

Sa Huỳnh Culture and Its Relationship with the Islands of Southeast Asia

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Abstract: From the 5th century BC to the 5th century AD, Southeast Asia (SEA) experienced a dynamic evolution in its historical and cultural development, characterized by significant transformations across various facets of society. These changes left a profound impact on social structures, economic systems, technological advancements, and the tangible as well as intangible aspects of local communities during ancient times. Both indigenous and exogenous factors played pivotal roles in driving these changes. The geo-cultural position of Central Vietnam, strategically located at the crossroads of North and South, East and West, and bridging East Asia with Southeast Asia, made the inhabitants of Sa Huỳnh integral to networks facilitating the exchange of people, goods, technology, and ideas. This research centers on two main themes. It utilizes recent archaeological discoveries from the Sa Huỳnh culture and Early Iron Age cultures in Southeast Asia, employing trade and social archaeology theory and methods. These are used to examine the archaeological evidence that illustrates the intricate relationships and interactions of the Sa Huỳnh people with the external world, particularly the SEA Islands. Additionally, it explores the nature of these interactions and their role in fostering the growing social complexity within Sa Huỳnh society or societies.

Keywords: Sa Huỳnh culture, exchange, pan-regional network and Central Vietnam, SEA islands, maritime trade routes.

Subject classification: Archeology.

1. Introduction

Since prehistoric times, communities living in inland, coastal, and offshore islands have established strong trade relationships and exchanges with major cultural and civilizational centers such as China, India, and the Mediterranean. In Southeast Asia, a network of exchange existed for thousands of years, covering everything from raw materials to finished products, people, and ideas. The people living in the marine environment were the

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pioneers of water engineering and technology, which developed in the Southern Ocean. Recent findings have reinforced this idea, showing that large trading ships, built in Southeast Asia using local techniques, plied Asian waters during this period. (Pierre Manguin, 1996: 181-198).

During this period, several communities along the East Sea (*Biển Đông*, also known as the South China Sea) shared a set of desirable goods, such as Đông Sơn bronze drums, Sa Huỳnh-Kalanay-related pottery, nephrite ling ling-o earrings, carnelian and glass beads, and high-tin bronze bowls. This led to the establishment of a “South China Sea (Biển Đông) Sphere of Interaction Pan-regional Culture.” (Bérénice Bellina, 2017). As regional goods became inter-regional, they contributed to the formation of inter-regional production centers. These centers, in turn, promoted interaction and exchange of goods, people, ideas, and technologies.

The Early Iron Age Sa Huỳnh culture (the 5th century BC to the 1st century AD) is one of the three Early Iron Age cultures in present-day Vietnam, along with Đông Sơn in the North and Đồng Nai in the South. While the population of Sa Huỳnh culture is considered multiethnic, the Austronesian-speaking people played an important role. Sa Huỳnh inhabitants mainly settled in coastal areas and islands of Central Vietnam and shared many cultural features with Southeast Asian cultures, particularly those of the islands.

2. Overview of Sa Huỳnh culture

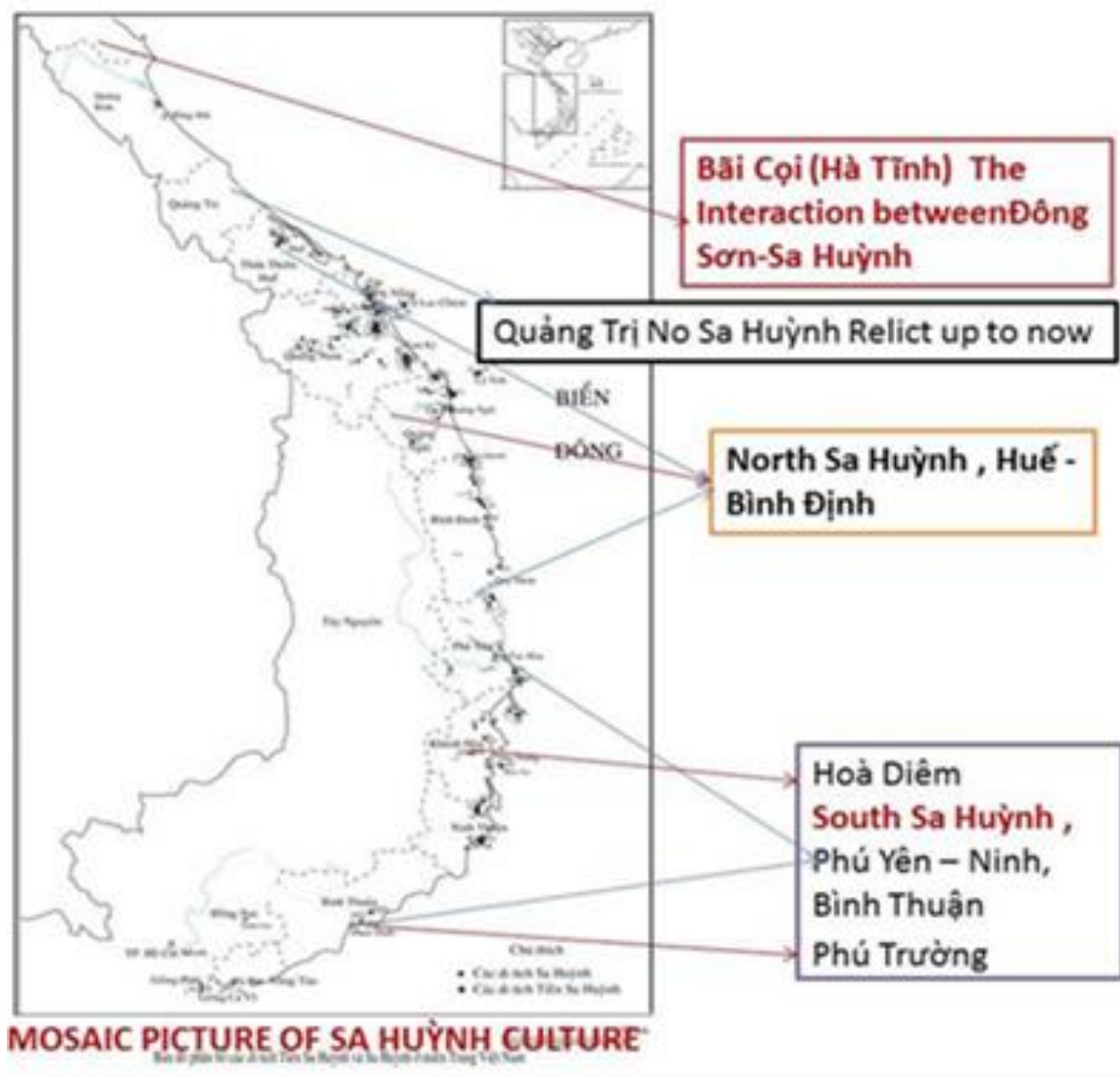
The period between 500 BCE and 500 CE was a critical time in the cultural and historical development of Central Vietnam and Southeast Asia. Recent archaeological evidence has revealed rapid and significant changes, multidimensional cultural contacts, and acculturation with the outside world. These changes coincided with the emergence and development of early polities, including chiefdoms that transitioned to early states with higher social complexity.

Before the Sa Huỳnh culture emerged, there were various pre-existing cultures, such as the Pre-Sa Huỳnh, Early Sa Huỳnh, and Initial Sa Huỳnh groups. These contributed to the formation of the new culture, which integrated different streams and tendencies. The archaeological record of this period was colorful, reflecting the mosaic of local cultures or groups, including Bàu Tró, Bàu Trám, Long Thạnh, Bình Châu, Xóm Cồn, Hòn Đỏ. The Sa Huỳnh Early Iron Age culture lasted from approximately 5 BCE to 1.2 CE, characterized by chiefdoms and alliances of chiefdoms.

Sa Huỳnh culture exhibits a significant cultural diversity that was shaped by a variety of environmental, human, and historical factors, as well as by outside influences such as political, religious, and ideological factors (Lâm Thị Mỹ Dung, 2018: 58-60). The culture flourished from Huế in the North to the northern fringes of the Mekong Delta in the South (including Đồng Nai province and Hồ Chí Minh City), and from the coastal plains to the

interior highlands. Sa Huỳnh has been the focus of research for more than a century, ever since the Sa Huỳnh site was excavated by French archaeologists in 1909. Numerous jar and extended burial sites have been discovered throughout Central and Southern Vietnam, providing solid evidence of trading contacts and cultural exchanges across Southeast Asia during the Sa Huỳnh era. Sa Huỳnh is typically divided into North and South local variants, although the boundary between these regions is not clearly defined. Within each variant, there are topographical variations that lead to cultural diversity, including mountainous and maritime variations. Recently, a Sa Huỳnh cultural group in the Central Highlands has been identified, but there are conflicting opinions on its existence (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The Mosaic Picture of Sa Huỳnh Culture



2. The emergence of the Southeast Asian sea interaction sphere and the important role of Sa Huỳnh communities

2.1. Exchange networks in Southeast Asia during proto-historical times

Research has shown that Southeast Asia had well-established and dynamic regional trade routes as early as the Neolithic period. Furthermore, recent reassessments have highlighted the importance and intensity of exchange between Southeast Asia and its East and South Asian neighbors since the mid-first millennium BC (Glover, 1990: 2).

In fact, intra-regional and inter-regional exchange networks had already existed within the Southeast Asian world before significant trade with China or India began. Scholars studying the archaeology and history of Southeast Asia have developed various theories related to the relationships between the Southeast Asian mainland and islands, including the movements of Austronesian-speaking people. Some of these theories include:

The Nusantao theory, proposed by Solheim O. W., suggests that the people who carried technologies and languages across Asia and the Pacific, the Nusantao, developed a system of trade and exchange among Southeast Asian settlers. The movement of Austronesian people has been theorized by Solheim O. W., Bellwood P., and others, and the impacts of these movements have been traced through the diffusion of goods and ideas. There is documented evidence of trade and exchange between Island Southeast Asians and people from mainland Asia over the last three millennia, which is related to the origin and spread of the Austronesians, as evidenced by archaeological and linguistic proof.

Solheim O. W. recommended the theory of the “Sa Huỳnh - Kalanay” tradition, which has been developed by other scholars. This theory suggests that there are similarities in cultural assemblages, particularly in pottery and jade ornaments, shared between Sa Huỳnh sites in Central Vietnam and many contemporary sites in the Philippines, Borneo, and Southern Thailand.

It is often said that the seas in Southeast Asia serve as a unifying factor for the peoples who live along the region’s rivers and coasts, rather than an obstacle or hindrance. Moreover, the seas may provide a geographical framework for discussing the possibility of region-wide themes. According to Pierre Manguin (1993: 253), the East Sea is the first leg of the long-distance trans-Asian trade route, which leads from China to the Mediterranean. This trade route is fed by the products of the East Sea’s interregional exchange network.

To the north of the East Sea, the harbors of the southeastern and southern provinces gather natural and manufactured products from the vast Chinese mainland, which are then shipped to Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean countries, the Middle East, and Europe. To the south and east of the sea, the tropical and equatorial climates of Southeast Asia produce an array of trade goods that are in high demand around the world. The peoples living around the East

Sea, which is another “Mediterranean” in its own right, are among the shippers and traders who keep this major trade route of the Old World in lively operation.

The exchange of exotic goods and their use in mortuary rituals is a recurrent feature of inland Neolithic and Bronze Age communities in Southeast Asia. Pottery, marine shell ornaments, cowrie shells, marble ornaments, and items cast from copper base alloys survive to document extensive exchange links. However, less durable items such as cloth, plumage, and salt (Ian Glover, 1998) were surely also valued.

It is important to note the nature of the interactions during different historical periods. In prehistoric times, contacts and exchanges were focused on people movements and trade of goods, while in proto-historic and historic times, economic, political, and religious interactions became more prevalent. According to most scholars, by the 4th century BC, Southeast Asia had become part of a world network of interaction that linked the Mediterranean Basin via India to China. The significance of Southeast Asia during this time was due to its desirable resources and its strategic location on the various trade networks that connected large civilizations to its west and north. It is noteworthy that Southeast Asia played a dynamic role in shaping these trade networks.

2.2. The Formation of the early ports and its functions

Recent studies on early ports and harbors in Southeast Asia have produced a wealth of information about the formation and operation of various ports, including the complex interplay between urban centers, manufacturing, and residential areas. Notable examples include the ports of Khao Sam Kaeo in Thailand, Hội An and Giồng Cá Vồ in Vietnam, and Kuala Selinsing and Pulau Kelumpang in Malaysia. Several of these sites have been fully and systematically excavated and studied.

2.2.1. Ancient ports along coastal Southern Thailand - Kra Isthmus

Khao Sam Kaeo, located on the Isthmus of Kra in the Thai-Malay peninsula, was an early trading port that played a strategic role in facilitating cultural exchanges between the Indian Ocean and the West, as well as the East Sea and the East, from the centuries BC to the early centuries AD. According to Bérénice Bellina and Praon Silapanth, Khao Sam Kaeo in Chumphon province may have been one of the earliest “port cities” identified in the Eastern Sea, dating back to the 4th century BC to the 1st century AD.

During the same period, other ancient port cities such as Arikamedu in South India and the China’s Hepu port town were established, as noted in the book *Periplus* for the Erythraean coastal region of Ptolemy. Khao Sam Kaeo has yielded significant finds, including three Đông Sơn-style bronze drums, two Han mirrors, various seals,

fragments of Indian and Chinese ceramics, stone beads, and glass “Indo-Pacific” beads, as well as high tin bronze wares adorned with Indian-inspired scenes. These artifacts have helped to date the site and demonstrate early direct exchanges between Mauryan India and China via the Maritime Silk Road.

While most raw materials and technology were imported, some items were produced and (re)distributed domestically and regionally. The excavators argue that the emergence of a cosmopolitan society centered on global and multi-ethnic communities can be traced back to Khao Sam Kaeo, which also served as a center for complex crafts and production sites that were able to meet the different needs of local aristocratic groups for rare goods of exotic origin. The archaeobotanical agenda and macro remains suggest that some grains, such as mungbean (*V. radiata*), horse gram (*M. uniflorum*), and cereal foxtail millet, originated from South and East Asia. There is also evidence of dry land rice production, with the predominance of *Spilanthus acmella* (Bérénice, 2017; Castilo, 2011).

Khao Sek is located 80km south of Khao Sam Kaeo, in a similar environment, at a small distance from the current mouth of the large fluvial system of the River Langsuan. Khao Sek and Khao Sam Kaeo are two contemporaneous settlements that show similar patterns of topography, construction modes, internal standardized and strikingly similar industrial models and products. The settlements were constructed on the same model and their hybrid industries are standardized. However, Khao Sek is distinct from Khao Sam Kaeo due to its more modest dimensions, the apparent absence of labor-intensive monumental constructions (such as surrounding walls and hydraulic systems) and of a cosmopolitan configuration. One possibility is that Khao Sek may have been created by Khao Sam Kaeo as an outpost to control the Langsuan river-system for its own benefit (Bérénice, 2017).

In the Kra Isthmus of the Upper Thai-Malay Peninsula, it is believed that the emergence of Maritime Silk Road “city-states” was linked to increasing economic specialization, cultural differentiation, and cooperation among different groups participating in local and long-distance networks. These groups formed a chain that was part of the port-city’s hinterland.

On a micro-regional scale, it is reasonable to suggest that the growth of the multi-centered Kra Isthmus polity may have corresponded with the extension of settlements and the erection of additional surrounding walls at Khao Sam Kaeo. This was marked by the creation of foreign compounds in the northern part of the site, making Khao Sam Kaeo the central place. Other polities such as Phu Khao Thong (in Ranong province) and others, which are still to be identified, may have been part of its periphery or “umland” (Bérénice, 2017).

2.2.2 Ancient ports along Coastal Central and Southern Vietnam (see Figure 2)

Figure 2: The Locations of the Early Ports along Central and Southern Coast of Vietnam



Source: Nguyen Huu Manh and Lam Thi My Dung.

Hội An port is located in Quảng Nam province, and the town contains the remains of several trading communities, including Hậu Xá, An Bang, Thanh Chiêm, Lai Nghi, and others. These communities are densely distributed in the Thu Bồn estuary, which is in the

present-day Hoi An area. Archaeologists have discovered abundant evidence of a prosperous society with clear indications of wealth and status differentiation in the large cemeteries in this region (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: The Sa Huỳnh Culture Cemeteries along the Lower Thu Bồn River (the blue lines showing the ancient flows of river)



Between 2002 and 2004, three excavation campaigns were conducted at Lai Nghi, resulting in the discovery of a total of 63 burials. This dating is supported by the presence of grave goods, including bronze mirrors, vessels of Chinese origin (Late Western Han), and AMS dates derived from charcoal samples recovered from the burial jars (Lâm Thị Mỹ Dung, 2018: 53-54, table 2.1; Reinecke, 2018: 30). Along with locally made goods such as pottery and iron tools and weapons, many grave goods were identified as imports from the Đông Sơn culture in Northern Vietnam, China, India, and Southeast Asia. Of particular note is earth tomb number 37, which contained six bronze vessels and an iron knife with a ring-ended handle (see Figure 4). This burial may have belonged to a leader of the Lai Nghi community or a wealthy merchant of the time¹.

¹ According to Andreas Reinecke, it is the burial of a merchant from Hepu after a surprising death (Reinecke, A., 2018: 31), but it is hard to confirm this, due to lack of direct evidence and AND analyses.

Figure 4: The Bronze Items Dated to the Late Western Han and Early Eastern Han Times, Uncovered in Burial 37, Lai Nghi Site



Source: Nguyễn Chiêu, Andreas Reinecke, Lâm Thị Mỹ Dung.

Hòa Diêm port (Cam Thịnh Đông village, Cam Ranh town, Khánh Hòa province)

The relics of habitation in Hòa Diêm are widely distributed over a large area and interspersed with graves, including various large and small mounds. The site has been excavated several times, with exploration taking place in 1999, 2002, 2007, 2010, and 2011. Remains of habitation date back to the 4th-3rd centuries BC and continued until the early centuries AD. Burials at the site consist of jar and earthen graves. Researchers studying the pottery in Hòa Diêm burials have noted elements inherited from the Pre-Sa Huỳnh and Xóm Cồn periods. The latest phase of mortuary pottery (from the 1st to the 3rd centuries AD) is characterized by the presence of Kalanay pottery from the Philippines. The grave goods found at the site include items of Chinese, Indian, and Western Asian origin, such as Western and Eastern Han Dynasty coins, etched beads, gold beads, and particularly fine gray-white and orange-yellow pottery featuring various types of high pedestal cups, lids, vases, and more. These objects, which are widespread in sites dating back to the first centuries AD in Southeast Asia, demonstrate the complex relationships between Hòa Diêm and the outside world.

Giông Lớn port is situated in the mangrove ecological zone on Long Sơn island, which is part of Vũng Tàu city in Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu province. It is located in Gành Rái bay, approximately 10km north of Cần Giờ in Hồ Chí Minh City. The Southeast coastal region

of Southern Vietnam is a lowland area that has formed relatively recently, with a terrain strongly divided by an interlaced river system. This strategic location on the East-West trade route, with a deep and wide river system, has been an essential factor in the development of ports in this area since ancient times (Trương Đắc Chiến, 2017).

Archaeological researchers have uncovered traces of human habitation, production activities, and burial practices at Giồng Lớn, dating back to the 3rd century BC to the 2nd century AD. Researchers have analyzed the ecological environment and grave artifacts to suggest that the residents of Giồng Lớn traded with China, India, Northern Vietnam, Southeast Asia Islands, Central Vietnam, and other regions. The gold collection found in Giồng Lớn includes not only jewelry but also miniature items with spiritual significance, reflecting a rich spiritual life of the owner. The collection comprises 202 items such as beads, earrings, masks, linga, leaf, rings, thread, and more. The goldware found at Giồng Lớn is similar to those discovered in other sites, such as Lai Nghi, Gò Mã Vôi, Gò Mùn (Quảng Nam province), Giồng Cá Vồ (Hồ Chí Minh City), Prohear, Bit Meas (Campuchia), Pacung, and Sembiran (Indonesia). The chemical composition of the Giồng Lớn gold mask is close to that of gold items from Bali (Indonesia) and Sa Huỳnh culture sites.

Giồng Lớn port has developed as an early port due to its strategic location on the East-West trade route of Gành Rái bay, attracting traders from all over the world. The international ships come here to trade, and a group of commercial services has emerged, serving as a bridge between residents in the Đồng Nai and Vàm Cỏ river basins and foreign traders (Trương Đắc Chiến, 2017).

Giồng Cá Vồ port, located in the Cần Giờ mangrove area in Cần Giờ district, Hồ Chí Minh City, is situated about 10km south of Giồng Lớn and is connected to it through Gành Rái bay. It is a site that serves as both a residence and cemetery, with a cultural layer that is approximately 1.5 meters thick. The Giồng Cá Vồ community practiced jar and earthen burials, and the archaeological remains found there are of high quality and quantity, including various types of pottery, jewelry, metal weapons, and implements. Giồng Cá Vồ is considered the largest handicraft center in the region, with crafts such as pottery and jewelry making. The scale of pottery production reaches the level of a factory. Additionally, Giồng Cá Vồ has the characteristics of an early port town, where exchange and trade activities with the outside world were conducted extensively. This is reflected in the abundance of artifacts of exogenous origin, including foreign imports.

The appearance of Giồng Cá Vồ residents marked a critical change in this mangrove area, transitioning from the dominant economic mode of natural resource exploitation to the economic mode of production and trade. This transformation illustrates the significant impact of the residents in this region on its economic and cultural development (Đặng Văn Thắng et al., 1998; Vũ Quốc Hiền, 2008).

3. The multidimensional contacts and relations of Sa Huỳnh people with outside world

3.1. China, India and beyond

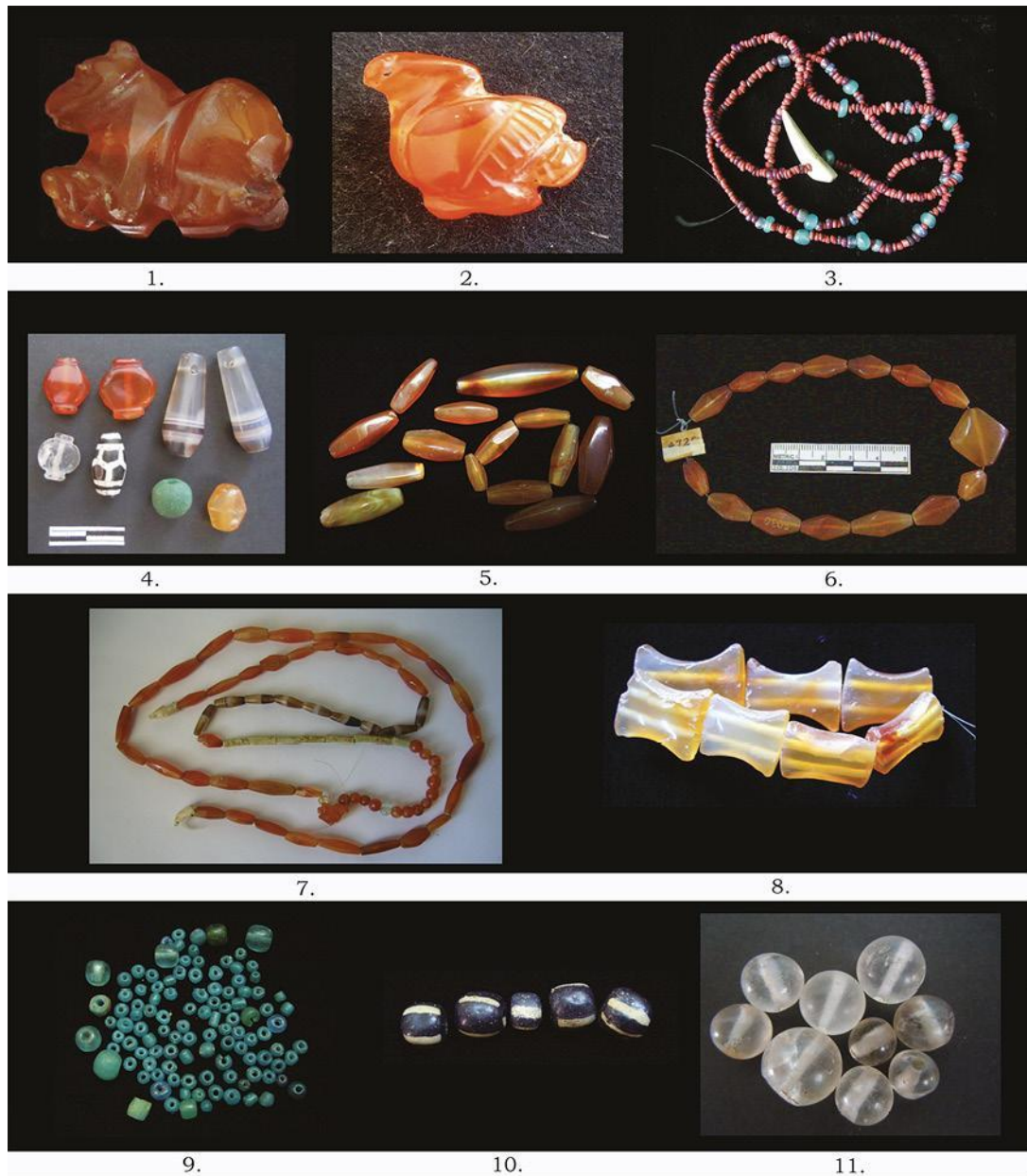
The Sa Huỳnh communities had extensive connections and interactions with the outside world, particularly during the final stage of their culture from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD, facilitated by the emergence of maritime trade routes. Numerous archaeological findings reveal evidence of contacts and exchanges between Central Vietnam and various foreign regions, such as Southeast Asian Islands, China, India, and the Mediterranean (see Figure 5). In coastal areas, several important riverine and marine landings and ports were established as a result. The Sa Huỳnh people played a pivotal role in the long-distance trade network and were not only successful traders but also among the wealthiest consumers in this market (Hung Hsiao-Chun, 2009; Nguyễn Kim Dung, 2017; Lâm Thị Mỹ Dung, 2018).

The late stage of Sa Huỳnh culture yielded a significant number of artifacts from the Western and Eastern Han periods, including many “status markers” and “status goods” such as tripod containers, large basins, big bowls, kettles, and more. These items reflect not only the exchanges with Han markets, but also the increasing social complexity of local communities.

In terms of traded goods from and to India and beyond, it is difficult to determine precisely what items were traded due to the perishable nature of many goods. Indian exports to Southeast Asia included jewelry, metal images of the Buddha, and some items of Roman or Iranian workmanship, as well as cotton cloth, sugar, and various agricultural products such as wheat, rice, sesame oil, clarified butter, and honey. The primary Southeast Asian commodity exported to India was tin, but the area was also known as a source of gold and silver, as well as aloeswood, white sandalwood, camphor, and other aromatics, dye woods, tortoiseshell, pepper, cloves, and more. Chinese goods such as silk and cinnamon were also in high demand.

Most of the pottery found at mainland Southeast Asian sites were likely containers used to transport perishable goods, but some may have also been exported as items of value in themselves. Archaeological sites in Southeast Asia and Central Vietnam have yielded imported items from India, including various kinds of beads and pendants such as alkaline etched carnelian, agate beads, so-called Indo-Pacific glass beads, beads in the shapes of tigers, lions, birds, turtles, and more. Bronze roulette wares, knob wares, and some kinds of earthenware have also been found. Some gold earrings and beads from India and beyond have also been recovered from numerous Sa Huỳnh sites. Due to their unique value, these items were concentrated with one or two individuals. For example, at Giồng Lớn, four gold earrings and two masks were found in Burial 03GLHIVM1 and another two earrings and a mask in 05GLH1M1. At Lai Nghi, all four gold earrings found on the site were excavated from Burial M7.

Figure 5: Sa Huỳnh Beads and Pendants



Notes: 1. Tiger carnelian pendant, from Lai Nghi; 2. Bird carnelian pendant, from Lai Nghi; 3. Beads in different materials, from Lai Nghi; 4. Beads in different materials, from Hòa Diêm; 5. Carnelian beads, from Giồng Lớn; 6. Beads, from Giồng Cá Vồ; 7. Beads, from Lai Nghi; 8. Carnelian beads, from Giồng Cá Vồ; 9. Indo-Pacific glass beads, from Giồng Lớn; 10. Glass beads, from Giồng Lớn; 11. Crystal beads, from Hòa Diêm.

Source: 1-4. Andreas Reinecke, Nguyễn Chiêu and Lâm Thị Mỹ Dung; 5-11. Nguyễn Kim Dung, 2017, fig.18.4.

3.2. *The evidences of the contacts and exchanges between Sa Huỳnh communities and SEA Islands*

Exchange network of nephrite raw material and bicephalous and penannular tri-projection lingling-o pendants

Recent research into the Sa Huỳnh culture has revealed that it was a hub of a sea-based exchange network spanning 3,000km across the East Sea, connecting Taiwan, the Philippines, eastern Malaysia, southern Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam itself (Hung Hsiao-Chun, 2009). One of the distinctive features of Sa Huỳnh culture is the abundance of ornaments found mainly in burial sites. These ornaments were made from various materials, such as carnelian, agate, nephrite, amethyst, gold, and glass, and consisted of both imported and locally made pieces. Beads, in particular, comprise over 90% of the ornaments found in Sa Huỳnh burials. Some sites and individual burials contained a significant number of beads made from various materials. For example, Burial 7 at Phú Hòa produced 1,263 beads, and the ‘Group of Four sites’ in Hồ Chí Minh City unearthed 1,279 semi-precious stone beads and 637 glass beads (Nguyễn Kim Dung, 2017). At Gò Mả Vôi, 40 carnelians, numerous glass beads, and two gold beads were recovered, while excavations at Lai Nghi produced over 7,000 beads made from glass, jade, carnelian, agate, amethyst, crystal, and gold, as well as tiger and bird carnelian beads or pendants. Two types of ornaments including the bicephalous (animal-headed) ear pendants and the penannular tri-projection lingling-o are the most representative items or the most symbolic indicators of Sa Huỳnh culture. These kinds of pendants have been recovered on the large space, including SEA Mainland and SEA Islands². Based on the date of appearance and the number of samples found and the density distribution, Sa Huỳnh culture in Central Vietnam was considered as the homeland of these two species (Nguyễn Kim Dung, 2017).

The research conducted by experts such as Iizuka Yoshi, Nguyễn Kim Dung, and Hung Hsiao-Chun has shown that some of the raw materials used to create the lingling-o and animal-headed pendants originated from Taiwan. However, these materials were not

² Between 500 BC and AD 100, two very specific forms of nephrite ear ornaments appeared across a large region extending from Taiwan through the Philippines, East Malaysia, Central and Southern Vietnam, and as far southwest as eastern Cambodia and Peninsular Thailand. These two forms are the so-called lingling-o penannular earring with three pointed circumferential projections and the double-headed animal. Three-pointed ling-ling-o earrings have been reported from Jiuxianglan in southeastern Taiwan; the southern tip of Taiwan; Lanyu island; Savidug on Sabtang Island in the northern Philippines; 3 ears pendant. Remarkably, despite the large distances involved, all the recovered earrings are virtually identical in size and shape (Hung Hsiao-Chun 2009).

processed in Taiwan, but rather locally in the Philippines, Southern Vietnam, and Southern Thailand (Hung Hsiao-Chun 2009, Nguyễn Kim Dung, 2017). The jade used to create the ornaments is identical to that from Fengtian in eastern Taiwan, as confirmed by sourcing studies conducted by Yoshi Iizuka. Square blocks of Taiwanese nephrite have been discovered in Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam, indicating that they were transported by sea to local workshops in other Southeast Asian regions. There is no evidence of actual manufacturing of lingling-o or animal-headed pendants in Taiwan itself (Hung Hsiao-Chun, 2009; Hung Hsiao-Chun, 2012...) (Figure 6).

Although the analysis of collected samples has provided evidence of a wide variety of raw nephrite sources, not only from Taiwan, according to scholars, Sa Huỳnh people imported raw nephrite materials from Taiwan and other regions and also exploited local materials to produce these pendants and other ornaments (Lâm Thị Mỹ Dung, 2018: 156-157). Additionally, they exported the technologies, raw materials, and finished ornaments across Southeast Asia, possibly even including the cultural and social ideologies embedded within them. The Sa Huỳnh people were possibly itinerant, as suggested by Nguyễn Kim Dung (2017).

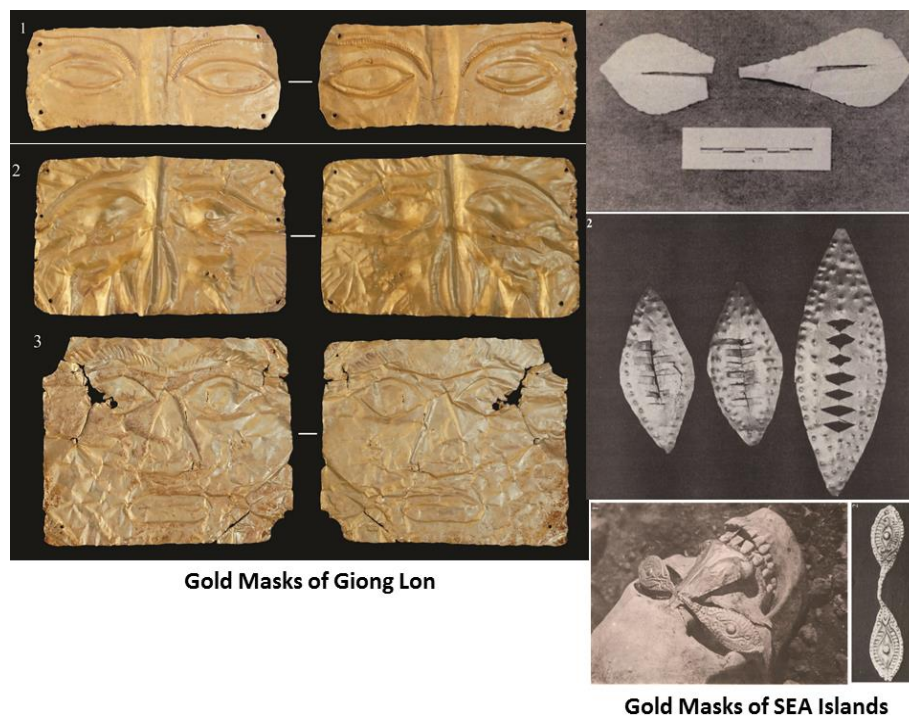
The evidences for relationships and exchanges with SEA islands at Giồng Cá Vồ and Giồng Lớn

As mentioned previously, excavations at ancient ports Giồng Cá Vồ and Giồng Lớn have revealed evidence of local communities' relations and contacts with the outside world, including the Southeast Asian islands. A burial custom in which the face of the dead is covered with a gold mask, as found in Giồng Lớn, is similar to the custom of burying the corpse under a gold leaf cover at many burial sites on the islands. This custom was common in a large area ranging from Java, Bali, Borneo to the Philippines, and dates from the 1st century to the 15th century. Some archaeological sites, such as Buni and Plawangan in Java, Gilimanuk in Bali, Santubong in Borneo, and Oton in the Philippines, are typical of this custom. The gold leaves found at Gilimanuk, Buni, and Plawangan date to the same period as the Giồng Lớn gold mask, between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD (cited from Trương Đắc Chiến, 2017). German archaeologists have analyzed the chemical composition of two of the three gold masks found in Giồng Lớn and found that they closely resemble the chemical composition of the gold objects found in Sembirang and Pacung (Bali) (Reinecke, 2015: 125-166), indicating a similarity between the Giồng Lớn relic and relics on the island of Bali (Indonesia) (see Figure 6).

In addition to the burial customs mentioned above, archaeologists have noted striking similarities between grave items found in the region and those discovered on the nearby island.

For example, gold-plated earrings discovered in Giồng Lớn bear a striking resemblance to earrings found at the Pesentren site in Kendal, Semarang, Java, as noted by L. Malleret in his 1962 publication. Similarly, golden-gilt bean seeds found in Giồng Lớn are comparable to conical beads found in Gilimanuk, Sembiran, and Pacung on Bali, as well as at the Tabon cave. The earthen bird-shaped cover is also similar to the cover found in the Manunggul cave of the Tabon complex. The pattern of “sea waves and showers” on the potsherds is characteristic of Giồng Lớn and is also found in the Tabon pottery complex and the Buni complex. Notably, some sites such as the Tabon cave or Buni contain hard-imprinted pottery that is similar to that found in Giồng Cá Vồ and Giồng Lớn. Additionally, copper axes with a swallowtail trawl, commonly found in sites on Java and Palawan, have also been discovered in Giồng Lớn and Gò Ô Chùa in Southern Vietnam (Trương Đắc Chiến, 2017).

Figure 6: Gold Masks from Southern Vietnam and SEA Islands



Source: Trương Đắc Chiến, 2017.

Sa Huỳnh - Tabon - Kalanay Contacts: The new finds from Hòa Diêm and Southern Vietnam

As previously mentioned, Solheim was the first scholar to focus on the commonalities between the Sa Huỳnh pottery complex in Vietnam and the Kalanay pottery complex in the Philippines. Although cultural similarities can be recognized in the earlier periods of the so-

called Pre-Sa Huỳnh in Vietnam and the Early Metal Age in the Philippines, the shared characteristics between the two complexes increased considerably during the later Sa Huỳnh period in Vietnam and the Early Metal Age in the Philippines. Recent findings from the southern regions of Central and Southern Vietnam, Southern Thailand, and other areas have provided more accurate and detailed knowledge of the nature of the Sa Huỳnh-Kalanay pottery traditions. Common types, decoration techniques, and motifs (such as the distinct shape of the vessels with an out-turned rim, constricted neck, sharply angled body, and short ring-foot, as well as the impressed or carved “scallop” design) are typical features of Kalanay pottery traditions found in Sa Huỳnh pottery complexes³. The relations between Sa Huỳnh and Tabon Jar Burial complexes have been observed in the pottery assemblages both in mortuary containers and grave goods, in the mortuary rite and practice.

The discoveries of Kalanay related Pottery in and out the area of Sa Huỳnh culture in Central and Southern Vietnam (see Figure 7)

The Sa Huỳnh-Kalanay pottery tradition was defined by W. Solheim II as a result of cultural interactions between the maritime-based trading community of the Nusantao Trading and Communication Network, spanning from Central Vietnam to the Philippine archipelago during the Early Metal Age. The Hòa Diêm complex of sites, which belongs to the Southern variant of Sa Huỳnh culture, has shown evidence of Kalanay burial practices and pottery. Multiple burials were common at Hòa Diêm, with jars and inhumations containing the remains of up to five individuals, a unique mortuary practice in prehistoric Vietnam. Two AMS dates from human teeth and grave goods, including a Chinese coin and an iron knife from the Han dynasty, pottery and glass items, and gold ornaments, date the burials between the 2nd century BC and the 3rd century AD. Only the jar burials dated to the late phase, from the 1st century AD onwards, contained Kalanay or Kalanay-related pottery.

Early burials at Hòa Diêm share similarities with jar burials in Phú Yên and Khánh Hòa provinces (Southern Sa Huỳnh), while late jar burials are similar to Kalanay and Tabon burial practices, suggesting a highly developed jar burial complex with primary, secondary, and multiple burials.

Kalanay-related pottery was also discovered in some early Óc Eo cultural relics in Bến Tre and Kiên Giang provinces, as well as on some coastal islands in Southern Vietnam and Southern Thailand, dated after the 1st century AD, when the Sa Huỳnh culture had declined. Therefore, it can be inferred that the introduction of Kalanay-related pottery is related to

³ During the Early Iron Age, it can be recognized the formation of various pottery traditions in SEA Mainland and Islands, between these traditions there are less common and more distinctive own features, so it makes the comparative studies become very difficult and complex. Because of the big variety in Sa Huỳnh pottery assemblages, the Vietnamese archaeologists have characterized Sa Huỳnh culture as the Mosaic picture, in Philippines, there were recognized at least 04 pottery traditions Sa Huỳnh, Niah, Kalanay and Tabon (Lâm Thị Mỹ Dung, 2018: 44-122).

relatively late population movements, and it is difficult to establish a direct relationship between the Sa Huỳnh culture and the Kalanay complex due to the temporal gap.

Figure 7: The Sites in Southeast Asia with the Kalanay Related Pottery



Source: Adapted from Mariko Yamagata, 2009 & Nguyễn Quốc Mạnh, 2019.

4. The dimensions of Sa Huỳnh culture: The increasing of the social complexity of Sa Huỳnh society (societies)

As previously mentioned, the Sa Huỳnh culture was found in various topographical terrains with different environments. The communities living in these areas had not only economic, but also political and cultural relationships with each other. The size and scale of the Sa Huỳnh communities grew gradually from the Pre-Sa Huỳnh period, as evidenced by the increasing dimensions of their cemeteries and differentiated grave goods. This accumulation of wealth and power led to the development of social complexity. The *pasisir*⁴

⁴ Using the ethnological data and the archaeological record from SEA islands Ian Glover mentioned the kind of *pasisir* societies and believed that such communities have very ancient origins and it is possible to recognize them in other parts of Southeast Asian. According to him, the Sa Huỳnh culture with its extensive and primarily

societies settled along the coast and established trading ports at the crossroads of river mouths and sea coasts.

Craft production became more specialized and standardized, as evidenced by the yielded artifacts from habitation and cemetery sites. Pottery and iron artifacts recovered from Sa Huỳnh cultural sites indicate that these crafts were produced on a large scale with standardization of form, decoration, and style. The interregional and long-distance trade supported the increasing social complexity. The increase in goods consumption of the Sa Huỳnh communities led to the extension and complication of inner-regional and pan-regional exchange networks. The importation of goods from China, India, and Northern Vietnam contributed to certain structural transformations in each craft and in the craft system. The status or rank goods played a role in the impulse of social hierarchical differentiation in the chiefdom and especially in the chiefdom network.

The critical changes in the exploitation of resources, the organization of production, and the distribution and redistribution of needful and exotic goods in the single chiefdom and in the chiefdom, network created a strong impact on the mental aspect of culture. The transition in burial rites from small jar burials sparsely distributed in Pre-Sa Huỳnh habitation sites to the special big jar burials with various forms, which were densely concentrated in separate cemeteries in Sa Huỳnh culture, was the most prominent transformation in the mental aspect of culture. Based on the spatial organization in each cemetery and comparative ethnological materials, it was thought that each village cemetery was divided into different parts, and each part was the burial place for one clan or extended family.

The archaeological materials have shown the large scale and strong dimensions of Sa Huỳnh culture's power. Its power was not second to any early Iron Age cultures in Southeast Asia. Sa Huỳnh culture's achievements contributed significantly to the emergence of states in the first centuries AD.

5. Conclusion

Southeast Asian communities have established an intra-regional network of population movement, goods, industry, ideas, and cultural symbols since prehistoric times. In protohistoric times, these exchange networks became denser and connected with other networks to form a pan-regional network between Southeast Asia and the world, facilitated by inland roads, rivers, and seas. Positioned at the crossroads of these networks, the communities of the Pre-Sa Huỳnh and Sa Huỳnh cultures acted as intermediaries and pioneers in the formation and growth of the network of maritime trade and exchange routes

coastal distribution and many external contacts formed just such a sociocultural type and which later through strong commercial contacts with China to the north, the Philippines islands to the east and to India to the west, morphed into the several early historic Champa polities and later converted to Islam.

in the East Sea and beyond. The wealth and power of the Sa Huỳnh culture became the foundation for the early states of Champa and Funan.

Based on recent findings, there is a need to reassess the relationship between the Sa Huỳnh and Tabon cultures and the Sa Huỳnh and Kalanay cultures. Although the Tabon and Sa Huỳnh cultures have similarities dating back to the late Neolithic era, such as the use of earthen big jars as mortuary containers, and similarities in the form and design of coffins and grave goods, the Kalanay mortuary pottery has only been found in some Sa Huỳnh cemeteries. These cemeteries are mainly located in the southern parts of Central Vietnam, Southern Vietnam, and Southern Thailand, and date back to the final stage of the local Early Iron Age cultures, around the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. The introduction and existence of Kalanay burial rites and mortuary pottery at several sites in mainland Southeast Asia may reflect the migration or wave of late Austronesian-speaking people from the SEA islands to the mainland around the beginning of the 1st millennium AD.

In conclusion, it can be said that the impact of the Kalanay pottery tradition on Sa Huỳnh pottery was found only in the latest stage of the Sa Huỳnh culture and in the southern area of the Sa Huỳnh culture. Along with the beaker adzes found in Gò Cây Tung⁵, this provides evidence for the influence of the late Austronesian-speaking people on the Sa Huỳnh culture in this region. The discovery of Kalanay-related pottery provides evidence of the presence of Austronesian-speaking people in the population structure of Pre-Óc Eo and Óc Eo times. This type of pottery has also been found on Samui island (Thailand) from the beginning of the first millennium AD, highlighting the close relationship of population and culture between Central and Southern Vietnam, Southern Thailand, and the Southeast Asian islands. The first centuries AD saw a new wave of population migration from the islands to the mainland, and these populations merged with the indigenous prehistoric populations, ultimately leading to the formation of the Óc Eo culture of the Funan kingdom.

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⁵ Gò Cây Tung site, located in Thới Sơn village, Tịnh Biên district, An Giang province. This site was discovered in 1990 and has been excavated several times. The thickness of cultural strata is around 2-3m and consisted of Pre-historic - Pre-Óc Eo - Óc Eo cultural layers. It is worthy to note, that the prehistoric stone tools uncovered in Gò Cây Tung are distinct from the Đồng Nai culture while bearing the similarities with the stone implements in Malaysia, especially the barker adze and hoe with round cylindrical body. There were found the vestiges of locally making of these stone tools (Phạm Đức Mạnh et al., 2009: 85-86).

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