

INFORMATION

Archaeological achievements in 2007

2007 is an eventful and fruitful year of the archaeological discipline; the archaeological activities have been conducted all over the country, in many fields. The followings are some main archaeological achievements:

- The research on the Hòa Bình culture, the ancient inhabitants and environment in Việt Nam has been done with the continued excavation at Hang Chỗ (Cave) in Hòa Bình province by Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology, Hà Nội University of Social Sciences and Humanity and the Seoul University (Korea). The excavation results shed light on the stratum features and happenings in the excavated trenches, which initially better identified the ancient environment in the region and the settlement characteristics of the Hòa Bình cultural groups of inhabitants in the mountainous area of Northern Việt Nam round 20,000 BP – 10,000 BP. In addition, there are some more remarkable finds, such as the ancient snail-shell stratum at Lộc Bình district (Lạng Sơn province), Phia Mồn Cave with the dates spreading from the late Hòa Bình culture to late Neolithic in Tuyên Quang province.

-The research on the pre–protohistoric marine cultures in the Vietnamese coastal areas has also been furthered. In the northeastern area, Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and Hải Phòng Museum

conducted the fourth excavation at Cái Bèo site (Cát Bà Island), the results of which have better identified the cultural happenings and archaeological content from 7,000 BP to 3,000 BP. Also on this land, Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and the Provincial Museum of Khánh Hòa conducted an excavation at Vĩnh Yên site, Vạn Ninh district, and found a cultural layer that was over 1m thick and many other special artifacts, which helps to confirm the existence of the ancient human groups living on the hills/mounds in the southern central Việt Nam 3,000 years ago. The Hòa Diêm site was excavated the second time by the South Việt Nam Institute of Social Sciences, Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and Waseda University (Japan) and found that the site was dated to the late Sa Huỳnh period (the first century BC – the second century AD) though, none of the typical features of this culture have been found. Further to the south, the Neolithic traces were found from the excavations at Hòn Cau, Phú Quốc Island by the Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology in cooperation with the provincial museum of Phú Quốc.

The Phú Quốc Institute of Archaeology and Đồng Nai Museum conducted an excavation at Gò Cây Me site and dated it from 2,500 BP to 3,000 BP, equivalent or a bit later than Bình Đa site. In addition, there are investigations and test-excavations at Gò Cây Tung, Gò Đè

Metal Age, Gò Huệ Tánh, Gò Năm Dò, and Gò Tư Trâm sites, from which a lot of valuable data have been collected, contributing to the study of the ancient cultures in the south Việt Nam.

- The research on Tây Nguyên archaeology has been appreciated, with the excavations at Thôn Tám (Đắk Lắk province) conducted by Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and Đắk Nông Museum, which resulted in the finds of a Neolithic workshop that can be considered to be the first found stone manufacturing workshop in Tây Nguyên. Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and Đắk Lắk Museum conducted an excavation at Buôn Râu and found the remains of jar burials dated to round 3,000 BP. Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and Đà Lạt University conducted the third excavation at Phú Mỹ site (Lâm Đồng province), found that this site was from late Bronze Age – early Iron Age. Additionally, the finds of some ancient Champa architectural traces have attracted the attention of the domestic and oversea scientists.

- In the mountainous area of western Thanh Hoá, Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and Thanh Hoá Museum conducted an excavation at Bản Sặt site and found 2 axe moulds, a stone weight..., which help to confirm the process from pre-Đông Sơn period to Đông Sơn period in this area. The Hà Nội University of Social sciences and Humanity and Thanh Hoá Museum conducted an excavation at Đông Khối site and found more than 260 artifacts, which means that Đông Khối was a

large scale workshop for making stone tools dating from early to middle Metal Age in the Mã River basin. There are other excavations at Núi Sen, Núi Đồng Cỏ sites, which can be dated from the second century BC to the third century AD, and the wide distribution and long-term existence of the Đông Sơn culture in the area has been confirmed.

In the plain of north Việt Nam, Mán Bạc site was continued to be excavated by Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and Ninh Bình province in cooperation with the Australian, Japanese and American archaeologists, which resulted in the better identification of the owners and the process of occupying the coastal plain by ancient Việt inhabitants about 4,000 BP – 3,500 BP.

-The archaeological research serving the restoration and valorization of the cultural values of the national tradition has been focused at some remarkable sites: Thăng Long Imperial citadel, Xả Tắc (Hà Nội), Trần Temple and Tháp pagoda, Thái Lăng site (Trần Nhân Tông mausoleum) in Quảng Ninh province, Trần-period Bến Lâm in Yên Bái province. Especially, at Quỳnh Lâm pagoda site (Quảng Ninh) found the Lý-period foundation, so that the architectural size, decoration, building materials have been better studied. Those results not only satisfy the scientific needs but also timely provide a lot of reliable information and scientific evidence for building planning tasks and valorization of the cultural – historical values of the site.

The Hồ and Trần period Nam Giao site in Thanh Hoá was excavated and the

matters of the architectural structure, scale, decoration as well as the momentary rate of the site have been highlighted, which timely provides the scientific information and evidence for the reconstruction and development of cultural tourism.

In Bình Định, Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and Bình Định Museum conducted the fourth excavation at Tây Sơn-period site Hoàng Đế (Imperial) citadel site. From the results, the size and plan of the Forbidden citadel has been confirmed and part of the traces of Nam Giao open-air alta from Tây Sơn period has initially been identified.

Apart from the archaeological excavations and investigations, the application of new methods in archaeology has also been interested; 30 samples have been ¹⁴C- dated, 16 samples have been dated by fluorescent heating method. Other methods of biology, geology, co-ordinate system and information technology have also been applied in archaeology.

ĐÀO TUYẾT NGA

Seminar: Preservation and Development of Mường ethnic cultural identity in the renewal and integration era

On 15 December 2007 in Hòa Bình province, the Ministry of Culture – Sports and Tourism (MoCST) in cooperation with Hòa Bình Provincial People’s Committee organized a seminar on “Preservation and Development of Mường ethnic cultural identity in the renewal and integration era”. The meeting took place as part of

The First Mường ethnic Cultural Festival 2007.

Attendees at the seminar included Mr. Lê Tiến Thọ, Vice-Minister of MoCST; Mr. Quách Thế Tân, Vice-Chairman of Hòa Bình PPC; representatives for leaders of Departments of Culture-Information, Centre for Culture-Sports of provinces where Mường ethnic groups inhabit; and, academics, researchers of Mường ethnic culture.

The Mường ethnic cultural Festival 2007 was organized with the theme “Bring into play Mường ethnic culture in the renewal and integration era of the country”. The event aimed at honoring Mường ethnic cultural identities; promoting cultural exchange, study, sharing experience of cultural activities, preservation and development of Mường ethnic culture, in particular experience of the organized building of new cultural life in Mường ethnic communities. The event was a good opportunity to advertise culture-tourism, trading activities of Hòa Bình with domestic and international visitor friends.

With more than one million populations, Mường ethnic communities virtually inhabit in Hòa Bình, Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An, Ninh Bình, Hà Nam, Hà Tây, Phú Thọ, Sơn La, Lâm Đồng, Bình Phước, Đồng Nai, Kon Tum provinces. Mường's gong culture, pipe-wine drinking culture, house-on-stills culture and a system of saga, Mường ethnic literature, Mường ethnic decorative patterns, etc. are cultural heritages, which are enormous

in respect of quantity, rich in terms of types and transmitted consecutively from one to another generation, making profoundly humane imprints.

Like many other fraternal ethnic groups in Vietnam, preservation and development of Mường ethnic culture within the community have become a great concern and need assistance given by different stakeholders.

At the seminar, the attendees arrived at agreement that preservation, promotion and development of traditional culture of not only Mường ethnic group, but also other ethnic groups in the Vietnamese community, at the same time acquiring selectively fresh features of brotherhood ethnic groups, are radically important. The objective of this work is to contribute to the building of cultural life, crime prevention, removal of social evils and outdated customs being practiced by the Mường communities, bringing effectively traditional cultural values into play in the new period of the country.

The preservation of tangible and intangible culture embraced by Mường ethnic group should be assessed in a serious manner. There exist cultural elements, such as food, housing, costumes, exchanges, traditional arts, indigenous knowledge, and spiritual and mysterious factors which can not even construed by the contemporary science. It is also crucial that traditional cultural values must be scrutinized, collected, studied, synthesized and consecutively brought back to the community life through

cultural exchanges and activities. Cultural maintenance should be harmoniously associated with development as well as hunger elimination, poverty reduction and socio-economic development in the Mường-populated areas, especially in the resettlements, migrants and new settlement areas.

Attendees agreed on some recommendations aimed at preserving and developing Mường ethnic cultural identities in the renewal and integration era as follows:

Mường ethnic culture among other brotherhood ethnic communities is an integral part of united but diversified Vietnamese culture. Thus, the preservation and promotion of Mường ethnic traditional cultural values have become a request to our state. It is necessary to include the preservation and promotion of Mường ethnic cultural values in the national programme on culture and tourism on a strategic basis with a view to bringing into play participatory efforts of all stakeholders at the central and local levels. It is imperative to demarcate the responsibilities in research, preservation in an appropriate manner in order to support the building of cultural life.

It is important that a system of cultural institutions, among which are essentially village or hamlet cultural houses, needs to be built and perfectionated. Particularly, it is recommendable to make use of mass theatrics, advocacy campaigns, mobile cinematography, mass sports, host

visits, public libraries in an attempt to translate the lines, policies of the Party and State into the real life, improve the cultural and information enjoyment in Mường ethnic-populated areas;

It needs to plan and build a contingent of cultural, sports and tourism officials who are Mường ethnic. A survey should be carried out, which serves as the basis to use, make use of and bring into play the role of Mường ethnic artisans. Favorable conditions should be created for Mường ethnic artisans to train and hand over their craft to the younger generations; more attention needs to be drawn to the recruitment of Mường ethnic children to cultural, sports and tourism schools for the long-term development;

It is important to cultivate the awareness of preservation, maintenance and promotion of Mường ethnic traditional culture through grassroots cultural activities; societal activities as well as the building of new cultural life should be associated with festive, fine cultural activities of the community;

It is necessary to intensify communication, exchanges through cultural activities between and among Mường ethnic group with other ethnic groups in order to enhance mutual understanding, solidarity and assistance for common development.

HOÀ AN

An exhibition of objects and materials collected on a tour-deforce by French ethnologist George Condominas in Sar Luk (1948-1949)

An exhibition week with the theme “*We have eaten the forest*”, displaying objects collected by French ethnologist George Condominas, was held by Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, from 11 to 16 December 2007, in Hanoi.

The exhibition was part of the cooperative programme between Vietnam Museum of Ethnology and the French Embassy in Hanoi, Museum of Quai Branly (France), L'Espace – the Centre for French Culture in Hanoi, and UNESCO Vietnam, on celebrating the 10th anniversary of the inauguration of Vietnam Museum of Ethnology for the public view (1997-2007).

George Condominas is a French ethnologist, born in Hải Phòng in 1921. He is currently Director of the Center for Research and Documentation of Southeast Asia and the World or CEDRASEMI, Chairman of the Board for Anthropology, Ethnology and Pre-history Studies (XXX) under the French National Committee for Science. Having become a graduate of literature and ethnology, embracing a view that "ethnology is an occupation, which however must imply a life-style we choose. For me, ethnology as such is a life-style", in September 1948, he had the first tour-deforce to research on Mnong Gar people in Sar Luk (now known as Ro Chai A) village, Krong Kno commune, Lac district of Da Lak province (Central Highlands) of Vietnam.

"Eat the forest" is a connotation spoken by Mnong Gar people as well as the majority of Pre-Indochina

montagnards, implying forest clearance and burning for cultivation. Each year, another name is referred to the exercise by each village, because at a certain point in time each village "eats" a different segment of forest in their territory. The year during which George Condominas stayed in Sar Luk village, Krong Kno commune, Lak district of Dak Lak province (1948-1949) was referred to as the year "we have eaten the forest of Goo Stone God". Within one-year tour, he lived with the people thereat and collected a repository of invaluable materials and around 500 objects. After the tour-deforce, he published a book titled "We have eaten the forest of Goo Stone God". This ethnological research work of George Condominas has been repeatedly republished.

The objects and materials on display during the exhibition week at Vietnam Museum of Ethnology brought back nearly the whole picture of the life lived up by Mnong Gar people in Sar Luk village in the mid-twentieth century (on the people, costumes, handicrafts, farming practices, fishing, buffalo sacrifice, etc.). At the same time, they illustrated the work and life of the ethnologist himself in a place where he had a tour-deforce. Additionally, the photos taken by George Condominas during his two re-

visits to the village afterwards (1996 and 2006 respectively) were also displayed at the exhibition.

At this opening exhibition week, visitors not only watched objects and materials that are used by Mnong people, but also could experimentally played gongs and other musical instruments with the owners of the displayed objects, who are Mnong people from Sar Luk village, Krong Kno commune, Lak district of Dak Lak province.

In conjunction with the exhibition, other activities were also carried out on this occasion, such as: "A special tour with the Museum's experts"; a public lecture on "Ethnology as a living art" given by George Condominas; the presentation of a series of films about Mnong culture and other ethnic groups in the Central Highlands; a programme "learning is playing, playing is learning" specifically designed for children, which enabled the children to self-learn and explore Mnong culture by getting involved in such exercises as weaving decorative patterns, making bead streams, book markers, post-cards, etc.

VÂN HÀ