

Olov R. T. Janse 1895–1985

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DR. OLOV JANSE died in March of 1985 as the result of complications following a relatively minor accident. His mind was active to the last. While I had correspondence with him for some time before, I first met him in Saigon in 1959, at which time he informed me of the beginning of the Mekong Valley Project. We worked together for three years trying to develop an internationally supported archaeological salvage program for the areas to be disturbed by this project but were not successful: more of that later.

Olov Janse was born in Norrköping, Sweden, in 1895. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Uppsala in 1916, earned his Master of Arts from the same university in 1920 and his Doctor of Philosophy degree in archaeology, again from the University of Uppsala, in 1922. He was appointed as Assistant Curator of the French National Museum of Antiquities in St. Germain-en-Laye from 1920 to 1930 and an Associate Professor of National and Prehistoric Archaeology at the Ecole du Louvre from 1925 to 1927. He became a *Charge de Cours* (Associate Professor) at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes of the Sorbonne from 1928 to 1936. At the same time, on several occasions, he was an Assistant Curator of the National Historic Museum in Stockholm.

Janse's archaeological fieldwork started in Sweden in 1912; he continued with excavations there until 1927. He also was involved in excavations in France, at the palaeolithic site of La Quina and in Gallo-Roman remains. He did research on both museum and private collections, resulting in several publications. At some time during the late 1920s his museum research moved him into Chinese archaeology, with an interest in bronze materials and bronze manufacturing cultures.

His first archaeological work in Viet Nam was in 1934–1935 when he was the Director of the Archaeological Expedition to Indochina, sponsored by La Direction des Musees Nationaux of France, the Ecole du Louvre in Paris, the Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient in Hanoi, and the French colonial government of Indochina. His second expedition to Indochina, with the same sponsors, was from 1936 to 1938. Janse is best known for his excavations at Dong Son and nearby, related sites, done during these two expeditions, and his three-volume publication on this work (1947*a*, 1951, 1958). He surveyed and

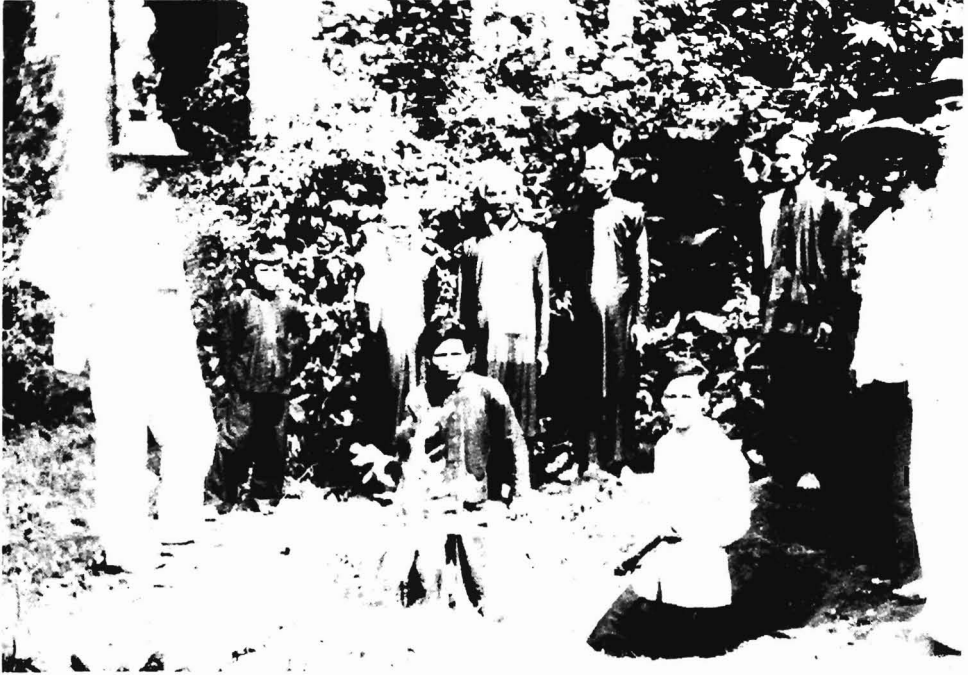


Plate I. Olov R. T. Janse standing at left of excavation on Turtle Island near Ho Chi Minh City, with several Vietnamese “chiefs” in the background (photo taken in 1939).

tested several other sites in other areas, including the site of Sa Huynh (1961a), in the south. His third expedition included both Indochina and the Philippines, sponsored by the Harvard-Yenching Institute and the Ecole Francaise d’Extreme-Orient. He was a Visiting Professor of Far-Eastern Archaeology at Harvard University from 1941 to 1943 and a Lecturer on the Far East for the Harvard Summer School in 1945.

Janse’s research in the Philippines was not particularly successful as far as his purpose in coming to the Philippines was concerned. This was in considerable part because he did not understand the necessity of working through H. Otley Beyer, who controlled the field (see Solheim 1969:4–5). His purpose for wanting to work there was to investigate the possibilities of Dongson presence in or contacts with the Philippines. Because of his inability—for lack of working through Beyer—to locate archaeological sites with Dongson-like bronze artifacts, he felt that there was no evidence for Dongson influence in the Philippines. He did, however, find and excavate sites with Chinese porcelain in Calatagan, Batangas, and demonstrated the importance of Kay Thomas, a site with large quantities of Early Ming porcelain (1947:348–355). This is an area where I did some testing in the early 1950s, and where Bob Fox made a major excavation (Fox 1959).

During the Second World War Janse’s knowledge of Indochina was very important to the United States government and to its war effort. In 1943 he was a consultant to the Board of Economic Warfare in Washington, D.C. From 1943–1945 he was a Senior Research Analyst and Chief of the Research and Analysis Branch and the Director of the Southeast Asia Section of the Office of Strategic Services in Washington. Immediately following the war, from 1944 to 1945, he was the Deputy Chief of the Southeast Asia

Section, Research and Analysis Branch in the United States Department of State. From 1946 to 1947 he was a member of the Preparatory Commission of UNESCO and a Consultant to the Director-General of UNESCO, in Paris. He then became, from 1947 to 1955, a Senior Research Analyst for the Foreign Service Institute of the Department of State in Washington, D.C.

Janse received many honors during his long career. Among these were: the Letterstedt Fellowship in 1930, awarded by the Royal Swedish Academy once every five years to do research in foreign museums for one year; the Vega prize of the Royal Swedish Anthropological Society in 1937; appointed Sweden's Ambassador-at-Large, 1936–1940; Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur (Knight of the French Legion of Honor); Knight of the Royal Swedish Order of the Polar Star (Kungliga Nordskjarnan); Member of the Swedish Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities; and Member of the Royal Nordic Society of Antiquities, Denmark.

In spite of the honors he had received and the important positions he held, he was easy to approach and to communicate with, at least if you were interested in Southeast Asian archaeology. Shortly before going on active duty with the United States Army Air Corps in 1943, at the age of 18, having no background in archaeology or knowledge of Southeast Asia or any Southeast Asian language, I wrote to Janse in Washington, D.C., asking him whether there was anything that I could do to join him and start my training to be an archaeologist specializing in Southeast Asia. I received a prompt reply from him saying that without a specialized background in Southeast Asia there was no way in which I could join him in the OSS but he encouraged me to continue my interest in Southeast Asia. As mentioned above, I first met him in Saigon where he acquainted me with the just-organizing Mekong Development Project, under United Nations sponsorship. He was in Saigon as a Visiting Professor of Vietnamese and Comparative Archaeology at the University of Saigon, the position being sponsored as a Goodwill Mission supported by the United States Department of State from 1958 to 1960. He suggested to me the need for an international salvage program in the many areas to be disturbed by this huge development project, and I agreed to join him in bringing this about. Over the next three years we corresponded with each other and with many influential people. At one time in 1961 I joined him in Washington, D.C.—thanks to a grant from my then employer, Florida State University—and we lobbied in Congress for several days. We received much moral support in answer to our requests, but no funds (Solheim and Hackenberg 1961). This led to my starting to work in northeastern Thailand in 1963, when we both gave up trying to convince others of the importance of such a program. I visited him, and his charming wife, many times thereafter in Washington. He was very interested in the findings of our research in northeastern Thailand and kindly contributed a number of articles for publication in *Asian Perspectives*, presenting further information and interpretations from his research in Viet Nam.

He was a gentleman, a scholar, a pioneer in his research on Dong Son, and a friend.

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