The Dongson Culture and Cultural Centers in the Metal Age in Vietnam

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Hoang Xuan Chinh and Bui Van Tien

In the past we have studied the Hung Vuong period and have achieved some significant results, the most important of which is that the Hung Vuong period has been shown to exist as part of Vietnamese history. However, our research has thus far been limited to only the deltas of the Hong River, the Ma River, and the Ca River.

After the liberation of the South, we took an opportunity to extend our study into the southern part of our country. We have studied not only the coastal areas in the central part, but also the deltas of the Dong Nai River, the Vam Co River, and other areas.

Newly collected data give us an opportunity to study the Dongson Culture in a new perspective, and they provide us with a broader base to understand the metal age and clarify the picture of the beginning of our country. It is still too early to discuss in great detail every aspect of the complicated relationships in the metal age of Vietnam. However, it is time for us to present a simple sketch of the beginning of the metal age in our country, and also a general discussion about the Dongson Culture. The ideas presented here are no more than hypothetical.

Three Principal Centers

Through the research done by the French and by ourselves, the metal age in Vietnam, mainly bronze and early iron, could be said to be concentrated in three main centers:

Hoang Xuan Chinh and Bui van Tien are affiliated with the Institute of Archaeology, Viet Nam Social Sciences Commission, 27 Tran Xuan Soan, Ha Noi, R. S. Viet Nam. This paper was translated into English by Nguyen ba Khoach.
1. The Northern Center: Dongson Culture

Up to now, most of us have agreed that Dongson was the climax of the late bronze/early iron culture in the deltas of the Hong River, the Ma River, and the Ca River.

To understand this culture completely, it must be remembered that Dongson is the integration of the previous cultures (or stages of culture) in the plain of the Tonkin delta and the northern part of central Vietnam.

By the time of Dongson, its culture had become generally uniform, though some of the local characteristics were still visible. These local characteristics reflect more or less the processes of integration. In the Red River delta, we have conditions in which to follow the development from Phung Nguyen to Dong Dau, and from Go Mun to Dongson.

Phung Nguyen Period

Phung Nguyen has been considered the earliest period of the development of culture in the Hung Vuong period. It is the beginning of the development of the uniform culture of Dongson.

Phung Nguyen was distributed over a large area, including the plains and part of the mountains in the North. Sites of this culture concentrate densely in the intersection of the Red River and the Black River, at Hac Tri. So far, 30 sites of this culture have been found.

Characteristics of this period are reflected in the high level of stone tool technology. These stone tools include axes, trapezoidal or rectangular adzes, chisels, knives, points, and ornaments.

Wheel-made ceramics were also popular during this period. The people of Phung Nguyen had mastered the techniques of making pottery; they have given their pottery special styles, distinct from pottery found in other places. This pottery has fine clay, fine sand temper, and some organic temper. It is thin walled, its outer surface is polished, and its color varies from dark rose to light rose or brown. This pottery was found in different forms: containers, cooking utensils like pots, jars, fruit stands, and so on.

The decorative motifs are beautiful and were mainly made by striation, forming such configurations as triangles, vertical S’s one after another, and circles. These decorations are symmetrical, from simple to complicated, suggesting the creativity of the people (Tan 1969).

Metallurgy was also known. Bronze nodules are found in Go Bong, Xom Ren, and Dong Vong. However, no complete bronze specimen has yet been found in the sites of the Phung Nguyen period.

From these characteristics, it is obvious that the beginning period, Phung Nguyen, was rather advanced and made solid contributions to forming the culture upon which the subsequent culture developed.

In this period it is necessary to mention the sites of Go Con Lon, Dong Ba Tram, and
Doan Thuong. The site of Go Ma Dong, for example, has also, in addition to the rectangular adzes, a considerable number of shouldered axes, shouldered hoes, and pottery decorated with dots. This pottery is different from the pottery of Phung Nguyen. The existence of these sites side by side with the Phung Nguyen Culture indicates the complexity of the beginning cultures in the Red River delta.

The Dong Dau Period

The period of Dong Dau is found distributed in the provinces of Vinh Phu, Ha Tay (old name), Ha Noi, and Ha Bac. The distribution of this period is the same as that of the Phung Nguyen period. In this period, the finds are similar to those of Phung Nguyen: axes and rectangular adzes; the same types of ornaments, such as stone bracelets and stone earrings; the same types of pottery, such as pots, bottles, bowls, and vases. It all seems to indicate that the Dong Dau period was influenced by the Phung Nguyen tradition and further developed it.

There are, however, new elements in the Dong Dau period which set it apart from the Phung Nguyen period. One new characteristic is that techniques of working with bronze have better developed. In the Phung Nguyen period, only nodules were found, whereas in the Dong Dau period many bronze specimens were found. The Dong Dau people made many bronze tools with various forms. Clay and stone molds for points and axes were found in sites of the period. The typical bronze tools are rectangular axes, spearheads, and fishhooks.

Differences between the Dong Dau and Phung Nguyen can also be found in the pottery. In this period, pottery is no longer thin and light. It becomes thick and heavy. The decoration was done by combs, or comblike tools. The decorative motifs include wave forms, spirals, interwoven ropes, and horizontal S's connected to each other or interwoven with each other.

The ornaments are also different from those of Phung Nguyen. The stone bracelets with the D cross section are well crafted, as are the four-pointed earrings.

Thus, the Dong Dau period inherited the Phung Nguyen Culture and improved upon it, as reflected in the development of bronze technology.

The Go Mun Period

Sites of the Go Mun period were also found in the Van Lang area of the country. However, they were concentrated in the area to the south of Vinh Phu, north of (old) Ha Tay, along the rivers Hong, Cau, and Day.

This period saw many important developments. Many bronze specimens were found. In addition to the socketed spears, fishhooks, and bronze strings, there were also cuneiform axes (riu xeo), and scythes. The appearance of the cuneiform axe is considered to be the foundation of the new technology which characterizes the subsequent culture.

The role of stone tools began to decline, as reflected in the diminishing numbers and types of stone tools. Stone axes, adzes, and ornaments became more scarce. The stone earrings of this period resemble a flat doughnut, beveled on one side in such a way that its cross section looks like a rectangular trapezoid.

Pottery of this period is harder because the firing temperature was higher than before. The containers usually have a rim which turns heavily outward and is decorated on the top.

The decorative motifs, though derived from previous periods, become highly geomet-
ric, with clear-cut lines. These characteristics are found again in the late bronze period, the Dongson.

In the Ma delta, there was a gradual development from an early period to a late period, from lower to higher stages. These developmental stages in the Ma and Chu River areas consist of three periods.

The period of Dong Khoi is comparable to that of Phung Nguyen in the Red River. This is the earliest period in the Ma delta. In the sites of this period, the obvious characteristics are the rectangular axe made of basalt (badan), pottery with flaring or sharp rims, and chac with ovaloid legs.

The findings at the site of Hoa Loc indicate relationships with both Sa-huynh and Dong Khoi. However, the people at Hoa Loc were not the main population instrumental in the development of the Dong Khoi/Dongson Culture in the delta of the Ma River.

The next development is the lower Thieu Duong/Dan Ne. Some sites in this period are Dan Ne, Lower Thieu Duong, Lower Dong Ngam, and Lower Xom Ru. This period is comparable to the Dong Dau period in the Red River. Pottery here is decorated with combs or comblike tools. The motifs are waves, connected meanders (S-shaped motifs), triangles, and two-winged points (mui ten hinh canh en).

In the third period, comparable to Go Mun, are the early Dongson, the Thieu Duong graves, and layer 1 of Nui Nap (or Mount Nap). The pottery of this period has a curved rim, the upper surface of which is decorated with lines. Stone earrings of this period have a trapezoidal cross section. In some sites of this period were found potsherds typical of Go Mun: 11 pieces were found at Dong Son, 3 pieces at Quy Chu, and 1 piece at Hoang Ly. These indicate cultural relationships and the similarity of these sites to those of Go Mun.

In the Dongson period, the process of integration of the two delta cultures was almost complete. In spite of some local characteristics, the general characteristics common to Dongson Culture have clearly formed in the two deltas.

There are few stone implements. Among them, the majority are ornaments, with the remainder being trapezoidal axe/adzes. One of the main characteristics of the bronze implements of this period is the high percentage of lead, higher than that of the previous period.

Decoration on the bronze implements flourished, especially on type I bronze drums (the typical drum of this period), on bowls, and on asymmetrical axes. In addition to motifs which were derived from the previous periods, there were also new ones, such as stylized human pictures done in feathers, aquatic birds, deer, and especially realistic scenes of the ancient people's activities.

Typical stone implements of this period are axes with a round or rectangular heel. These axes were encountered in the Go Mun sites. There were also daggers whose handles were garlic-bulb shaped and carved into anthropomorphic figures. Also found are bowls, containers, and tam che nguic (ventral section of armor).

The pottery is still the same kind as that of previous periods. Pottery of this period, however, shows tendencies of being more practical, with a shorter body and a shorter ring foot. Chac of this period have two forked legs and are very unstable. Compared to previous periods, pottery of this period is very poorly decorated. Typical decorative motifs are interwoven ropes, combs, and hatches. The more elaborate decorations seem to be found on bronze implements only.

The fact that Dongson had developed from Phung Nguyen and Dong Khoi confirmed its indigenous origin. The Dongson Culture was found mainly in the hills, the plains, and
some coastal areas. From the decorations on the bronze implements, we suggest that this culture was originally from the hills, and only later did it move to the plains and then coastal areas.

2. The Central Coastal Center: Sa-huynh

Since the beginning of this century, the culture of Sa-huynh has been mentioned in the writings and reports of the École d’Extrême Orient, in those of H. Parmentier, M. Collani, and O. Janse. A dozen sites have since been mentioned in conjunction with this culture. Some of these are Long Thanh, Thanh Duc, and Phu Khuong (Nghia Binh).

Until recently, many problems about this culture have not been clarified. They deserve more study. Usually people have thought of this culture as merely an assemblage of burials with beautiful pottery situated in the areas of Nghia Binh and Bien Hoa (old names). Further discoveries after the liberation of the South have shed new light on the problems of the Sa-huynh Culture.

First of all is the question of its distribution. This culture was not limited merely to the areas of Nghia Binh and Bien Hoa. In addition to already known sites such as Long Thanh, Thanh Duc, and Phu Khuong in Nghia Binh and Dau Day, Hang Gon, and Phu Hoa in Dong Nai, there are also newly found sites such as Tam My, Ky Xuan, and Bau Tram in Tam Ky district; Que Loc in the Que Son district; Ngua Hanh Son (Quang Nam/ Da Nang), Binh Chau (Nghia Binh); and My Tuong, Bau My (Thuan Hai). Obviously, the culture of Sa-huynh had a wide distribution, extending from the eastern part in the South to the Hai Van Pass. It might possibly have extended to the areas of Quang Binh (Binh Tri Thien) and Tay Nguyen.

The culture of Sa-huynh had a continuous development from the late Neolithic to the metal age. The development could be described in the following stages or steps.

The first period can be found in the lower layer of Bau Tram and Long Thanh. The apparent characteristic of this stage is the abundance of such stone implements as hoes, axes, and chisels. One unique specimen is the “bulltooth stone” axe (riu da rang trau). These types of stone axes were also found in other sites in the central part of Vietnam, such as Bau Tro (Binh Tri Thien) (Nguyen and Trinh 1977) and Play Cu. The stone ornaments are four-lugged earrings and stone beads (which look like bamboo segments). These ornaments are relatively beautiful. In this period, there were neither bronze nor iron implements. The pottery was developed and decorated. The principal types of decorative motifs are the wave forms with different styles and triangles. These were sometimes in relief. There are many pot types, the most noticeable being the large jars. These jars have lids and are well decorated. One type of pot has the “con tien” shape, globular at the bottom part, with a slightly flaring rim.

The next period is the Binh Chau. In this period there were not any signs of iron implements, but there were bronze implements. Molds for bronze casting were found, as were some bronze implements like split chisels (duc xo e can), chisels, spears, and arrowpoints. Some stone implements were still present; these are the stone hoes like those of Long Thanh. Binh Chau pottery was not well decorated like that of Long Thanh; the principal decorative motifs in this period are simple wave forms. The common shapes of the pottery in this period are the pot and bottle with short foot ring and globular body. It is interesting to notice that there was pottery with red and black paint in the mouth and shoulder areas. These markings are similar to those of Long Thanh.
The latest period of the Sa-huynh Culture is found in Long Thanh, Phu Khuong (Nghia Binh), Phu Hoa, Suoi Chon (Dong Nai), and Tam My (Quang Nam/Da Nang). In this period most stone implements disappear; bronze implements are very rare, but iron implements are the most common, including swords, scythes, and axes. In Long Thanh jar burials, glass beads were found. The pottery of this period was not refined like that of previous periods; commonly the pottery was gray, thick, and sparsely decorated with string motifs.

Discoveries of this period were made mainly by the French.

The culture of Sa-huynh lasted for a long period of time and was distributed over a large geographical area covering thousands of kilometers. Each period and every region had unique characteristics, yet there were certain characteristics common to all of the regions, through all the periods.

The most common characteristic of the Sa-huynh Culture is the jar burial. While not all the peoples in the Sa-huynh Culture buried their dead in jars, the abundance of jar burials indicates the popularity of the practice.

In regard to the “bulltooth-shaped stone” tools, these probably have shoulders, trapezoidal in shape and triangular in cross section. They were found sparsely in the cultural layers and in burials at such sites as Go Ma Vuong and Ky Xuan. These axes are close to those found in the coastal areas of Quang Binh, Cu Bai (Binh Tri Thien), and Play Cu (Tay Nguyen).

Of stone ornaments found, there are two unique types known to the researchers, the two-headed beast earrings and the lugged earrings. Until now, only a few of these two-headed beast earrings have been found (four specimens, three from Phu Hoa, Tam My and the fourth one in Xuan An [Nghe Tinh], a Dongson site; Can and Kinh 1977; Tan and Trinh 1977). The lugged earrings of this period are more developed. Some have three lugs, some four. Most of these lugs are long and pointed.

The pottery here is rather fine, polished on the outside and decorated with beautiful motifs, on a background of chap dai. These types of decoration are also found at Go Ma Vuong, in graves which were surveyed by the Institute of Archaeology in 1977. Painted pottery was also found at Sa Huynh, with red and black paint being the most common colors.

In terms of shapes, at Sa Huynh the common shapes of pottery are burial jars with large lids indented on the edge and small bottles (binh con tien).

In the Sa-huynh sites, there were only a few bronze implements. Among thousands of finds, only 30 are made of bronze; the majority of these are bracelets. Although the molds for bronze casting have been found, the bronze industry was not well developed here. On the other hand, the iron industry seemed to be well developed. Many iron implements were found, the majority of which were weapons like swords, knives, and spears and tools like scythes, hoes, and spades. These implements were well shaped, indicating a high level of technology for the Sa-huynh people.

In recent years, many scholars have discussed the origin of the Sa-huynh Culture. Some scholars have suggested that Sa-huynh was a naval culture because of the coastal distribution of the Sa-huynh sites and because of the similarity of its pottery with those of the Pacific islands. Together with pottery in the Kalanay, the scholar suggests a Sa-huynh/Kalanay complex.

While it may take a long time before we can solve this problem, we suggest that the Sa-huynh Culture was savanna based (trung du) because of the similarity between the “bulltooth-shaped” axes (riu hinh rang trau) in Sa Huynh and Play Cu (Gia Lai/Cong
Tum), Cu Bai (Binh Tri Thien) and also because the Sa-huynh economy was based on agriculture. Only in its later period did Sa-huynh move to the coastal area. In the future there might be more discoveries of the Sa-huynh sites in the hill areas, as implied by those found at Que Loc (west of Quang Nam/Da Nang) and Tra Dom (Gia Lai/Cong Tum).

3. The Southeast Center of the South: Doc Chua

Many metal age archaeological sites were found in the eastern part of the South in the later part of the nineteenth century. In 1978, Chenuiex made some metal age finds in the Rua Islands, and these findings were presented by E. T. Hamy. In the 1960s, E. Saurin reported on a series of sites in the Hang Gon area (Dong Nai). Even more significant and more important are the reports of H. Fontaine on the metal age sites in the Dong Nai delta, such as the sites of Cu Lao Rua (Rua Islands), Ngai Thang, Phuoc Tan, Hoi Son, and Ben Do. Fontaine suggests the term "Phuoc Tan Culture" for these sites.

In recent years, many more metal age sites have been found and excavated on a large scale. Some of these sites are Cau Sat (or Binh Loc), Ben Do, Cai Van, Suoi Chon (Dong Nai), An Son, and Rach Nui (Long An).

In general, the finds in these sites show that they belong to the same tradition and share similar cultural characteristics, yet at times underwent different stages of development. Three common types of artifact found in these sites are shouldered axes, axes, and stone bracelets. The shouldered axes existed throughout the late Neolithic to the iron age. Based on the changes in the size of the shouldered axes, the increase in the number of axes as compared to shouldered axes, and also the various types of the stone bracelets, the culture of this area can be divided into four stages.

The earliest stage is the Cau Sat period. In this stage there are no traces of bronzes or bronze-related artifacts. Among the stone implements, the shouldered axes are more abundant than the quadrangular axes. These implements also include the triangular or almost triangular axes, harvesting knives (luoi dao hai), and points. Concerning the level of technology, this culture could be said to be comparable to the Phung Nguyen period in the North and the Long Thanh in the central part. However, in these sites the stone bracelets were far less abundant than those in the north and central centers. In the Cau Sat period, the stone bracelets were almost nonexistent. For the pottery, the techniques of manufacture seemed to be developed but the decorations were rather simple, consisting only of simple ropes and hatches.

The next stage consists of sites like Ben Do, Phuoc Tan, Hoi Son, and Ngai Thang. Shouldered axes are still found in this stage, but not as many as in the Cau Sat. This seems to be true also for the triangular axes and harvest knives (luoi dao hai). Unlike those of the previous period, the shouldered stone hoes seem to increase in numbers in this stage. Like the previous stage, the pottery is still rather simple in terms of decoration and types, the most typical type being the three-legged pot which was probably used for cooking or storing. In this stage there are still not clear traces of bronze.

The third stage consists of sites like Cu Lao Rua, Cai Van, Go Da, the lower level of Doc Chua, and probably such sites as An Son and Rach Nui. In this stage the types of stone implements still remain the same, but their proportion has changed; the shouldered axes have decreased in number and the rectangular axes have increased. Harvest knives with notches at the two ends start to appear. The pottery is still the same simple pottery found in the previous stages. Molds for curved-edge axes (riu dong xoe can) are found.
The last stage of the development is found in the site of Doc Chua, which belongs to the bronze culture, and probably early iron culture, in the area of Dong Nai. Stone implements still exist in considerable numbers, with rectangular axes being greater in number than the shouldered axes. Stone bracelets with a D shape in their cross section appear in large quantities. There are also weights (qua can). Pottery techniques are well developed and increase in quantity. Pottery is generally red, hard, and large in size. The most typical types are the long-legged bowls and the flaring rim bowls. Bronze implements are also more abundant. Some of these implements are spears, socketed axes, and qua dong (a kind of weapon).

The development from Cau Sat to Doc Chua is a continuous process, from simple to complicated, from "lower" to "higher." Each stage has its own characteristics, yet they all share common ones which represent the culture of the Dong Nai delta.

Of stone implements found, the most popular are the shouldered hoes and the triangular axes. Unique to this area is the existence of harvest knives (dao hai) which are never found in the North. Another unique type of implement is the cutting knife (dao cat).

Stone ornaments like bracelets are rather rare; in each site, only a few were found.

Concerning materials used in this culture, most of the stone implements are made from basalt (ba dan). This reflects a continuation of the Xuan Loc technique of making stone implements. In this area there was virtually no use of jewelry or semiprecious stone to make implements.

The stone technology was rather developed. The techniques of sawing and grinding were mastered. Differing from other sites in this area, in addition to well-polished stone implements, there were also stone implements which were carefully flaked and chipped but not polished. Because of this, some foreign scholars think that the people in this area were not careful in making their stone implements.

The pottery of the culture was simple. Both the decorations and the types of pottery were poorer than those of the North and the center.

Concerning bronze implements, the popular ones are the socketed spears with ovaloid blade. The bronze axes had curved blades and hexagonal or circular handles. There is not much decoration on the bronze implements.

Like the cultures in the Hong River, the sites in the Dong Nai delta were found mainly in the hills, with a small number in the eastern plain of the South. Basically this is also a savanna culture (van hoa trung du) whose origin could be from the plateaus southwest of the central part of present Vietnam (Tay Nguyen).

**THE DONGSON CLIMAX**

We have just described the development of the centers of civilization of the metal age in Vietnam. Each of these centers of civilization was formed in different ways, through different paths, yet they all had definite cultural relationships with one another.

In Xuan An (Nghe An)—a site of the Dongson Culture—a two-headed beast earring was found. This specimen is similar to that of Phu Hoa and Tam My, two sites of the Sa-huyhn Culture. It might have been possible that the people of Xuan An created the earring by imitating the Sa-huyhn model. It might also have been possible that they traded it with the Sa-huyhn area. Either way, it is proof that there were cultural relationships between the Dongson Culture and the Sa-huyhn Culture.

In Sa-huyhn sites there are pottery rollers (con lan) and leech-shaped earrings. These types of artifacts are often found in the site of Hoa Loc. The shouldered and decorated
bottles found in Len Hai Vai and Ru Tran (Nghe Tinh) as well as the pottery with indented rims are similar to the styles of Sa-huynh.

Were the lugged earrings found in the Sa-huynh Culture derived from those of the Phung Nguyen Culture?

There are similarities between the cultures of Sa-huynh and of Dong Nai. Some people have suggested that the curved blade axe (*qua dong*) and ovaloid bladed spears of the site of Doc Chua are related to the bronze implements of the Dongson Culture. And the weights, peach-shaped stone artifacts, were thought to have some relationship with the stone implements in the Sa-huynh sites because artifacts of similar shape were also found with Sa-huynh pottery.

The relationships between the cultural centers of the metal age in our country are manifested in many facets. The above-mentioned ones are the easiest to comprehend. For example, some people have recognized the similarity between the materials and the decorative motifs of the Dong Nai delta and those of the Red River delta.

The cultural relationships are definite and multifaceted. How could and should we evaluate these relationships? Could it be that all of these cultures have integrated to become the Dongson Culture? Would it be necessary to coin the concepts of Northern Dongson and Southern Dongson?

Like the Hoabinh Culture, the concept of a Dongson Culture was applied, by some foreign scholars, to the whole area of Southeast Asia. Some bronze implements in the Philippines and in Indonesia, which show none of the characteristics of Dongson Culture, are also classified as Dongson artifacts.

With the wide distribution of the Dongson Culture, it is possible to see some unique Dongson artifacts in its contemporary and neighboring cultures. Because of this, in comparative studies of the archaeological cultures it is necessary to compare the whole collection and also the representative styles and artifacts. In discussing the culture of Dongson, one has to mention the bronze drums, deformed axes, pots, anthropomorphic-handled daggers, long-beaked birds, and concentric decorative motifs.

In the culture of Dongson there was a certain percentage of *riu xo e can* (socketed axes), but these implements are not diagnostic of Dongson.

It is important to understand the convergence phenomenon in archaeology. Sometimes distant cultures which have no relationships whatsoever can produce similar decorative motives—for example, the wave form motifs or the horizontal 5 motifs. These exist in all the stages of the Dong Nai delta, in Samrongsen, and even in Europe. The *khuong nhac* (music frame) and its different motifs are typical motifs of the Dong Dau period. Yet it is not true to say that every *khuong nhac* motif belongs to the Dong Dau Culture.

Therefore, as presented above, we suggest that the metal age in our country was derived from a very ancient culture in Southeast Asia. During the metal age in Vietnam, there were three centers of culture. Each of these centers had its own path of development. The relationships among them were complicated and multifaceted; such relationships contributed to a certain extent to the formation of each center. These centers developed at different speeds.

By the beginning of the second millennium B.C., the peoples in these centers had entered the bronze age. Radiocarbon dates from Trang Kenh, Dong Dau, and Ben Do seem to prove that.* By this time pots in all the three centers were wheel made and rich in

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*Dong Dau (layer 4), 3330 B.P. ± 100; Trang Kenh, 3405 B.P. ± 100; Nui Gom (Hang Gon), 3950 B.P. ± 250; Ben Do, 3090 B.P. ± 100.*
decorative motifs; experiments in metallurgy were also begun. So the beginnings of all three are rather comparable (dong deu.)

From the same beginning, the Dongson Culture became the most developed because of the differences in environments, in resources, and in relationships of each area. In the North there were rich sources of the metal ores needed for bronze. This, together with the well-developed level of technology, created the ideal situation for the development of the bronze technology. The development was further enhanced thanks to the North's important location; it could trade with the bronze centers in the west and in the northwest. By Dongson times, the bronze implements in this center had surpassed those of the other centers both in quantity and types. While the bronze implements in the central region and in the South were counted in dozens, those in the North had reached thousands.

The Dongson bronze implements consist of ornaments, producing tools, containers, and large-sized musical instruments with complicated decorative motifs. It is true that while in the cultures of Sa-huynh and Doc Chua the bronze implements were small in size, the bronze implements in Dongson had developed to a high level.

The development of metallurgy in the culture of Dongson also reflects that culture's level of technology and production, which were much higher than those of the other cultures.

Together with economic development came social changes. The appearance of bronze weapons in the Dongson burials indicates such changes. In Doc Chua and Sa-huynh, only a few spears (qua) were found, while 50 percent of the Dongson bronze implements are weapons. The quantity and kinds of weapons in the Dongson Culture seemed to indicate that warfare (between ethnic groups or nations) had been a common phenomenon. The changes in Dongson society also are reflected in the changes in the burial goods. This was not as clear in the other centers.

The above situations indicate, in our opinion, that the Dongson Culture not only was more advanced than the others in metallurgy but also pushed its society to progress at a higher speed.

Could it be correct to say that while the people of Dongson in the North had organized into a state under the Hung king, the cultures of the central coastal area and in the eastern part of the South did not make such progress because of limitations, one way or another, despite the fact that they had also entered the bronze age?

This historical reality is reflected in folklore. The people in the North still retain good memories of mythical stories about the beginning period of the country under the Hung king, whereas in the center and in the South, stories about building the country have to wait until the appearance of the Champa and Phu Nam.

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