

ABSTRACT

The primary archaeological markers of annual trepanging visits to the northern Australian coastline are the processing sites and a significant component of the material culture represented at these sites is discarded earthenware pottery shards.

Ethnohistorical evidence suggested that trepanging was an integral part of the rich and diverse inter-archipelago trade system and that from the 17th century the voyages to northern Australia were an expansion of a larger trading network. Previous scientific analyses of the earthenwares from along the northern Australia coastline, however, suggested that any involvement by the "Macassan" trepangers within these cyclical trade networks was considerably more constrained than would be expected from the ethnohistorical data. This thesis reevaluates prior analyses of island Southeast Asian earthenwares. Utilising an ethnoarchaeological framework and introducing new earthenware data, it provides an alternative perspective of the role played by trepangers within the wider historical context of island Southeast Asian trade in a turbulent but little understood period of regional development.