

# Ban Chiang culture and Dong Son culture history essay



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For the origin of the metalwork in Southeast Asia, there were many different opinions of the scholars. Some scholars support that the metalwork in Southeast Asia was origin locally and some of them support that it was from India and China. But unluckily, there is not enough evidence to prove which of them would be the truth. Therefore, the origin of the metalwork in Southeast Asia is not clear and uncertain.

Compare with the Ban Chiang culture, the Dong Son culture was appeared later in Southeast Asia. The Dong Son was also one of the flourishing cultures during Bronze and Iron Age period in Southeast Asia.

In geography, the center of the Dong Son culture was located in the Red river valley at the North Vietnam. It was named by the village where the archeologists had found. The Dong Son culture was not form independently and it was probably developed from the local Neolithic cultures at Vietnam such as the Dong dau.

Different to the Ban Chiang, there was the monarch kingdom (Vjfn Lang and Au Lac) appeared in Vietnam. The Dong Son people did trade in Southeast Asia and also China and India by sea, it made the Dong Son culture was influenced and transformed by the Indian and the Chinese. In 43 AD., the Dong Son was occupied and ruled by the Han dynasty in China.

The characteristic of the Dong Son culture was the bronze object with the high level craftsmanship. Till the Dong Son period, the people mastered the technology and skill of the bronze making, they used the metals to make many different kind of metal tools. The metallurgy and the bronze making was in a very high level, and they developed their own sophisticated

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metallurgy techniques based on the special quality of the bamboo and they were able to use the bamboo to fashion a fire-piston that produced the heat required to liquefy metal.[1]

The Dong son people used the metal tools in their life, especially the bronze. They used the bronze in making the agricultural tools such as the ploughshare, axe, spade, sickles and hoe etc, (few of them were made by iron) it reflected that the agriculture was high developed in Dong son and the ploughshare was the typical agricultural bronze tools in this culture, it showed and proved that the Dong son people had already domesticated and used the water buffalos' strength in their agricultural activities.

Besides the agricultural tools, many weapons were found in the relics of the Dong son culture. It might reflect that there were wars happened in this region. There were various of weapons were found and it included the arrows, axe, daggers, spears, swords and breastplates etc., different kind of these weapons showed that the military technology of the Dong son people was quite completed. On the other hands, the weapons were rich of decorative patterns, those patterns were vividly and detailed. The weapons were made in many different shape and the patterns was usually animals and human figures, it represented that the metallurgic technology of the Dong son people was very sophisticated and we can also see what the Dong son people looked like from the patterns.

Not only metals, the Dong son people also used the potteries as the utensil for their daily life. The jars, pots, basins, vases and jugs with the decorative patterns were found in the Dong son relic. Some of these utensils found in

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the relic of burial were filled with the jewelry and even the skull, ash, human bones and remains of the dead people. This relic told us that the pottery jar was not just used for utensil, it was also used as the coffin in the funeral.

In the relic, the archeologists found abundant of the jewelry. This jewelry was mainly made of bronze and there were other materials such as the gemstones, glass, iron and shells etc. Some of the ankles rings were decorated with the small bell and it would made sound when people move. It represented that not only for the dead people, the people alive were like to have the jewelry for making themselves more attractive.

Except for the pottery and jewelry, there were musical instruments found in the relic. It reflected that the spiritual life of the people and the most representative musical instruments was the Dong son bronze drum. The usage of these drums was still uncertain (it might be used for religious, celebrations or regalia) but many evidences prove that the drums were traded as the goods in China and the Southeast Asia. The ship pattern on the drum might showing the trading activity and the star on the center of the tympanum might represent the mandala polity. Many of the patterns on the drums were seems showing the spiritual life of the people and the style of the drums were different in different regions. Some of the drums were huge and it made by the lost wax method, it made the pattern could be in more detail and showing the sophisticated of the metallurgic of the Dong son people.

In conclusion, there was difference of the metal work and used between the Dong Son and the Ban Chiang culture. The Ban Chiang appeared earlier than

the Dong Son and its metal work was simple and mostly for the practical use. The Ban Chiang also used the bimetallic (bronze and iron) in the tools and iron in burial. Different to the Ban Chiang, the metallurgy of Dong Son was more sophisticated and they used the lost wax method in the metal works. The skillful technology made the Dong Son bronze working became diversification and many of the Dong Son relics was in more detail than the Ban Chiang. The Dong Son drums showing the trading activity and there was regalia of the Dong Son people, it is very different to the Ban Chiang. The different style of the drums reflected that there were contacts between the regions and the metal working (lost wax method) skill was spread in Southeast Asia. The jewelry and different kind of the funeral of the Dong Son showing that the Dong Son society was more complicated than the Ban Chiang and there might have the social stratification in the Dong Son society.