

Rice in Thailand: The Archaeobotanical Contribution

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This paper is about rice in Thailand. There are few archaeological projects incorporating archaeobotanical sampling and even fewer published archaeobotanical studies in Thailand. However, the available data shows that rice was the most ubiquitous cereal in prehistory and particularly during the Metal/Iron Age. This could either signify the importance of rice as a crop or signal a preservation bias, both topics are considered in this paper. Furthermore, there are no genetic studies on prehistoric rice originating from Thai excavations, due to the lack of directly sourced archaeobotanical rice from well-dated excavations as well as the restrictive high costs involved. But several samples from well-dated excavations have been sent for analysis which may shed light on the *indica-japonica* debate.

My doctoral research focuses on the early urban site Khao Sam Kaeo located in Peninsular Thailand, dating to ca. 400-200 BCE. This site is unique in its strategic location between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea providing evidence of Indian, Han Chinese and locally produced cultural material. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that the site was an entrepot where different communities settled either temporarily or permanently. The archaeobotanical assemblage attests to the South Asian and to East Asian influence: the Indian origin domesticates *Vigna radiata* and *Macrotyloma uniflorum* and the Northern Chinese cereal *Setaria italica* respectively. But the site has also yielded the greatest amount of rice from Thai archaeology and provides information on the domestication of rice and the cultivation practices during this Late Prehistoric period.