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## preface

Fieldwork carried out during 1980-1981, in the Sakon Nakhon Basin of Northeast Thailand, provided most of the archaeological evidence set out in the present report. In addition, pottery recovered from excavated and/or surveyed sites spread within the Khorat Plateau, the adjacent Petchabun Highlands, and the more distant Central Plains region, has provided important comparative data. Information regarding the distribution of ceramic traditions in the area was virtually non-existent in 1980. When such conditions exist a research strategy which provides an overview of the region in question is a vital first step in orientating the data under immediate scrutiny. Hence, at David Peacock's suggestion, it was decided to aim for an extensive corpus of pottery, from as many sites as possible, against which the primary material could be brought into focus. The comparative pottery enhanced Sakon Nakhon Basin evidence by allowing it to be set in a tempero-areal background. Such background information can give important insight into socio-economic and other cultural factors. In the present study it has allowed these processes to be brought under closer scrutiny. Fieldwork during 1985, at the neolithic site of Khok Phanom Di, contributed technological information which further bears on several inferences and conclusions within this report. These explanations particularly concern the origins of manufacturing techniques which were adopted by potters late in the Northeastern cultural sequence.

This report is a very slightly modified version of the author's doctoral dissertation "The Prehistoric Ceramics of Northeast Thailand", submitted to the University of Otago in 1987. The changes involve a different page format suited to double-sided publication, with running headers, and an index. It also expands and clarifies preliminary results previously published by the author in the three volume report, B.A.R. International Series 231(iii), edited by Higham and Kijngam (1984). Readers who wish to avail themselves of a detailed report which also covers the non-ceramic aspects of the 1980-81 archaeological expeditions, carried out under the auspices of the Thai Fine Arts Department's Northeast Thailand Archaeological Project, should refer to that publication. The present volume serves as a further contribution to the 1984 three volume series, with the intention that it provide a more comprehensive cover of that investigation. It is also the author's hope that the present report may contribute to our understanding of the prehistory of Thailand, through a consideration of Thai prehistoric ceramic artefacts. Many of the sites covered are located beyond the area covered by the 1980-81 investigation, and it has thus been possible to make available a quite broad perspective of Northeast Thai prehistory, in terms of the ceramic spectrum available at the time of publication.

At the commencement of the Sakon Nakhon Basin fieldwork, which provided both cultural and geological data, it was envisaged that any technological or petrographic information would fall under the analytical rubric so cogently promoted by earlier workers such as Anna Shepard and David Peacock. This approach seemed fitted to evidence derived from potting clays and/or ceramic artefacts. A fundamental assumption was that mineralogical evidence would provide