynamic and their potential impact on cultural trajectories. Archeologists have focused almost exclusively on the steady state dynamic in the guise of equilibrium models. Interestingly, Johnson (1982:416) was on the track of the self-organization theorists by implying a bifurcation-type model for the development of complexity when he noted:

> ...trajectories of organizational development will depend in part on *response sequence*, i.e., the temporal order in which sequential and/or simultaneous hierarchy development or elaboration occurs....We can probably expect organizational change under scalar stress to be more discontinuous than continuous [emphasis added].

CONCLUSION: AN EMERGING RESEARCH AGENDA

I have argued that the issues raised in the beginning of this chapter concerning the pacing and legitimizing strategy for the development of complex society in the core area of mainland Southeast Asia can be fruitfully examined from a heterarchical framework. This perspective suggests that the development of social complexity and political centralization are distinct phenomena and that the concepts should be separated in discussions of theory. Moreover, the heterarchical perspective suggests new avenues for both theoretical and empirical research. On the empirical side, the Southeast Asian data show that evi-

dence may in many cases be accessible to archeologists to evaluate the presence for heterarchical patterns. For example, mortuary evidence can be used to examine flexibility of status, rigidity of funerary rules, and evidence for individualizing graves that may have bearing on the relative rigidity of rules of behavior or relative importance of individuals as opposed to corporate groups.

On theoretical issues, amplified criteria beyond simplistic binary oppositional frameworks (presence-and-absence style statements) need to be developed in order to measure, differentiate, and evaluate the impact of such variables as warfare, economic control, agricultural intensification, or craft specialization. Costin (1991) has made important advances in the amplification and differentiation of *craft specialization* as well as provided guidelines for evaluating variants in archeological contexts. Similar thoughtful treatments of the other critical variables are long overdue. For example, empirical evidence to evaluate the presence, type, degree, and impact of violent conflict on the social system should be able to be defined beyond a minimal reference to *warfare*. Criteria for amplification might include the degree of technical and formal elaboration of weaponry and a quantitative assessment of its prominence, the evidence for violent trauma in skeletal populations, and the evidence for defensive (not just offensive) manifestations, such as the degree of elaboration of defensive earthworks.

Complex societies can be re-examined along these more-fully articulated dimensions to see if the variability encountered can be addressed more richly as well as systematically. Changes in complex societies over time might be specified to particular dimensions, and the impact of particular stimuli may vary depending on how a particular society's continua are configured at any particular point of scalar stress.

In addition to helping us examine our data more thoroughly, systematically, and richly, the proposed perspective challenges some of the basic assumptions anthropological archeologists have stressed in recent decades in upper level theory, namely assumptions of determinism, predictability, and *a-cultural* evolution. The Southeast Asian data highlight the need to incorporate in archeological theory the possibility and implications of heterarchy at every level of social dynamic.

NOTES

[1]Not considered in this paper are the socio-political developments on the northern periphery of mainland Southeast Asia along the Red River in northern Vietnam and Yunnan. States in northern Vietnam are considered to have been imposed by China (Wheatley 1979, 1989). Archeological evidence from the prehistoric period shows that the Red River Valley's socio-cultural development took a trajectory distinctive from the core region of mainland Southeast Asia from at least 1000 BC and probably earlier.

[2]The possibility that the development of site hierarchies in the Phimai area was associated with centralized production of crafts other than copper needs to be thoroughly explored. The resources considered of focal interest for these societies (i.e., land, salt, timber, and iron ore) are not highly nucleated, however. McNeill and Welch (1991) in a preliminary study were also not able to identify evidence for specialized ceramic manufacturing centers.

[3]This stress on the personal achievement of state rulers is bound to disturb the archeologist brought up on cultural evolutionary theory. Achievement included many qualities and actions, including ability to skillfully gather political intelligence, mediation and diplomacy, spiritual endowment, wealth, and sometimes warfare, among others. Skill in handling complex interpersonal relationships was probably more important for leaders than mobilizing aggressive actions.

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