

Abstract

Over the period 1570-1640 economies of East and Southeast Asia were drawn into the globalization of trade of the Early Modern Period. For maritime trade European documents are a rich source for historical interpretation. In contrast, for historiography the Southeast Asian mainland interior has remained in essence *terra incog'nita*. Abundant evidence for craft production in the form of ceramic kilns throughout the Thai interior, some of truly industrial size, plus ceramics of shipwreck cargoes, demonstrate that in the pre-colonial period the economy of the inland had been dynamic, complex and linked into maritime trade. In the early seventeenth century this economy collapsed and ceramic production ceased. Archaeological analysis of a key production centre in northern Thailand appears to contradict the historiographic explanation for such radical change. Rather than succumbing to the recurring regional warfare of the late pre-colonial period Sisatchanalai, the largest production locale, expanded. Something more fundamentally radical than the occasional passage of military campaigns had to have occurred. An anthropologically informed alternative to conventional historical explanations is that a pre-modern barter economy of the Thai interior very rapidly collapsed under the transforming influence of commoditization and monetization, hallmarks synonymous with globalization for the Early Modern Period.

Ceramic production is used as a proxy for the regional economy. Because of a lack of a reliable chronology for ceramic production throughout the Thai interior I have turned to the ceramics of dated shipwreck assemblages.

Analysis is based on stoneware storage jars. This ceramic type offers several advantages over finewares (i.e. tablewares). A large sample collection from a chronological range of shipwreck assemblages is geochemically analyzed.

Interpretation of geochemical data, in terms of likely production centres, combined with typological analysis of jars provides a new perspective on regional differences in the pre-modern economies. These differences appear to determine outcomes in the face of the changes wrought by globalization.