

3. On the Origins of Traditional Vietnamese Music

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As a result of numerous archæological discoveries made especially during the last four decades, it is increasingly evident that the ancient Vietnamese civilization can no longer be regarded as a mere branch of the Chinese cultural complex. Even though Chinese contributions are not to be minimized, especially in regard to the court, the mandarins, and the city dwellers, we have ample evidence of certain Western elements that played part in the formation of the Vietnamese heritage, which can be traced back two thousand years at least.¹ Several of these Western elements have survived in one form or another, especially among the country people and the mountain tribes. One of the most fascinating and puzzling problems in this respect is related to the traditional Vietnamese music and dramatic art as stressed *inter alia* by the Exhibit of Vietnamese Art, Archæology and Ethnography circulated in the U.S.A. 1961-62 (Smithsonian Institution 1961). The study of the origins of these local art forms and of their survival to the present day is of special interest.

Vietnamese and Western musicologists (see Bibliography) have made valuable contributions on the traditional local instruments, the musical system, and the classical Vietnamese theatre. But what comparative archæology and related disciplines can now offer in answer to the questions: 'When, why and how?' have never been fully explored. This paper sets out to present some relevant, but hitherto little known, facts which should help to stimulate further research in a most promising field. Such research could eventually even contribute to the elucidation of sundry problems regarding the Eurasian and the Amasian cultural complexes and thus open up new broad vistas in space and time.

A pioneering work of great value in this field was done by the late Jaan Kunst (1949) among other Western scholars mentioned in the Bibliography. Kunst has shown convincingly that the Javanese and Balinese have developed their musical

¹ Extensive comparative research has now fairly well established that the formation of a Vietnamese cultural unity can be traced back, at the earliest, to the first centuries around the beginning of our era. It was conditioned by a gradual fusion of local and foreign ethnic and cultural elements (*cf.* Janse 1961 *passim*). According to a theory advanced a long time ago by E. Chavannes and adopted by L. Aurousseau (1923), the ancestors of the Vietnamese entered Northern Indochina in the fourth century B.C. and came from the central part of the Yangtze valley. The theory has now been generally abandoned with the possible exception of a few Vietnamese intellectuals, who are biased by a false pride in nobility as equated with antiquity of origin.

In a government publication, *News from Vietnam* (10[11]; 15 Dec. 1961, p. 20, Washington, D.C.) appears the surprising statement that the history (*sic*) of Vietnam dates from as far back as 2879 B.C. (*sic!*), or a year which falls within the period of the early Stone Age. Its author seems completely ignorant of the results of scientific research done during the last 30 years. For all of us who gave the best years of our lives to find an answer to the question on the origins of the Vietnamese civilization, what a lesson of modesty!

system on the basis of the heptatonic (seven tone) scale as compared to the pentatonic (five tone)² scale prevalent among the Chinese. Furthermore, the heptatonic scale, regarded as of Western origin, was introduced to Indonesia by way of 'Indochina'.

This point of view is confirmed by Dr F. D. K. Bosch (1952: 36) who writes, '... il y a la musique qui forme un lien solide entre l'Indochine et l'Indonésie. Sans contredit, il n'est pas dû à une simple coïncidence que dans toute la péninsule transgangaétique, comme à Java et à Bali, la gamme heptatonique soit à la base de la musique indigène et que de part et d'autres des instruments de musique spéciaux aient été en usage qui sont inconnus à l'Inde propre. Dans ce cas particulier, il n'est pas douteux que le centre de diffusion doit être cherché quelque part sur le continent indochinois'. As we show below Funan, once a part of Southern Vietnam, could have been such a centre of diffusion.

Kunst (1949a) also pointed out that the musical system in question (tones and melodies), in view of its magic character, could not be arbitrarily altered: 'Even though music is a part of the universal human soul, the effect of the magic formula in melody will be opposite of what is intended if it is not performed perfectly and in the right pitch'.

Hence, we may reasonably expect to find in the East Indies as in Vietnam a distant echo of the music, which, millenia ago, raptured its audiences among the peoples on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean and in West Asia.

Before discussing the time and the circumstances under which Western music and obviously also Western musicians first reached 'Indochina', a few pertinent archaeological discoveries should be presented for they throw light on the problems involved.

In the vaulted brick-tombs belonging to the first centuries B.C. and A.D., excavated in the thirties in Thanh-hoa, Central Vietnam (Janse 1935 *passim*) under the auspices of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient, several remarkable bronzes have been found which give evidence of the early use in Vietnam of instruments like cymbals, the end-blown single reed flute, and possibly the mouth-blown jug. The well-known dwelling site and necropolis of Đông-sơn (Janse 1958) yielded several bronze drums; other, more profusely decorated, drums have been found elsewhere in northern Vietnam. The latter decorations show gongs, mouth-organs (khênes), castanets, and in one case possibly a harp (S. S. Ling 1955). These instruments seem to have been used in a ritual drama including dance.

A lithophone found near Dalat, southern Vietnam (see p. 155) may not belong to prehistoric—as supposed—but rather to early historical times (Condominas 1952).

Of particular interest for our inquiry are the following items:

1. A 33 cm.-high bronze candelabrum, found in 1935 in a vaulted brick-tomb (N: 03) near the port of Lạch-trương (Hậu-tộc), province of Thanh-hoà, Central Vietnam (Janse 1935 *passim*) Plate I. The piece takes the form of a kneeling, almost nude

² The cycle of fifths also is characteristic of the Pythagorean scale. As the Pythagorean philosophy according to A. Daumas (1958-1959) was known in China probably at the end of the first millennium B.C., we are entitled to pose the question, 'Did not the traditional Chinese musical system also originate under Western influences?' Cf. also L. Malleret (1961).

man with definitely Western features (Fig. 1). On the back and on the upper part of the arms are three movable, detachable, conventionalized branches, each serving as supports of equally movable lamps. In the centre of each branch is a small plastic figure of a squatting individual with the palms of his hands stretched forward together as if in adoration (*mudra*).³ At the feet and the knees of the kneeling man are four other plastic figures, two cymbal players and two flute players. Each musician wears a conical headgear like the Phrygian cap. Close to this candelabrum was discovered a figurine of bronze which we have tried to identify as an Indianized Pan (Janse 1961: pl. Va).

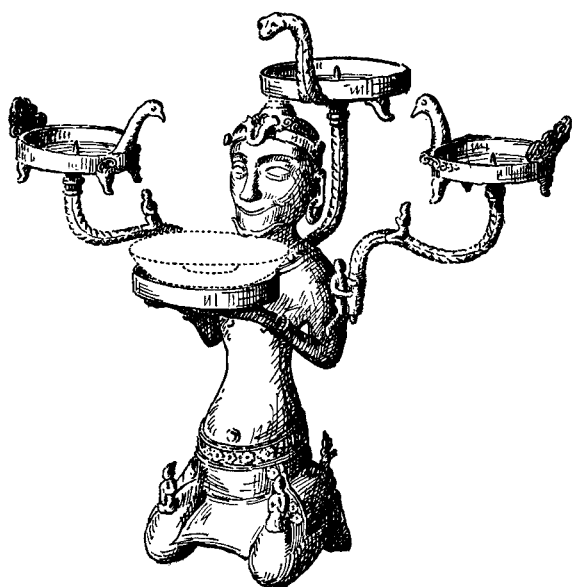


FIG. 1. Anthropomorphic Lampad reconstructed from the Bronze Lampad shown on Plate I. On the hips and knees of the figure are four plastic figures of flute and cymbal players, facing the four directions, E.W.N.S.

The kneeling man, Pan, and other important bronzes were discovered right beneath the arch of the tomb, which marked the separation of the central chamber and the 'chapel'. This disposition is certainly not mere coincidence, because each piece in the funerary deposit had a given position. The arch itself plays a most important part in ancient religious conceptions. This has been pointed out by M. André Varagnac, in his article 'Aventure d'un Symbole' (1958-1959: 2), ' . . . l'arc . . . est le symbole de la porte, de l'accès à un lieu clos, peut-être

³ When the candelabrum was on display in Musée Cernuschi, Paris, 1935-36, René Grousset, the then curator of the Museum and the author examined carefully the small figurines on the branches. Though the bronze was somewhat corroded, we came to the conclusion that the figurines were intended to represent *mudras* rather than cymbal players.

On the branches carried by a fantastic animal of a candelabrum from Thailand (Janse 1947: 1, pl. 127) can be seen two small *mudra* figurines. This piece is of recent times, but nevertheless perpetuates an old tradition and may support the contention that the small squatting humans on the branches of the candelabrum from Lach-truong also may be considered *mudras*.

consacré, chargé de vertus mystérieuses. . . . Arcs . . . consacrent ou agissant comme un philtre magique qui écarte le mal, purifie ce qui le traverse'.⁴ The 'kneeling man' and his musicians in the tomb tends by his position to accentuate their part in a mystery religion and perhaps also in a ritual.

The idea of motion is conveyed by the man kneeling, leaning slightly backwards as though getting ready to stand up. The classical statues of Dionysos carried fresh branches on certain festivals. If our 'kneeling man' is related to such a deity, may it not be that the branches, articulated on his back, were reminders of this ancient custom? The lamps themselves on the branches and the sebila in the tray held by the kneeling man by their 'mobility' may symbolize the diurnal and nocturnal cycle of the sun.

If the small squatting human figurines of the branches carried by the 'kneeling man' are mudras, the candelabrum may be regarded as the earliest evidence on Vietnamese soil of a ritual drama of Western, possibly of Dionysic inspiration (Janse 1961). We may even postulate that the drama represented by the figurines on the lampad is concerned with man's eternal hope of resurrection and rebirth.

No other identical lampad has been found elsewhere. As it presents particularities (e.g. the small musicians and mudras), which are typical of bronzes found mainly in Thanh-hoà, this piece may be considered a product of some local industry. In this case, it would be logical to look toward the south for its origin: in one of the cultural cosmopolitan, but predominantly Indian, centres in the ancient kingdom of Funan, which possibly before the dawn of the Christian era had already received important elements of the Greco-Roman Orient. The territory of Funan stretched over large parts of southern Vietnam and eastern Cambodia, and probably spread its influences to the populations scattered along the Vietnam coast.

Although our own excavations at Đông-sơn have yielded evidence of a local bronze industry (Janse 1958, *passim*), it is not likely that our candelabrum from Lạch-trương was made in that region. It could have been imported in maritime trade together with other bronzes from the south. It is noteworthy that the kneeling man is virtually naked, a feature which would rule out the idea that the figurine was originally conceived as far north as Thanh-hoà, where for a large part of the year the climate is rather cold and rainy. Other details point toward the ancient Kushana territory in Northwest India and/or the Greco-Roman Orient (Janse 1952-3, 1961) as a possible source of inspiration (*cf.* p. 156).

Ample historical and archaeological evidence exists to show that close connections existed between Funan and the Kushans, who themselves had eagerly absorbed elements of the Greco-Roman civilization. The results of the excavations conducted by Mr Louis Malleret (1959-1962) on the cosmopolitan site of Oc-èo, show that Funan received early impulses directly through the maritime trade along the monsoon route, from the Greco-Roman Orient, especially Egypt and Syria.

That cymbals and flutes (not reproduced) and the big illustrated bronze drums (see below pp. 151-153) are often mentioned in the classical literature together with the timberel is rather significant. It is quite possible that they were introduced

⁴ The horseshoe, still so often seen in Europe and placed as a charm over an entrance, is a curious reminder of the persistence of the arch symbol. It is conceivable that the rainbow originally was seen as the arch of the gate to heaven.

simultaneously to Southeast Asia from the Greco-Roman Orient. However, we can hardly expect to find remnants of such instruments today, for their organic matter (wood and skin) would rapidly disintegrate in the destructive Vietnamese soil.

2. *Lamps decorated with ronde bosse figurines representing musicians*, Plate II. In central Vietnam, several bronze lamps, contemporary with the above candelabrum from Lạch-trư-ong, are also decorated with small plastic figurines in the shape of cymbal and flute players, usually wearing the conical cap (Janse 1935: III, *passim*). Most of these items have been found accidentally and so we do not know under what circumstances they came to light. However, one typical suspension lamp, now in Musée Guimet, Paris, was discovered under scientifically controlled excavations in one of the vaulted brick-tombs at Lạch-trư-ong (Janse 1947-1951, I; pls. 22, 23, 2; fig. 49). The rim of the circular oil receptacle is decorated with two small figurines of the type seen at the feet of the kneeling man; one is a cymbal player, the other a flute player. The musicians face each other and the central flame, according to widespread conceptions, is a vital principle and a guide in the posthumous journey.

A combination of a suspension and a standing lamp of unknown origin, but possibly also found in Vietnam, has on its suspension arc, among other small plastic figures, a musician playing an end-blown flute (Janse 1947, I: pl. 24). On the edge of the oil receptacle are four small plastic figures, reminiscent of those seen on the Thanh-hoà candelabrum and lamps. Two of these individuals appear to be listening to the music;⁵ two others, facing each other and the central flame, are holding what seems to be a jug, possibly one of the primitive mouth-blown instruments still in use today. The four individuals are placed at equal distances from each other; this may be meant to symbolize the four quarters. In such a case, we may have here, as in that of the 'kneeling man', an example of the combination of the square and the circle, a widespread conception of oneness and perfection.⁶

Another lamp of different type has been found at Đổng-sơn (Janse 1958: pls. 38, 39; 1961: pl. 3*d, e*). It belongs to a large collection of bronzes, iron objects, and ceramics dug up—without scientific control—at the dwelling site in the twenties and early thirties, and then acquired by the National Museum at Hanoi (Musée Louis Finot). We know very little about the circumstances under which these objects were found, but from information given by the local population to the author, they came from the so-called 'Indonesian' and the brick-tombs as well as in the archæological stratum of the dwelling site (Janse 1958, *passim*). Most of the finds appear to belong to the first three, possibly four, centuries B.C. and the first century A.D.

⁵ The gesture of some of the listeners, holding one hand behind the ear, may have been intended to express a state of rapture. According to Theophrastus (third century B.C.) hearing is of all senses the most emotive (παθητικώτατον), while Plato contends that music has a peculiar moral effect upon its listeners. Plato obviously has in mind the music played primarily with string instruments, it was regarded as connected with *ethos* and having a distinct effect upon the soul. Music played on percussion and wind instruments was generally regarded inferior (Dodds 1957: 78).

⁶ Concerning the square and the circle in combination as an expression of oneness and perfection, of the temporal and the spiritual, see Jung (1958, 1960), Watts (1960), and Janse (1947-51, 2: 55).

Among the items acquired almost simultaneously by this Museum were three bronzes (Janse 1958: pls. 38, 39, 46 *i*) which may have belonged originally to the above lamp of Greco-Roman type—but certainly of local make. The pieces referred to consist of a globe-shaped oil receptacle with a long wick-holder (Janse 1958: pls. 38, 39), a flat object (*ibid.*: pl. 45 *i*), probably a shade-screen (handle) and a group of two grotesque, plastic figures, representing a dancer wearing a conical cap and carrying on his back a mouth-organ (*khène*) player (*ibid.*: pl. 38 *i*). Like the Greco-Roman lamps of this type (Janse 1961: pl. 3*b*, *c*), there existed originally a chain, possibly with a 'pointer', which served to adjust the wick. The two plastic figurines related eventually to the satyr family, served probably as handle of the lid, which is missing. On the wick-holder are three small squatting plastic figures, one appears to be a cymbal player. The two others could be either cymbal players or possibly mudras. A hypothetical reconstruction of the lamp has been published by the author (Janse 1961: pl. 3*d*). See Fig. 2, also Plate III*a*.

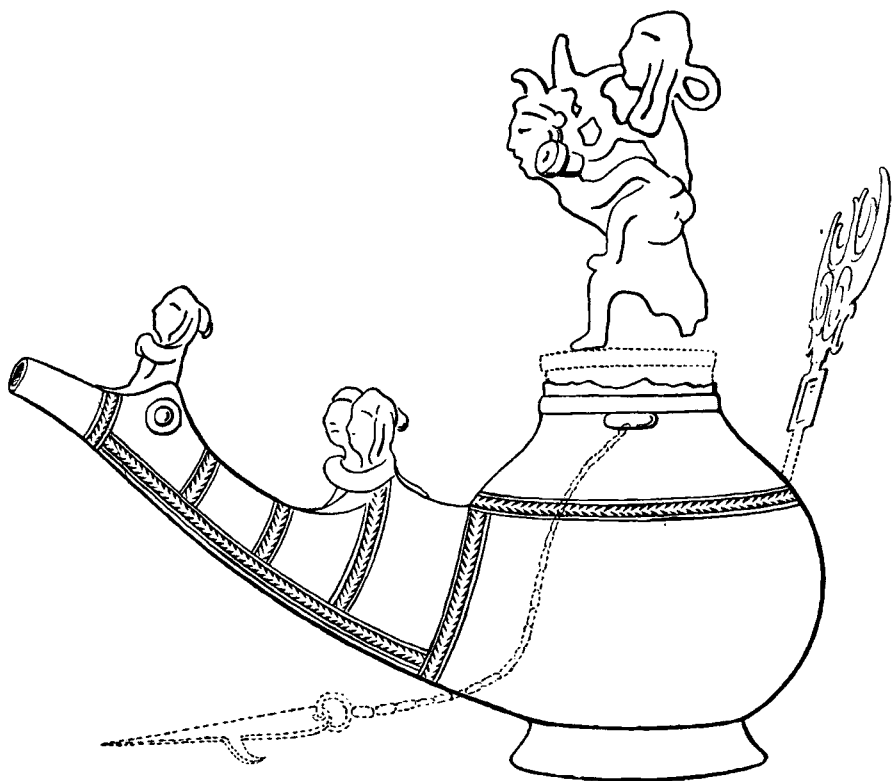


FIG. 2. Hypothetical reconstruction of a bronze lamp found at Dongson, Thanh-hoà, Central Vietnam. On the wick-holder, a cymbal on his back is a *khène*-player. National Museum, Hanoi (xxx*i*, xxx*iii*). See Plate III*a*.

The end of the wick-holder is in the shape of a conventionalized bird's head with two big circular eyes. Its symbolism has not been satisfactorily explained. As light was considered a guide in posthumous travel, the bird's head was possibly

meant to convey this. It should be remembered that a pilot bird or *oiseau propulseur* is sometimes pictured at the bow of the phantom vessels seen on several of the big kettle-drums of the Đôngsơn culture. These phantom vessels have been explained, not without reason, as representing the carrier which brought the souls of the deceased to the Islands of the Blessed (Goloubew 1940-1941: figs. 15-17). It is noteworthy that rows of flying birds are frequently pictured on these drums (*ibid.*: fig. 13; Janse 1958: pl. 10, 1, 86, 2; fig. 27, 1, 2).

One lamp belonging to the same series has been found at Pompei (Janse 1961: pl. 3b, c). Another was discovered in Iran by Dr R. Ghirshman, Director of the French Archaeological Mission to Iran and is now in the Louvre Museum (Pl. IIIa). I am indebted to Dr Ghirshman for calling my attention to ceramic lamps of similar shape (globular oil receptacle and a long cylindric wick-holder) found in great quantities in Iran, particularly in the Parthian necropolis at Susa (from the second century B.C. to the first century A.D.). Even though the ceramic lamps from Susa do not have the small plastic figures seen on many of the bronze lamps found in Vietnam, their origin can be traced possibly to Hellenistic sources. In a letter of 25 September 1948 to the author, Dr Ghirshman writes, 'Vous n'ignorez pas la grande vogue qui sévissait dans le monde hellénistique depuis la fin du III^e siècle B.C. pour la céramique dite "de Pergamon", trouvée un peu partout dans le bassin méditerranéen et ayant pénétré dans les pays asiatiques. La particularité de cette poterie est son décor en relief. Plus tard, au premier siècle B.C., déjà sous les Romains, on atteste la décoration plastique en ronde bosse. Cette technique a passé également chez les potiers parthes. . . '. In a forthcoming article on the numerous omphalos bowls found in Vietnam (*cf.* e.g. Janse 1958: pl. 33), I shall give further evidence of these Middle East and Southeast Asia connections. Ceramic lamps, similar in shape to those found at Susa, have been discovered in Israel, even to the rope pattern seen on the lamp from Đôngsơn (Funk and Wagnalls 1936: art. *Lamp*, p. 505A).

It is of interest to call attention here to two ceramic lamps of 'Roman' type, found in southern Indochina, and published by Mr Louis Malleret (1957). One, now in the Bangkok Museum (Pl. IIIb), was found at Phra Pathom, an old site which probably once belonged to the kingdom of Dvāravatī in southwest Thailand. The other lamp, now in the Museum of Phnom Penh, was discovered at Prah Pithu at Angkor Thom—its wick-holder is broken and only a part is preserved. The wick-holder of Phra Pathom lamp is well preserved; on its upper part are two 'buttons', one near its mouth and the other closer to the oil receptacle. These 'buttons' are obviously not functional and we may ask ourselves if they are not rudiments of plastic figures in *ronde bosse* like those which are seen on the wick-holder of the Đôngsơn lamp. In any event, the *ronde bosse* item appears related both to the lamps found in Cambodia and Thailand, as well as to similar lamps found in Iran, Israel, and Pompei.

3. *Cymbals. Various sizes of cymbals have been brought to Vietnam and Thailand.* In the tomb of the kneeling man we discovered four small ones with perforated tops. They are now in Musée Cernuschi, but were not yet (October 1961) cleansed of their concretion dirt (Janse 1961: pl. 6a). Others, of larger size, were found in

two brick-tombs in Thanh-hoà (Lăch-trương, no. 4 and D'ại-khôi no. 3) (Janse 1947: figs. 43*a*, *b*, *c*, pp. 67, 153). [The D'ại-khôi cymbals have been previously referred to as horse trappings.] Several cymbals, almost identical to those from the tomb of the kneeling man, were found at Oc-èo (Janse 1961: pl. 6*b*) and are in the National Museum, Saigon (Pl. II*c*). Other specimens of the same type have also been discovered at Wat P'ra Pat'on, Thailand (Dupont 1959: pl. 67; nos. 259, 260, p. 88). Associated with these last cymbals was a candelabrum of bronze, with four lamps which are arranged in the same way as those carried by the kneeling man (two lamps on the same level, one on a higher, and one on a lower).

A beautiful statue of Lōkēçvarā from the Didelot Collection and found in the province of Rach-gia, southern Vietnam has been published by Mr Louis Malleret (1954); in his right hand is probably a cymbal of the type from the kneeling man tomb as well as at Oc-èo (Janse 1961: pl. 6*a*, *b*) and at Wat P'ra Pat'on (Dupont 1959, *cf.* p. 159). According to Mr Malleret, the statue belongs to the 6th century A.D. Since the object in the god's hand is single, it may be a drinking cup rather than a cymbal. In the initiation ceremonies, performed in oriental mystery religions—spreading from the Near West to Southeast Asia during the first centuries A.D., if not even earlier—cymbals were used as drinking cups (see p. 154). It is significant that the Greeks identified Lōkēçvarā with Dionysos.

Big cymbals, clashed vertically, in ritual dances are still used now, e.g. among the sorcerers of the Man tribes in northern Vietnam. In 1927, the author witnessed such ceremonies at Tinh-tuc, in the second military territory. During the performance, the sorcerers—one with bridal gown—went round in a circle and at



FIG. 3. Drawing of a Roman Bronze Figurine, see Plate II*b*. Representing probably Attis playing the 'clear' or horizontal cymbals.

certain moments they turned about. The headgear of one sorcerer was shaped like a cock's crest.

Cymbals are mentioned also in the Bible. They were used in the ceremony performed when bringing up the ark (II Sam. 6:5). Apparently, cymbals were of two types, the 'harsh, noisy' and the 'clear'. The former are larger in size and were struck vertically; the latter, the lighter 'clear' ones were struck horizontally (Janse 1961: pl. VIc). The two types are represented among the funerary deposits in Thanh-hoà (Janse 1941, 1947-51 *passim*) as well as in present-day Java. Since the cymbal players represented on the candelabrum and some on the lamps from Thanh-hoà are striking their instruments vertically, they are likely to be of the heavier type (Sellers 1961, also *The Biblical Archaeologist*, 4[3], 1941).

4. *Drums*. During our excavations at Đông-sơn we discovered in each of two undisturbed 'Indonesian' tombs, a large richly decorated bronze drum (Janse 1958: pls. 8-10, fig. 11). Other larger, decorated instruments of the same shape have been found accidentally in northern Vietnam. These drums may have been buried at the time of the invasion of the Chinese armies under General Ma Yüan, A.D. 43, to save them from falling into the enemy's hands.

Several of these drums (Coedès 1948, Goloubew 1940-41, Heger 1902, Heine-Geldern 1932 *passim*) are decorated in linear relief with scenes from religious ceremonies in which the following instruments were used: mouth-organs (khênes), gongs, castanets (reminiscent of the Greek crotales), and possibly the harp (R. H. Ling 1955; cf. Goloubew 1932). As said above, cymbals and flutes are not reproduced on these drums. Henri Hubert, later Louis Finot, and other scholars have noted that the Dayaks of Borneo still perform ceremonies reminiscent of those pictured on the drums.

In Yünnan, were recently discovered in tombs at Shih-chai 石寨, about 30 km. south of Kunming, a great many drums; their study may throw new light on the meaning of the Vietnam drums. Since 1955 the Kunming Museum has been making systematic excavations of a great many royal tombs of the non-Chinese Tien people, which belong mainly to the period of the Western Han dynasty, 206 B.C. to A.D. 24. The discovery reveals a great interest of music among the Tien; since there exists a definite relationship between the Tien and the Đông-sơn cultures, Vietnam must have received some elements (the drums and instruments pictured on the kettle-drums) of its musical system from this quarter. As is often the case with the bronzes found in northern Vietnam, the items discovered in the Tien tombs are decorated with small plastic figures (cf. Janse 1958, 3 *passim*), some are human beings with a conical head-gear. The Tien culture may be regarded as a blend of local, Chinese and Western elements and shows, as mentioned, a definite relationship with the Đông-sơn culture. All these factors will be the subject of a comprehensive study which the author plans to do in the near future.

The Yünnan excavation results were published in 1955 in two volumes, 142 pages and 126 plates under the title: *Yunnan sheng Po-wu-kuan: Yunnan, Chün-ning Shih-chai-shan ku-mu ch'ün ch'ing-li chi*. An English résumé by Wang Chiun-wing appeared in the *Peking Review* (12 Jan. 1960) under the title: 'The bronze culture of ancient Yünnan, a review of the ancient cemetery of Shih-chai Hill, Tsinning, Yünnan'. See also Richard C. Rudolph in *AP* 4 1960 (pp. 41-49, 4 pls).

Prior to the discovery of the cymbals in the kneeling man tomb which may belong to the first century B.C., such instruments, according to the then current opinion, had been introduced to the Far East by way of China, at the earliest at the end of the fifth century A.D. According to J. Kunst (1949) cymbals are traceable to the Aegean culture.

In the Greco-Roman Orient cymbals served to mark the steps of the ritual dancers who served the various deities of the Oriental mystery religions, e.g. Dionysos, Bacchus, and their followers. Numerous classical monuments, especially bronzes and paintings, represent these deities clashing cymbals or associated with them as their attributes (*cf.* Janse 1961: pl. VIc).

The geometric form of the cymbals had symbolic significance and is described as reminiscent of the celestial hemispheres covering the earth ('Cymbala similia sunt hemicyclis coeli quibus cingitur terra', *Aeneid*, Book IV, 64).

With the timberel, the cymbals were used in the communion and sacrifice services performed in the oriental mystery religions. One of the Fathers of the early Christian Church, Firmicus Maternus, quotes the curious passwords pronounced by those who had been initiated in the mysteries of Attis, a deity equivalent to Dionysos-Bacchus: 'I have eaten from the timberel; I have drunk from the cymbal; I have become an initiate of Attis'. The instruments as well as the food they contained were believed to be charged with holiness of the god.

It is conceivable that Jews of the Diaspora traded with the Greco-Roman Orient and brought to Southeast Asia the knowledge and use of Jewish songs, music and instruments. Alexandria, one of the leading cultural and trade centres during the classical period, was to a large extent under the influence of its Jewish population. The bronze lamp found at P'ong Tük in Thailand (Janse 1961: pl. VIII d) was made in Alexandria and is evidence of relations between this trading metropolis and Southeast Asia.

Here it is well to remember the numerous legends (especially among the mountain tribes) which are reminiscent of those in *Genesis*. The similarities, even if somewhat superficial, can hardly be mere coincidence. If the Jews participated in the expeditions to Southeast Asia, we can reasonably accept that they brought with them their religious concepts and cultural elements.

The timberel is often mentioned in the Western classical literature in connection with cymbals. Apparently they were played together. If this was also the case in Vietnam, we might assume that they also might have been deposited in the ancient tombs together with the cymbals. However, as the timberel was made of organic matter (wood and skin), easily decayed in the destructive soil of Vietnam, their survival is not to be expected in the funerary deposits. That none of the plastic figures representing musicians on the above candelabrum and various lamps found in Vietnam play timberels is not significant, because relatively few bronzes from the vaulted brick-tombs have been preserved. Most of those we excavated had been looted for metal and, in many cases, only ceramics and potsherds were left behind by the thieves.

In the classical world cymbals were used in a funerary ritual, from the evidence that the sirens, divinities of mourning, are occasionally pictured with these instruments in their hands.

5. *Flutes*. None of the flutes reproduced on the above candelabrum and lamps are of the Greek aulos (double-reed) type, but of the single reed end-blown type. The ancient texts tell us that it was in particular the end-blown Phrygian flute which was played in the Dionysic rites. The Greeks attributed to this instrument the magic power of making the listeners 'full of god'.

Orgiastic music and dancing performed during the Dionysic and Corybantic rites were credited with a purifying influence on the participants. The flute played in the Phrygian mode accompanied by the beating of the kettle-drums were the main instruments. Both were the leading instruments of orgiastic music and in the rites of several deities of the mystery religions. Subsequently these rites lost their religious character and were used in treatment for hysteria. Soranus, contemporary of the Antonines, refers in this connection to flute music as a musical cure (Dodds, 1951, p. 78ff).

It is conceivable that flutes were deposited in the ancient tombs in Vietnam together with cymbals, but as we said left no traces, being made of perishable wood.

6. *Gongs*. According to J. Kunst (1949 *passim*) gongs were introduced to South-east Asia from the Near East. In Greece as well as in Egypt and in the Aegean world, the gongs (ῥαεῖον) were used to produce thunder effects on the theatre stage. They also served to stress the climax of the ritual drama in the Eleusian mysteries. Gongs are pictured on some of the big decorated drums, see Goloubow (1932 *passim*).

7. *Other instruments*. In the vicinity of Dalat, southern Vietnam, a lithophone was found several years ago (Condominas 1952). It has been referred to as prehistoric because of the technique used in making the barres. However, the instrument may belong to a less ancient period. As shown *inter alia* by our excavations at Đôngson and elsewhere in Vietnam, stone-age instruments were still in use at the dawn of the Christian era (Janse 1958, *passim*). Pending further investigations, we need reserve our opinions as to the date of the above instrument. The lithophone is closely related to the xylophone which is still widely played in Southeast Asia. The type originated possibly in the West. However, according to D. Stevens and Alec Robertson (1960), the older tradition of the xylophone, as far as Indonesia is concerned: 'may be sought' . . . among . . . 'the music-loving Bataks'. They add: 'The xylophone has wandered far and wide, and its presence in Africa is directly due to early immigrations from Southeast Asia in about the fifth century of the Christian era, as of the Hova people, now living in Madagascar'.

During our excavations at Đôngson, we acquired from one of the local farmers several ceramics belonging to the T'ang and Sung periods. Among these items was an ocarina (Janse 1941: pl. 20, 1; 1958, fig. 42). These objects were reportedly to have been found accidentally in tombs, near the Ham-rong bridge in the vicinity of the Đôngson dwelling site. As far as we know no other ocarina of that early period has been found in Vietnam. Even if it is of local make, the type may have been introduced from the West.

As said on p. 149, mouth-blown jugs may have been used in Vietnam or southern China since the beginning of our era.

We have thus now ample archæological evidence (accumulated especially during the last few decades), of the use in ancient Vietnam of various instruments and of rituals performed—some can be traced back possibly two millennia.⁷

As the above mentioned instruments and the rituals illustrated on some of the large bronze drums have survived in many instances until present times among the Vietnamese, the Cham, the Southeast Asian mountain tribes and the Dayaks of Borneo, we may reasonably also infer that other instruments still played in Vietnam and elsewhere in Southeast Asia are traceable to Western prototypes. Of particular interest in this connection are various string instruments played today in Vietnam and claimed to be of 'unquestionable Vietnamese origin' (Anon. *The Vietnamese Music*). Hence, in the light of recent discoveries we should re-examine and re-evaluate the problems concerning the origin of the traditional musical system of the Vietnamese. A comprehensive study of this subject may well give clues to the remote sources of various traditional Vietnamese instruments.

If we accept the theory that the heptatonic scale was introduced to Vietnam two thousand years ago—with the spread of the Near Eastern mystery religions and the worship of related divinities (Dionysos—Bacchus—Osiris—Attis, etc.)—is it not likely that favourable conditions had been created in a predominantly agricultural society for the birth of a local drama, especially in its two main forms, the *hát bội*, the tragedy, and the *hát chèo*, the comedy? It should be recalled that it was in the Dionysic rites that these two forms of the classical Greek drama originated.

The close connections which once existed between the Kushans in India and the kingdom of Funan in southern Vietnam (Goloubew 1939-40, Maenchen-Helfen 1945) could also have been lead, at least to some degree, to the creation and development of the traditional drama. Pending further research, it is worth mentioning that, according to Dr A. L. Basham (1954, p. 433), there existed possibly elements common to the ancient Greek and Indian theatres. Dr Basham says: 'The curtain at the back of the stage was called *yavanika*, a diminutive of the name by which the Greeks were generally known in India. One play at least, "The Little Cart", has a superficial resemblance to the late Greek comedy of the school of Menander. We cannot wholly reject the hypothesis that Greek comedians acted at the courts of the Greco-Bactrian kings of N.W. India, inspired unknown Indian poets to develop their own popular stage into a courtly form'.⁸

The Vietnamese could possibly have also absorbed some of these Western elements in their cultural heritage either through direct contact with the Funanese or through the intermediary of the Chams, once tributaries of Funan.

⁷ A large vase from the former Eumorfopulos Collection, London, decorated with plastic figures (musicians) reminiscent of those seen on the bronze lamps and the lampad from Thanh-hoà, and with some pictures in low relief, has been published by O. Siren (1942: 198, pl. 66). The piece (said to be Yüeh Yao ware and a funerary urn) was on display a few years ago in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, but has since 'disappeared'. According to information received from the Museum, the authenticity of the urn was in question.

⁸ According to Sylvain Lévi (1890), the Rig-Veda hymns contain remains of the earliest Indian-dramatic creations, the beginnings of the Indian drama. Leopold von Schroeder (1908) also pointed out that the purpose of the early ritual 'Culture Drama' was to stimulate the mysterious powers of Nature. There is further evidence of a parallel to the origins of the Greek Drama (Weston 1957, p. 27ff). The spreading of mystery religions in a predominantly agricultural society may also have conditioned the intellectual climate for the creation of a local dramatic art in Vietnam.

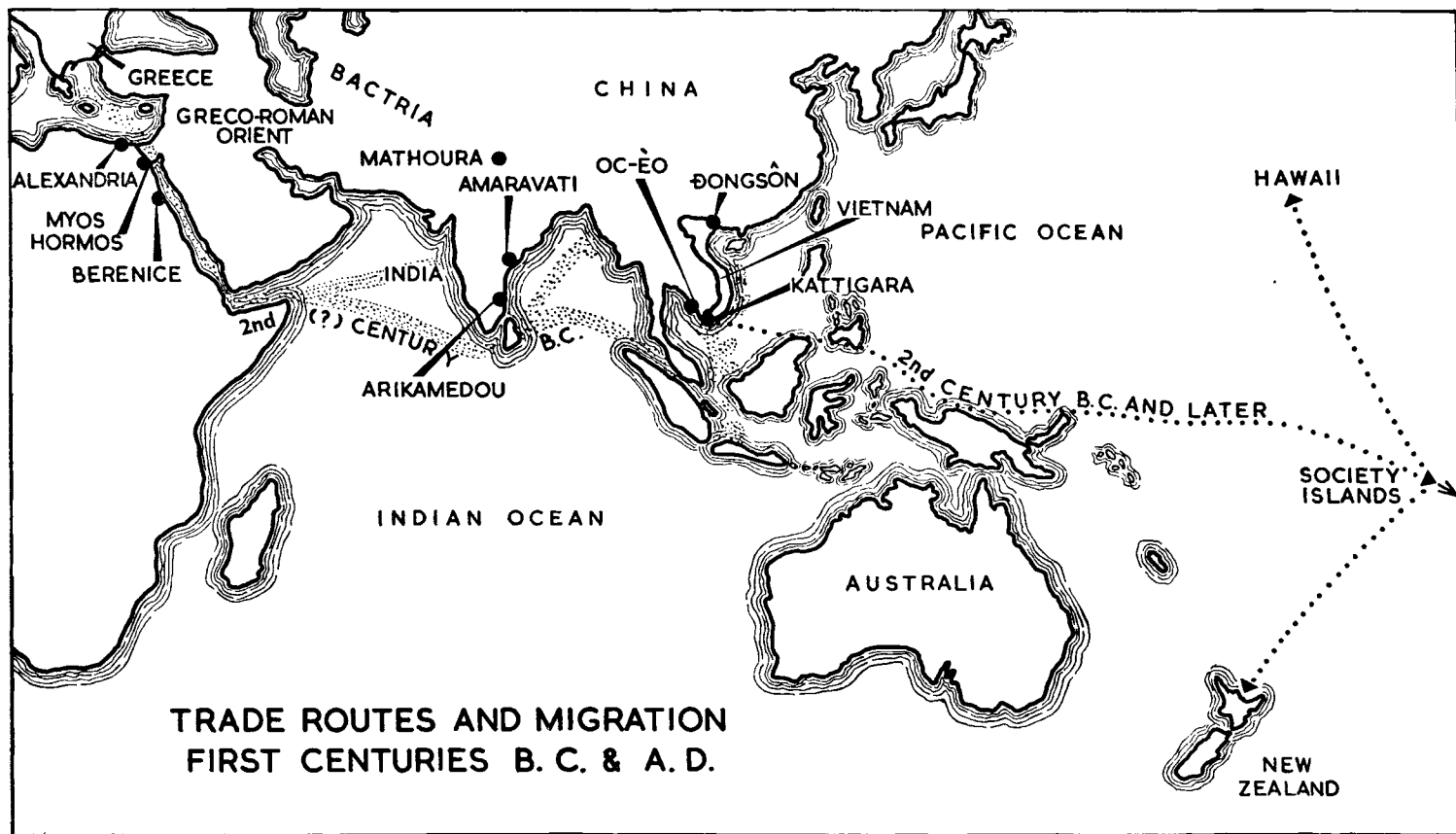


FIG. 4. Maritime trade-routes and migration of Asia and the Pacific in the first centuries B.C. and A.D.

The Funanese, as shown *inter alia* in the results of the excavations of Mr Louis Malleret at Oc-èo (S.S. Ling 1955; Malleret 1943, 1959), were on the other hand, in direct contact with the Greco-Roman Orient already at the beginning of our era by the maritime (monsoon) route, and may well have received from that part of the world both musicians and elements of Western music (Janse 1957-8, 1961).

It was in the first century B.C. that a Greek navigator, Hippalos, discovered the régimes of the monsoons in the Indian Ocean and the possibilities it offered for regular trade between the Near and the Far East. From that time on the trade between these regions took an unprecedented development. Merchants from Egypt and Syria in particular, are said to have taken an active part in this adventure.⁹ It is reasonable to expect that elements of the mystery religions then prevalent in the Greco-Roman Orient did permeate Southeast Asia. Music, accompanying dances, and the worship of various deities such as Dionysos, Bacchus, Osiris, Attis, etc., was a common feature of these religions. Very likely, professional musicians, acrobats and dancers came with the Western influx (Janse 1961, *passim*).

It is, however, also likely that elements of the mystery religions reached Vietnam and Southeast Asia through the Pontic migration (Heine-Geldern 1951) already in the eighth century B.C.

The heptatonic scale may well have been introduced to Indonesia from Funan as we said on page 146. The musical system based on this scale may conceivably spread even further during the first centuries A.D. to Oceania and even to the South American mainland, since for a long time European scholars have found indications that contacts existed not only with China (Schaeffner 1936, Heine-Geldern 1954: 195), but also with Southeast Asia (Gironcourt 1942, Paris 1942-3, Meggers 1961) and pre-Spanish America. Most American scholars, however, influenced by an anthropological Monroe-doctrine, have been reluctant, until recently, to accept the theory of any foreign influence in the cultures of the Amerindians. Similarities between Southeast Asian and Amerindian cultures were, by and large, regarded as mere coincidence. Taken separately, these similarities may not be indeed convincing proofs of far flung relations, but the cumulative effect is nevertheless becoming impressive and a change of mind has been noticed among American anthropologists. As some of the facts in favour of intercontinental connections are relatively unknown outside a small group of specialists, let me refer briefly to them.

An alert French archæologist, the late Pierre Paris (1942-3) drew attention several years ago, to a great many analogies between the cultures of Southeast Asia and the South America mainland. He has shown convincingly that all these analogies can hardly be due to mere coincidence, but should be regarded as evidence of early intercontinental contacts. Pierre Paris has been virtually ignored, but his theory recently received confirmation by some spectacular discoveries made in Ecuador. On the coast, in the Bahia region, excavations were systematically conducted by the late Emilio Estrada in co-operation with to well-known American anthropologists of the Smithsonian Institution, Clifford Evans Jr and his wife Betty Meggers. Numerous artifacts from several sites unmistakably show influence from the Far East and Southeast Asia (Meggers and Estrada, E.). They belong to

⁹ Pauly-Wissova, *Reallexikon*, art. *Kattigara*. Cf. Fr. Hirth, *China and the Roman Orient*, Shanghai 1885, p. 47.

the first five centuries A.D. The same cultural and ethnical current may also have introduced to the New World elements of a musical system and instruments from Southeast Asia. Furthermore a French musicologist, Georges Gironcourt (1942: 29) has noticed the presence of ancient 'Asian' elements in the musical system of the Incas in Peru: 'Une étude comparative avait en effet révélé que les formules sonores dans les Cordillères des Andes, relevaient des bases mélodiques asiatiques (Laos, Japon)'.

Some of the above problems are still unsolved; but in recent years enough, though relatively little known, material has been scientifically collected and evaluated and may serve as a basis for more comprehensive, comparative research in this increasingly fascinating field. Traditional music, song, drama and dance are fundamental components of the Vietnamese cultural heritage. Vietnamese and comparative archæology and musicology will greatly profit by the Musicological Centre, recently established at the University of Hué the Rev. Father Cao-văn Luân and his associates. Though the scope of the activities of this new Centre is primarily of special concern to the Vietnamese people, the interest in this complex problem goes far beyond the confines of Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

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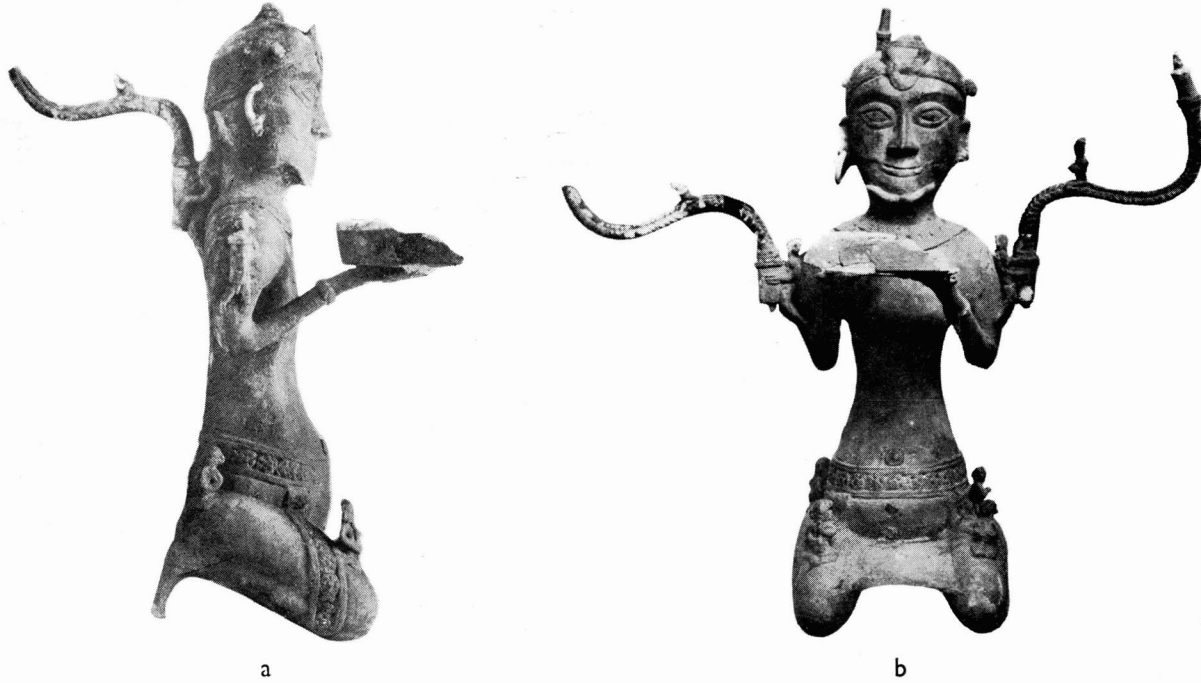
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Bronze lampad. Detail of the lower part of the reconstructed lamp of Fig. 1.
 Lach-truong, Thanh-hoà, Vietnam. National Museum, Hanoi D.164-33 or I.27500 (xxviii, xxx, xxxii, xxxiii).

a. Profile view with two of the musicians.

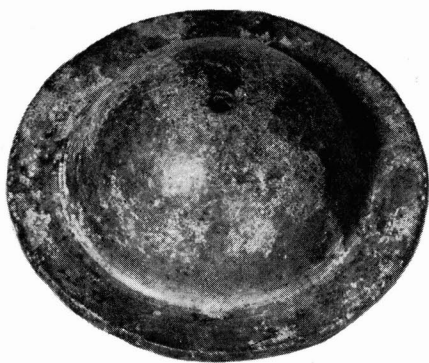
b. Front view with all four musicians.



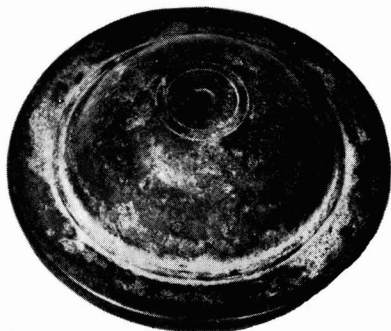
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b



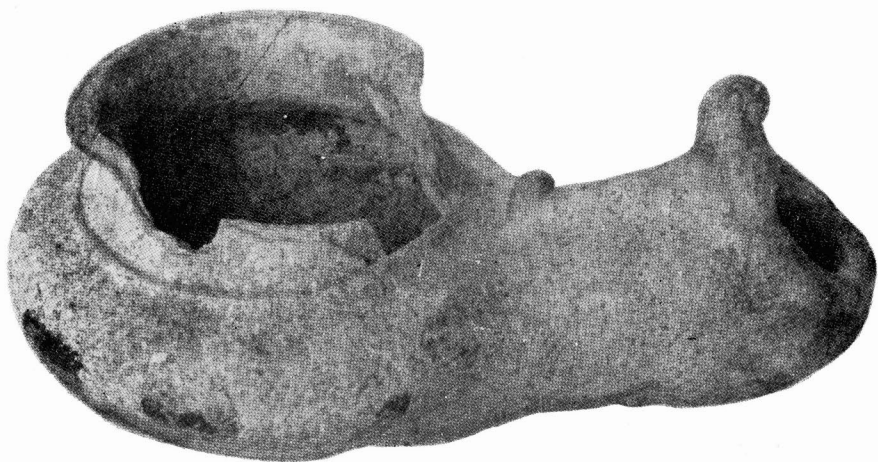
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- a. Roman Bronze Statue (copies after a Hellenistic original) representing a fawn, carrying the infant Bacchus. The fawn is playing the 'noisy' or vertical cymbals. On the tree trunk a goatskin, grapes and a shepherd's pipe (syrinx). National Museum, Naples, Italy. See Fig. 1, p. 150.
- b. Roman bronze figurine, probably representing Attis, playing the 'clear' or horizontal cymbals. National Museum, Naples, Italy. See Fig. 3, page 152.
- c. Cymbals of the 'clear' or horizontal type, found in the region of Oc-èò, Plaine des Jones, Southern Vietnam. National Museum, Saigon. See Fig. 3.

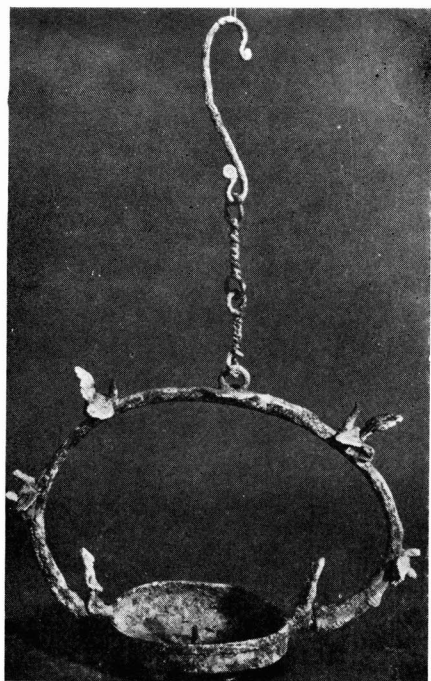


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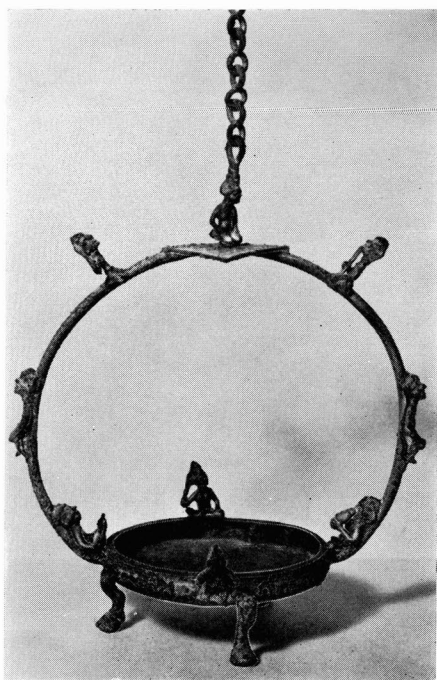


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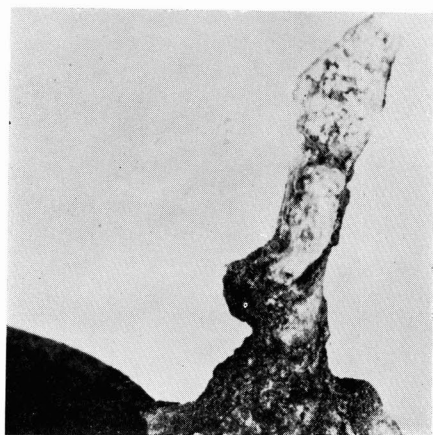
- a. Bronze lamp, Iran, similar to the Dongson lamp in Fig. 2. By courtesy of Musée du Louvre, Paris, and Dr R. Ghirshman.
- b. Ceramic lamp, found at Phra Pathom, Thailand, of a type similar as the one found at Dongson, Fig. 3. National Museum, Bangkok. (cf. Louis Malleret, *Une lampe romaine au Musée de Phnom Penh* in *Bull de la Soc. des Etudes Indochinoises* Nouvelle Série, 32 [deuxième trim. 1957], Saigon.)



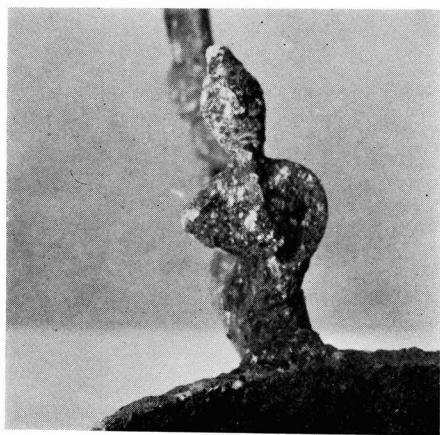
a



d



b



c

- a. Hanging bronze lamp. On the oil receptacle are two plastic figures of musicians, one playing a flute and the other a cymbal. Lach-truong, Thanh-hoà, Central Vietnam. Musée Guimet, Paris (xxx).
- b. Detail a. showing the cymbal player.
- c. Detail of a. showing the flute player.
- d. Details from lamp a similarly showing a flute player, two jug-players (?) and possibly of other musicians.

P.S.: The lamp (in coll. David-Weill, Paris) has recently been carefully examined by Mlle Marcelle Minet, whose opinion is that the two figures on the oil receptacle are probably a bagpipe player on the right, on the left is a figure holding in his lap a cithara. The one figure sitting to the back probably held in his hands a (missing) musical instrument. The two persons seated on the arc are holding their hands on their knees and not regarded as mudrā.