

The Relationship between Dong Son Bronze Jars and Its Counterparts in South China

Trinh Nang Chung *

Abstract: The Dong Son bronze jar (Đồng Sơn bronze Thạp) is one of outstanding products that provide a clear illustration of material aspects of Dong Son culture. By now, bronze jars have been discovered mainly in vestiges and graves of Dong Son culture in North Vietnam. In addition, some bronze jars have been found in South China.

Until now, over 280 bronze jars have been found and it is acknowledged that owners of the bronze jars are the very people of Dong Son culture. In terms of date, Dong Son bronze jars date from a little earlier than the bronze jars found in South China.

In South China, 19 bronze jars have been found in Guangdong, Guangxi and Yunnan. It is possible to affirm that local people in South China had no tradition of casting and using the Dong Son-style bronze jars. This big difference is a very important evidence to demonstrate that Dong Son culture originated and developed with its particular identities in Northern Vietnam.

Discovery of Dong Son bronze jars in Yunnan, Guangdong and Guangxi shows popular exchange between people of Dong Son culture and people in South China at the middle time of the Zhanguo Period and the Western Han (from the 4th to the 2nd centuries BC).

Key words: Dong Son bronze jar; bronze jar in South China; cultural owner of Dong Son bronze jar; exchange.

The Dong Son bronze jar is one of outstanding products that provide a clear illustration of material aspects of Dong Son culture. Together with Dong Son bronze drums, the bronze jars played a very significant role in Dong Son social life. The bronze drums and jars can be seen as “labeled atoms” that created the key spirit of Dong Son culture. While bronze drums were typical for different types of culture and they were owned by various ethnic groups in Vietnam, South China and Southeast Asia, bronze jars were particularly typical for Dong Son culture and they were owned by only ancient Viet people at the time of the Hung (Hùng) Kings and An Duong Vuong (An Dương Vương).

By now, bronze jars have been discovered

mainly in vestiges and graves of Dong Son culture in North Vietnam. In addition, some bronze jars have been found in South China. There is no information about discovery of this type of artifacts in any other places in Southeast Asia.

In this paper, I would like to elucidate the relationship between Dong Son bronze jars and those in South China, starting with description of basic information on Dong Son bronze jars.

I. BRONZE JARS IN VIETNAM AND THOSE IN SOUTH CHINA

1. Dong Son bronze jars: Basic information

1.1. Quantity and distribution of

(*) Assoc. Prof., Ph.D., Institute of Archaeology, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.

bronze jars

In the monograph titled “*Dong Son Bronze Jars*”, Ha Van Phung reveals that 235 Dong Son bronze jars were found in Vietnam by 2005, although the statistical data were not complete yet (Hà Văn Phụng, 2008). According to data presented at the annual conference of archaeological announcement, over 280 bronze jars had been found by 2014.

This figure just consists of the bronze jars kept in the Central and provincial museums as well as the bronze jars reported in official documents. In reality, the number of Dong Son bronze jars is much greater than the figure. Many local antiquarians are still keeping a lot of bronze jars; some of them now possess several tens of bronze jars. It is really difficult to make statistics of all bronze jars kept by individuals. According to our survey conducted in 2013 at a private museum named “*Forest in City*” owned by Hoang Van Thong, a collector in Thanh Hoa, there are nearly 20 Dong Son bronze jars of big size and tens of grave bronze jars of tiny size displayed in the museum. Thus, apart from the 280 above-mentioned bronze jars, there are a lot of bronze jars of tiny size, which were used as grave goods or for worship. By now, such bronze jars haven’t been fully counted yet.

All the above-mentioned bronze jars are the very product of Dong Son Culture. They are therefore named Dong Son bronze jars. Basically, the distribution of the bronze jars is similar to the distribution of Dong Son Culture. Consequently, Dong Son bronze jars were mainly found in the basins of the Red River, Ma River and Ca River. Based on collected data, we realize that Dong Son bronze jars were distributed in more than 15 cities and provinces, running from Lao Cai,

Yen Bai, Phu Tho, Hanoi, Bac Ninh to Quang Ninh, Hai Phong, Hung Yen, Hai Duong, Ha Nam, Ninh Binh, Thanh Hoa, Nghe An and Thua Thien Hue. The farthest place in the South, where Dong Son bronze jars were found, is Phong Dien District (Thua Thien Hue Province). Of all those provinces, bronze jars have been most found in following ones: Thanh Hoa, Yen Bai, Phu Tho, Hanoi and Nghe An. The province, where big-sized and beautiful bronze jars have been found, is Yen Bai, followed by Phu Tho. Those bronze jars are very well-known, such as Dao Thinh (Đào Thỉnh) bronze jars, Hop Minh (Hợp Minh) bronze jars and Van Thang (Vạn Thắng) bronze jars etc.

Compared with Dong Son drums, Dong Son bronze jars were distributed in a much smaller area. Until now, no bronze jar has been found in many vast areas such as the Northwestern Mountains, the South Central Coast, the Central Highlands and the South Vietnam. For the entire area of Binh Tri Thien (covering more than 3 provinces: Quang Binh, Quang Tri and Thua Thien Hue), only one bronze jar was discovered in Phong Dien District. Although a lot of bronze artifacts have been found in Quang Binh and Ha Tinh provinces, no bronze jar has been found there. We wonder whether the bronze jars were merely used to contain things; they were just significant for practical activities; thus, people might use other tools instead. As a result, the bronze jars were not found in areas far from the center of Dong Son Culture.

1.2. Classification of bronze jars

In spite of a great number of Dong Son bronze jars found by now, the shapes and designs are relatively simple; they do not

vary much. Unlike the complicated classification of Dong Son bronze drums, therefore, it is quite easy to make a classification of the bronze jars. According to descriptions made by research works, some bronze jars have beautiful designs, but by now no one has ever conducted a thorough research on the casting technique, designs and development stages etc. of Dong Son bronze jars.

In general, the bronze jars have a cylindrical shape; the top is bigger than the bottom; both the top and the bottom are a little smaller than the body; the body wells out in the middle; for some bronze jars, a side part of the body inclines straight from the top to the bottom. The bottom is even and flat. There is a base support standing vertically or a little inclining outwards. Most of the bronze jars have two inverted U-shaped or hood-boat shaped handles near the top. For the bronze jars, which have a lid, there are also two hood-boat shaped handles on the lid. Almost all the bronze jars have handles.

Most of the bronze jars are decorated with designs. Those, which have no design, account for a small proportion. The designs are divided into two groups: One consists of geometric shapes such as fanciful designs, inflectional cloud designs, inflectional palindrome design, triangular saw-toothed designs, com-toothed designs, concentric circles, tangential circles, and S-shaped zigzags like the shape of a canarium etc.; the other consists of animal-shaped designs such as a bird, a fish, a deer, a buffalo, and designs that show living activities such as a house on stilts, drumming, rice pounding, dancing and singing, boat-rowing etc., which are often found in bronze drums.

In terms of size, most of the bronze jars

are less than 30 centimeters high; the diameter of the mouth and the base ranges from 25 to 30 centimeters and from 20 to 25 centimeters respectively. Yet, there are some unusual bronze jars, of which the height is more than 50 centimeters, the mouth is about 40 centimeters in diameter, and the base is about 35 centimeters in diameter. There are also unusually smaller bronze jars that often have no lid.

As bronze jars did not change much, in terms of both the shape and designs, ones haven't paid much attention to classification of bronze jars. There are different opinions about classification of bronze jars. Based on the overall structure of bronze jars, we agree with the classification made by Ha Van Phung in the monograph "*Dong Son Bronze Jars*"; i.e. bronze jars are divided into two groups: with and without a cover. In general, the bronze jars, which have a cover, are decorated with more sophisticated and meticulous designs. Those designs show some artistic meanings. Those, which have no cover, are decorated with simpler designs.

The number of bronze jars that have a cover is not high. For some bronze jars, covers are found together with the jars. For others, of which the covers are not found, we have to base on the edge of the jar mouth to identify whether they have a cover or not. As Ha Van Phung mentioned in his monograph, there have been 26 bronze jars with a cover found in total. They have a relatively big size and beautiful designs. In addition to geometric designs, there are also animal-shaped designs. The designs on covers are nearly similar to those on the bronze drums; there is a design of the sun in the center with sun's rays and geometrical designs in the outside circles.

Typical for the bronze jars that have a

cover are bronze jars found in Dao Thinh and Hop Minh (Yen Bai Province), Van Thang I (Phu Tho Province), and Doi Noi Tru (Đồi Nội Trú) (Lao Cai Province) as well as the bronze jar covers found in Dau Ram I (Đầu Rằm) (Quang Ninh Province), Ngoc Lu (Ngọc Lũ) I and Ngoc Lu II (Ha Nam Province), and Xuan Lap (Xuân Lập) I (Thanh Hoa Province). The most typical is Dao Thinh bronze jar (Yen Bai Province), which can be seen as the national treasure. This bronze jar is the biggest and the most beautiful with a lot of designs symbolizing for Dong Son culture. On the cover of the bronze jar, especially, there are statues of four couples having sexual intercourse, which shows the lingaism – a belief of the owners of Dong Son culture.

The bronze jars that have no cover make up a majority, accounting for nearly 90% of all bronze jars. They often have a smaller size and a slightly different shape, compared with the bronze jars that have a cover. There are not many bronze jars, of which the top and the bottom shrink a little. There are some cylindrical bronze jars, of which only the top shrinks a little. For most of the bronze jars that have no cover, the side inclines straight from the top to the bottom. Based on designs decorated on the bronze jars, we can divide them into two sub-groups: One consists of the bronze jars that have only geometric designs; and the other consists of those that have both geometric designs and animal-shaped or living-activity designs.

1.3. Functions of the bronze jars

Jars are household-used products. They were mainly used to contain things, but Dong Son bronze jars were sometimes buried with the dead; typical are the bronze

jars found in Vac (Vạc) Village (Nghe An), Thieu Duong (Thiệu Dương) and Nap (Nấp) Mountain (Thanh Hoa) and Xuân La (Hanoi) etc. This makes a contribution towards elucidating the burial custom of ancient Viet people at the time of Dong Son culture. One type of funerals was cremation, in which a bronze jar was used to contain the bone-ash to be buried. In some cases, there was only a skull in a bronze jar; for example, the bronze jars found in Thieu Duong (Thanh Hoa Province) and Van Thang (Phu Tho Province). In some jars, we can see the first burial custom, according to which the jar was used as a coffin to contain the dead body to be buried; for example, the bronze jars found in Hop Minh (Yen Bai Province). For Dong Son Culture, it was very common that bronze jars of tiny size were used as grave goods to be buried with other things for the dead. This demonstrates that bronze jars were very significant, both materially and spiritually, for ancient Viet people at the time of Dong Son culture. They were just less important than bronze drums. That's why we often find bronze jars in Dong Son graves.

1.4. Date of Dong Son bronze jars

After carrying out the absolute dating by the C14 technique for Dong Son vestiges, where bronze jars were found, we have identified their date as below: Viet Khe Boat Tombs 2480 ± 100 BP; 2415 ± 100 BP and 2320 ± 100 BP; Chau Can Boat Tombs 2325 ± 60 BP; Phu Luong (Phú Lương) Boat Tomb: 2150 ± 60 BP and 2060 ± 60 BP; Ca (Cả) Village Graves 2235 ± 40 BP. Based on the above-mentioned information, we realize that the bronze jars have the same date as the bronze drums of Dong Son culture; i.e. they date from the

middle of the Dong Son culture time, or their date ranges from the 5th to 3th centuries BC.

1.5. Artistic value

Almost all Dong Son bronze jars were decorated with designs. The bronze jars that have no design make up a very little proportion. Designs decorated on bronze jars are divided into two groups: One consists of geometric shapes such as fanciful designs, inflectional cloudy designs, inflectional palindrome design, triangular saw-toothed designs, com-toothed designs, concentric circles, tangential circles and S-shaped zigzags like the shape of a canarium etc.; and, the other consists of animal-shaped designs such as a bird, a fish, a deer, a buffalo, and designs that show human living activities such as a house on stilts, drumming, rice pounding, dancing and singing, boat-rowing etc., which are often found in bronze drums. Owners of Dong Son culture used the body and the cover of bronze jars to convey ideas of life via decorations and designs. In terms of content, the designs on the bronze jars show living activities and emotional life of local people. Researchers have realized a common artistic style between Dong Son bronze drums and bronze jars; evidently, they were created by the same owners, who were ancient Viet people at the time of Dong Son culture.

2. The bronze jars found in South China

There are not many bronze jars found in South China. According to the announcements, about 19 bronze jars have been found in South China in total. They were mainly discovered in tomb vestiges such as the Tombs of Nanyue Wang (Nanyue King), Beiling Song in Guangdong, Luobowan and the Tombs in Gao Ying, as well as in some other areas such as Yu-Jiang (Guangxi) and

the Temple of Tianzi (Yunnan). Remarkably, in South China there is no bronze jar of tiny size used as grave goods or for worship at all.

2.1. Bronze jars in the tomb vestiges in Guangdong

2.1.1. Bronze jars found in the Tomb of Nanyue Wang

The Tomb of Nanyue Wang in Yiban Diaoxiang Hill (in the center of Guangzhou City) was excavated at a large extent by archaeologists. This is the very tomb of the Nanyue King Zhao Mo (i.e. the second king of the Zhao Tuo Dynasty in the Fan-yu – the ancient Guangzhou). The tombs date from the time of the Western Han Dynasty (Former Han Dynasty). There were abundant artifacts buried in the tomb, including: 2,877 bronze artifacts, more than 700 iron artifacts, more than 700 gold and silver specimens, 307 pearl specimens, 42 glass artifacts and a lot of ceramic, wooden and horn artifacts⁽¹⁾.

Almost all the burial artifacts have the style of the Zhongyuan and the Chu. There were, however, 9 bronze jars and 1 ceramic jar. Of the 9 bronze jars, the most noticeable are the jars coded B57 and B59.

The bronze jar B57 has a cylindrical shape, of which the top is larger than the bottom. There is an edge in the top to keep a cover. The middle is a little larger than the top and the bottom. There is a pair of handles. The bottom is flat. The base has a thin shape like a turban. A pair of ears is attached at the middle of the jar body. The handles have an inverted U-shape. There is

⁽¹⁾ 广州市文物管理委员会, 中国社会科学院考古研究所等 1991. “西汉南越王墓”. 文物出版社. 1991年.

a smaller handle of the hood-boat shape inside each handle to keep the cover in place. There are three groups of designs arranged from the top to the bottom. In the upper part, there is a strip of double canarium-shaped designs in the center; both above and below this strip, there is a narrow strip of tangential circles and a narrow strip of saw-tooth shaped designs. In the middle part, there is a strip of stylized bird-head designs connecting each other in the center; both above and below it, there is a narrow strip of concentric circles. In the lower part, the designs are rather similar to those in the upper part, but there is no strip of double canarium-shaped designs in the center of the lower part. The bronze jar was cast by a mould of two pieces. In the middle of the jar, we can see mould-joining traces. The bottom of the bronze jar was also cast by a mould of two pieces. The handle was cast separately to be attached into the jar afterwards. There are many square holes around the jar; they were used to keep the outside and inside pieces of the mould in place. The jar is 50 centimeters high; its mouth is 45.5 - 46.5 centimeters in diameter; the round base is 2.4 centimeters high and 44.3 centimeters in diameter.

The bronze jar B59 is relatively small. There is an edge in the top and inverted U-shaped handles. Yet, a half of the handles was broken and lost, so there are only the inner parts of the handles left. There are also 3 groups of designs. The upper part consists of a large strip of double-canarium shaped designs connecting each other in the center. Above and below this strip, there is a narrow strip of saw-tooth shaped designs and a narrow strip of dotted designs. The middle part consists of a large strip with

designs of 4 boats carrying people disguised in feather; they look generally the same; the 4 boats connect together; each boat has the bow and the stern; the stern is raising up like a waterfowl. In both the bow and the stern, there is a feather flag and a waterfowl. There is an estrade placed from the middle to the stern. In the estrade, there is something like a tripod cauldron. In the bow, there is a long stick placed vertically; there is a feather flag hung in the upper end and a wooden drum hung in the lower part of the stick. In each boat, there are 5 people disguised in feather; most of them are wearing a long-feather hat (only some particular people have no hat); there are two wings below the hat; there is a feather flag on the top of the hat; all those people have a narrow back; they all are wearing feather shorts and standing in bare feet. Of the 5 people, the biggest one is standing in the estrade; his left hand is holding a bow and his right hand is taking an arrow; the second one is also standing in the estrade, wearing a low hat; his left hand is holding a shoe-shaped axe and his right hand is holding a head (of which hair is hanging down) as if he was hosting a sacrifice. The rest three people are standing in front of the estrade; one of them is holding a bow in the left hand and an arrow in the right hand; the other is seating on a drum-shaped place, holding a drumstick in the left hand and something in the right hand; the rest is standing against the estrade, grabbing hair of a naked prisoner (the prisoner has long hair) in the left hand and taking a short sword in the right hand. In the stern, there is one person rowing the boat. All the boats are decorated with designs of the waterfowl, the turtle, and the sea fish. All the above-

mentioned activities seem to reflect a sacrifice, in which a prisoner is killed to worship the sea god (Picture 4).

Those bronze jars are surely products of Dong Son culture. In addition, the two ceramic jars coded C88 and C89 also copy the style of Dong Son bronze jars⁽²⁾.

Recently, Nguyễn Việt, an archaeologist, has realized the Dong Son bronze jar coded 2509-29 kept in the Barbier - Mueller Museum (Geneva, Swiss) is very similar to the bronze jar found in the tomb of Nanyue Wang (Zhao Mo). In this bronze jar, 22 Chinese words are inscribed by Nanyue style, of which the two first words read as Long Xoang indicate the name of a place. According to the author, it may be a phonetic variant of Long Xuyen, where Zhao Tuo used to be the district head before he established the kingdom of Nan Yue. Thus, this bronze jar is probably related to Zhao Tuo. Perhaps, the jar was given by Zhao Tuo to Zhao Mo (Nguyễn Việt, 2010: 633).

2.1.2. Bronze jars in the Tomb of Beiling Song

Archaeologists carried out an excavation of the ancient tomb in Beiling Song (Zhaoqing City, Guangdong Province) in late 1972 and collected hundreds of bronze, ceramic, and stone ornaments. Of all the artifacts, the most noticeable is a bronze jar. The tomb is determined to date from the Zhanguo Period; i.e. the 3rd century BC. According to professional assessments, most of the bronze artifacts found in this tomb have the style of the Chu. The ceramic artifacts and the bronze jar alone were particular products of local people⁽³⁾.

As described by excavators, the bronze jar has no cover, but it has inverted U-shaped handles. The designs decorated on

the jar are mainly geometric, including tangential circles, lozenges and comb-teeth, which are very similar to the typical designs of Dong Son bronze products. It, therefore, can be seen as a Dong Son bronze jar found in this tomb area (Picture 2).

2.2. Bronze jars in the tombs in Guangxi

2.2.1. Bronze jars in the Luobowan Graves

The tombs No.1 and No.2 are located in Luobowan (Gui District, Guangxi), next to Vietnam - China border. Both of them were dated from the time of the Western Han Dynasty. During an excavation conducted in 1976, abundant artifacts were found, providing a new understanding of ancient people in this area.

The size of Luobowan tomb No.1 is relatively great with a complicated structure. Under the tomb, there is a room, where 3 coffins are located, a graveyard and burial holes of grave goods. There are another 7 coffins, of which 4 ones are made of tree-trunks and the rest 3 ones are made of 6 planks, and grave goods buried at the bottom of the tomb. The artifacts are relatively abundant, including more than 200 bronze artifacts, 20 iron artifacts, nearly 10 gold and tin artifacts, more than 50 ceramic goods and some stone artifacts⁽⁴⁾.

Of all the artifacts found in the tomb, the

⁽²⁾ 广州市文物管理委员会,中国社会科学院考古研究所等 1991. “西汉南越王墓”. 文物出版社. 1991年

⁽³⁾ 广东省博物馆,肇庆市文化局 1974. “广东肇庆市北岭松山古墓发掘简报”. 文物. 1974年第11期: 69-78.

⁽⁴⁾ 广西壮族自治区文物工作队 1981. “广西贺县河东高寨西汉墓”. 文物资料丛刊. 文物出版社. 1981年

most noticeable are 4 bronze jars, which are almost the same with similar designs (Picture 1). The jars have a cylindrical shape, bigger in the top and smaller in the bottom; the top mouth is flat; the bottom is also flat, but the inside part is concave to make a round base. We can see casting traces in the bottom of the jars. There are two inverted U-shaped handles near the top edge. When the jars were discovered, they had wooden covers with a round knob in the center.

The bronze jar M1:1 is the biggest. The designs decorated in this jar are divided into 4 groups. The top part consists of a large strip of palindrome designs hooking with each other in the center and two narrow strips of comb-toothed designs above and below. The next part consists of a relatively large strip of palindrome designs hooking with each other in the center and two narrow strips of dotted designs above and below. The two lower parts consist of strips of comb-toothed designs. The bronze jar is 36 centimeters high; its mouth and base are 35.5 and 30.2 centimeters in diameter respectively.

The bronze jar M1:2 is also decorated with 4 groups of designs. The designs in the first, the third, and the fourth part are basically similar to those in the bronze jar M1:1. For the second part, there are two narrow strips of tangential and concentric circles, instead of the palindrome designs hooking with each other as in the bronze jar M1:1.

The bronze jar M1:3 has the same designs as the bronze jar M1:1; i.e. the first and the second parts consist of palindrome designs hooking with each other; the third and the fourth parts consist of narrow strips

of comb-toothed designs. The jar is 28.4 centimeters high; its mouth and base are 27.4 and 24.4 centimeters in diameter respectively.

The bronze jar M1:4 is the smallest with the same designs as those of the bronze jar M1:3. However, the word (布) is inscribed in the body and three words (十三斤) are inscribed in the handle⁽⁵⁾.

According to Guangxi archaeologists, the four bronze jars bear the local styles. In terms of the shape and the designs, they are quite similar to Dong Son bronze jars.

2.2.2. Bronze jars in the tombs in Gao Ying

During an excavation conducted in the tombs of the Western Han Period in Xia District (Guangxi) during 1975 - 1976, archaeologists discovered 8 tombs and hundreds of bronze, stone and ceramic artifacts⁽⁶⁾. According to assessments of the excavators, most of the bronze artifacts, including bronze tripod cauldrons, bowls and vases, have the style of Zhongyuan. There are some bronze artifacts that have local styles, including: bronze drums, bronze vases, and two bronze jars.

According to the report made by the archaeologists, the two bronze jars were found in the tomb No.7. They have no cover; the handles have an inverted U-shape. The bronze jars are mainly decorated with geometric designs, including lozenges and palindrome designs hooking with each

⁽⁵⁾ 广西壮族自治区文物工作队 1981. «广西贺县河东高寨西汉墓». 文物资料丛刊. 文物出版社. 1981年.

⁽⁶⁾ 广西壮族自治区文物工作队 1981. «广西贺县河东高寨西汉墓». 文物资料丛刊. 文物出版社. 1981年

other, which are typical for Dong Son bronze jars. Chinese archaeologists classified these two bronze jars as the products of the local style; they were not influenced by the style of Zhongyuan. In our opinion, they are the very Dong Son bronze jars.

2.2.3. Bronze jars found in Yu-Jiang

In the research work titled “*Quintessence of Ancient Viet Cultural Relics in Guangxi*” published in 2006, the authors - Jiang Ting You and Lan Ri Yong - revealed that a bronze jar, which is similar to the bronze jar in Loubowan, was found in the Jan-ka (Yu-Jiang, Nanning, Guangxi). The bronze jar is 39 centimeters high; the mouth is 22.5 centimeters in diameter. The base is 28 centimeters in diameter. The body is a little larger in the middle; the bottom part is smaller; there are two pipe-shaped handles in the jar shoulder. The upper part is decorated with saw-toothed designs alternating with palindrome designs. The middle and the lower parts consist of strips of saw-toothed designs alternating with canarium-shaped designs⁽⁷⁾. Like the bronze jars in Loubowan Graves, consequently, the bronze jar in Yu-Jiang is also one of Dong Son bronze jars.

2.3. Bronze jars in the tombs in Yunnan

The Temple of Tianzi is a very significant vestige of the Tian culture in Chenggong District, Yunnan. During an excavation in early 1980, 44 tombs with a lot of valuable materials from the time of Tian culture were discovered⁽⁸⁾. The tombs are determined to date from the middle of the Zhanguo Period to the early time of the Western Han (i.e. from the 4th to the 3rd centuries BC).

In the tomb M41 dating from the middle

of the Zhanguo Period, 3 bronze jars that have different shapes and designs were found (Picture 4).

Of all the above-mentioned bronze jars, the most noticeable is the jar M41:103; it is a jar with a cover. The jar has a cylindrical shape; the top is larger than the bottom. There are three low and small legs. The cover is round, like a drumhead; there is a circle in the center, surrounded by 4 strips of different designs, including triangular saw-toothed and concentric circles. There are 5 statues of buffaloes on the cover. The biggest statue is located in the center, surrounded by 4 smaller ones. The jar is therefore named a 5-buffalo jar. The cover has two small handles inscribed with the word “人” and geometric designs. In the top, there is an edge to keep the cover. The two handles are placed symmetrically near the top; they are also symmetrical with the handles of the cover. There are 12 strips of designs in the jar body. The main strip consists of two groups of designs. The upper part consists of the designs of boat-racers disguised in feather and the design of waterfowls in the center. Remarkably, the boats are short; the two ends of the boats are bending up. There are people with high chignons like short-pig-tails standing on the boats. They are completely different from the image of people on the boat inscribed in

⁽⁷⁾ 蒋廷瑜, 蓝日勇 2006. «广西古代越文化遗物要览». 瓠骆遗粹. 广西百越文化物精品集. 中国国家博物馆, 广西壮族自治区博物馆. 中国社会科学出版社. 2006 年: 255-281.

⁽⁸⁾ 昆明市文物管理委员会 1985. “呈贡天子庙滇墓”. 考古学报. 1985 年第 4 期: 507-544.

Dong Son bronze drums. The lower part consists of parallel diagonals and concentric circles, dividing the jar body into 6 cells. In each cell, there are designs of buffaloes and waterfowls arranged differently. In the above and below part as well as in the middle of the main strip, there are triangular saw-toothed designs and concentric circles. The bronze jar is 49.5 centimeters high; the mouth and the bottom are 29 and 21.5 centimeters in diameters respectively. Regarding to the designs decorated in this bronze jar, most of them are similar to the designs on Shi Zhai bronze drum, although some are similar to those of Dong Son bronze jars. As a result, this bronze jar is possibly a product of Tian Chi (Yunnan) but not a product of Dong Son culture.

The bronze jar M41:100 also has a cover. The cover looks like a slightly convex gong. A circle of the sun design with 8 sun's rays is decorated in the center. Yet, the image is not very obvious. The cover has two small handles. The jar has a cylindrical shape, bigger in the top and smaller in the bottom. There is an edge at the top to keep the cover in place. There are two small handles near the edge. 600 shells of sea snails were placed inside the jar. There is no design on the jar body, except for the design of the sun on the cover. The jar is 35 centimeters high; the mouth is 24 centimeters in diameter; and the base is 20 centimeters in diameter.

The bronze jar M41:101 has a cover, but the cover has been distorted because it was under pressure for a long time. In the center of the cover, there is a design of the sun with 8 sun's rays and a circle of the triangular saw-toothed design. The top edge

of the jar was broken. In both upper and lower parts of the jar, there are 2 groups of 7 strips of designs. The first, the third, and the fifth strips consist of inflectional palindrome designs. The rest strips consist of dotted designs, triangular saw-toothed designs, contiguous circles, and canarium-shaped designs, dividing the jar body into different parts. The main strip is located in the middle without designs. There are 900 shells of sea snails and pearl ear-rings placed inside the jar. The jar is 30.5 centimeters high; the mouth and the base are 24 and 20 centimeters in diameters respectively.

In general, the shape and designs of the bronze jars M41:100 and M41: 101 are rather similar to those of Dong Son bronze jars. Maybe, they were taken into Tian Chi, due to activities of exchange.

II. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DONG SON BRONZE JARS AND ITS COUNTERPARTS IN SOUTH CHINA

1. Unlike the origin of the bronze drums, which still causes some controversy for Vietnamese and Chinese scholars, the origin of Dong Son bronze jars has been determined rather clearly.

Until now, just few bronze jars have been found in South China; there are 19 bronze jars in total, distributed in a vast area of 3 provinces, including: Yunnan, Guangxi and Guangdong. In the meanwhile, the number of Dong Son bronze jars found in Vietnam is very great; there are 280 big and beautiful bronze jars as well as many other tiny bronze jars (as grave goods) in areas of Dong Son culture. This demonstrates that Dong Son bronze jars obviously originated in North Vietnam. This has

disapproved of the arguments by Jiang Ting You and Lan Ri Yong, who assumed that bronze jars at first originated in Yunnan (China) and then appeared in Liangguang and North Vietnam⁽⁹⁾.

In reality, local people in South China did not have tradition of casting and using Dong Son-styled bronze jars. These are very important evidences to show the origin and particular identities of Dong Son culture. Together with Dong Son bronze drums, the bronze jars are typical relics of Dong Son culture among ancient Viet people.

A noticeable is that bronze jars have been found popularly in various residence vestiges as well as graves of Dong Son culture all over from North Vietnam to Thua Thien Hue; whereas, for South China, bronze jars have been found in only five tomb areas, which are thousands kilometers far from each other. Three of the five tomb areas have a very large size with a lot of grave goods, of which many are very precious; the tomb owners were high-ranked officials, even the most powerful like Nanyue Wang.

2. To elucidate the relationship between Dong Son bronze jars and those found in South China, we are now making a comparison of artifacts between the two areas.

At a comprehensive level, almost all the jars found in the tombs of Nanyue Wang, Beiling Song, the Luobowan Graves, the tombs in Gao Ying and the Temple of Tianzi have a lot of similarities to Dong Son bronze jars.

In terms of the shape, these jars mainly are bigger in the top and narrower in the bottom; the body is a slightly larger in the middle; they have inverted U-shape or

hood-boat shaped handles. These characteristics are completely the same as those of Dong Son bronze jars.

In terms of the designs, these jars have the same designs as those decorated in Dong Son bronze jars, such as: saw-toothed designs, com-toothed designs, tangential circles, concentric circles, canarium-shaped zigzags, dancing-man designs, boat-shaped designs with men disguised in feather, and spear-shaped designs.

They are the same as Dong Son bronze jars not only in terms of the design types but also in the way to arrange the designs. For the bronze jars found in the tomb of Nanyue Wang and the Luobowan Graves as well as Dong Son bronze jars generally, designs are arranged in strips by groups along the jar body. They are mainly divided into three groups: the upper group near the top, the lower group near the base, and the middle group in the center. The three groups are also classified into the primary and the secondary. The primary group is much larger and decorated with the major designs of the jar. In each group, there are also larger and narrower strips; the larger ones are decorated with major designs, which are often bigger and bolder.

Studying details of the motifs, we can realize a lot of similarities between the bronze jars found in the tomb of Nanyue Wang, the Luobowan Graves, the Beiling Song area and some of Dong Son bronze jars. For example, the bronze jar B57 in the

⁽⁹⁾ 蒋廷瑜, 蓝日勇 2006. «广西古代越文化遗物要览». 瓯骆遗粹. 广西百越文化物精品集. 中国国家博物馆, 广西壮族自治区博物馆. 中国社会科学出版社. 2006 年: 265.

tomb of Nanyue Wang has completely the same designs as the bronze jar M1:1 in the Luobowan Graves and relatively similar to the designs of the bronze jar found in Cộng Hòa (Phu Xuyen District); the only difference is that the bronze jar in Cong Hoa has the strip of stylized bird-head designs arranged in the upper part; whereas it is arranged in the middle part, for the bronze jars in the two other places.

The bronze jar B59 in the tomb of Nanyue Wang is basically similar to the bronze jar named *Vietnam Ancient Relic* coded 010801. The upper group of designs near the top is decorated with two strips of saw-toothed and palindrome zigzag designs; the middle of the jar body is decorated with major designs, including boat-shaped and men disguised in feather. For the lower part, they all have two strips of saw-toothed designs. Yet, the two strips of tangential circles are found only in the bronze jar B59.

Another example is the bronze jar M1:2 found in the Luobowan Graves. It is relatively similar to the bronze jar Phu Xuyen II. Both the jars have three groups of geometric designs, of which the major designs are decorated near the top. The only difference between the two jars is the design in the middle of the jar body; for the bronze jar Phu Xuyen II, there is a strip of no design between two strips of tangential circles; whereas, for the bronze jar M1:2 in the Luobowan Graves, the two strips of tangential circles join into one strip.

We can see such similarities, when comparing the bronze jars in the Beiling Song and the bronze jars 4890 in the Museum of Arts.

Based on comparisons of the shape and

the designs between the bronze jars found in the tombs in South China and Dong Son bronze jars, we can find many characteristics very common, and even completely similar. It is, therefore, possible to come to a conclusion that they have the same origin. Dong Son bronze jars really contributed a part into the material culture in South China at the Iron Age.

3. According to the literature available, most of South China bronze jars were discovered in the tombs dating from the time of the Western Han, such as the tomb of Nanyue Wang, the Luobowan Graves and the tomb of Gao Ying. Only 4 ones discovered in the Tian tombs of the Temple of Tianzi (Yunnan) and Beiling Song (Guangdong) date from the time of the Zhanguo Period.

As we know, Dong Son culture developed most with its particular identities from the 5th to the 3rd centuries BC. Bronze artifacts of Dong Son culture were very abundant, in terms of quantity and type. Appearance of bronze drums and bronze jars shows that the bronze casting industry became the most thriving at that time. There were also a lot of iron products. During this period, activities of exchange between the area of Dong Son culture and surrounding areas took place vigorously. Regarding to date, Dong Son bronze jars appeared a little earlier than the bronze jars found in South China.

Dong Son bronze jars found in the Temple of Tianzi and the tombs in Beiling Song are the very evidence to show activities of exchange between people of Dong Son culture and people in South China. In turn, people of Tian culture in Yunnan learned how to cast their own

bronze jars like the bronze jars 41:103 in the Temple of Tianzi. All the bronze jars found in the Temple of Tianzi contained shells of sea snails, which were viewed as money to be buried for the dead. This is completely different from the custom of Dong Son people.

The three tomb areas, including the tomb of Nanyue Wang, the Luobowan Graves, and the tomb of Gao Ying, date from the time of the Western Han. This is a period, when Viet – Han cultural exchange took place extensively. In Vietnam, artifacts imported from the Han culture are often found in the upper layer of the vestiges of Dong Son culture or in graves of late Dong Son. In this period, a lot of activities of transportation, trade and exchange were carried out. In the middle time of the Western Han – the year of 179 BC – Zhou Mo, the Nanyue King, occupied Au Lac; as a result, a lot of Dong Son products, including also bronze jars, were exchanged, given and even seized to be brought to Nan Yue. This is a very normal phenomenon in history.

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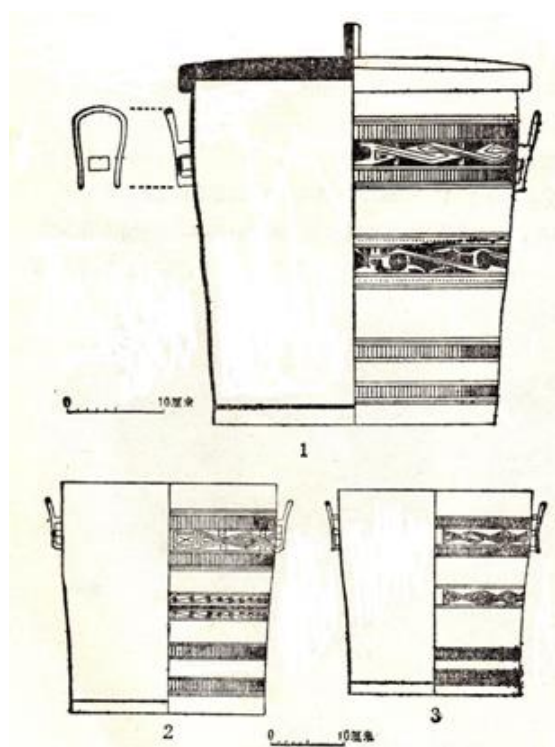
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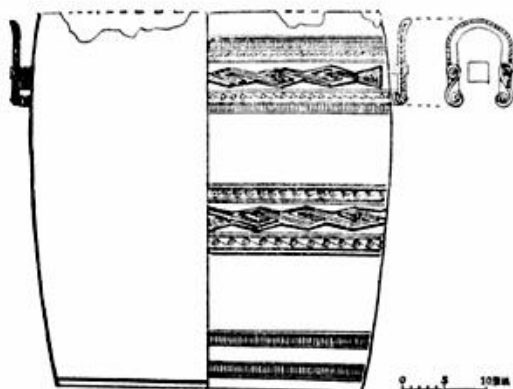
Illustrating Pictures

Picture 1: Bronze Jars in Luobowan

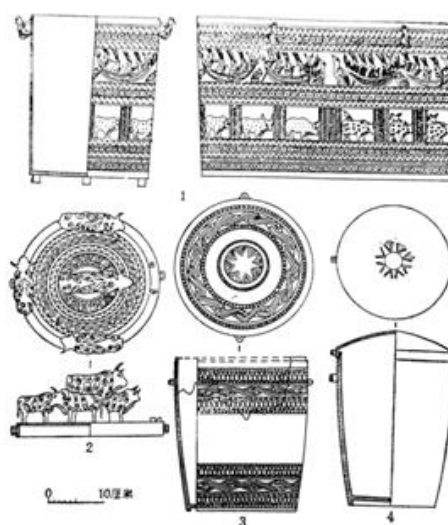


Notes: 1. M1:1; 2. M1:2; 3. M1:3

Picture 2: Bronze Jars in the Tomb of Beiling Song (Guangdong)



Picture 3: Bronze Jars in Temple of Tianzi



Notes: 1:2:1 (Body and lid 41:103); 3, 4 (41:101, 41:100)

Picture 4: The designs of Jars B9 in the Tomb of Nanyue Wang



