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Maritime Exchanges and Cultural Changes in Sabah, Malaysia
during the Metal Period

Archaeological research in Sabah over the past fifty years or so has uncovered prehistoric sites with Metal period artifacts such as iron and bronze tools, pottery, shell ornaments, glass beads, jar burials and wooden coffins. This chapter discusses the various issues and problems of the Metal period in Sabah, particularly its origin, dating, technology, function, interaction, trade and exchange from the east coast of Sabah, Malaysian Borneo. The discussion focuses mainly on sites with significant discoveries of metal artifacts, as well as sites that have been chronometrically dated, such as the Madai caves, Hagop Bilo, Melanta Tutup, Bukit Kamiri, Pusu Lumut, Timbang Dayang, and sites in the Kinabatangan Valley. There is currently a need for more reliable data from chronometrically dated and well-stratified sites to provide answers to the various archaeological issues and questions regarding the Metal Age in Sabah. However, the available archaeological data suggests that this period represents a continuum of cultural changes, interactions and maritime exchanges from the earlier Neolithic period, and that metal-working technology and culture in Sabah were not indigenous, but were introduced into various areas at different times as early as the 1st millennium AD.

Keywords: *Sabah; Malaysian Borneo; Metal period; maritime exchange.*