

# THE OLOV JANSE COLLECTION

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## ABSTRACT

*The Peabody Museum at Harvard University houses the Olov Janse Collection of archaeological materials recovered by the Swedish archaeologist Olov Janse during his excavations at a number of important Bronze Age and Protohistoric sites in Viet Nam. The artefacts in the collection were loaned to the museum in 1942. This paper briefly describes the history of Olov Janse's work in Viet Nam, highlights the problems encountered by scholars of Vietnamese archaeology when collections are housed in overseas institutions, and makes a case for the return of these materials to their cultural context in Viet Nam.*

## INTRODUCTION

Researchers investigating materials excavated during the French colonial period in Indochina invariably have difficulties accessing artefacts recovered during this period. Archaeological investigations began in Viet Nam after the Nguyen Dynasty came under the control of l'Union de l'Indochine Française (French Federation of Indochina) in 1887. While some of these important materials were deposited in the Musée Louis Pajot (now the Viet Nam Historical Museum, Hanoi), many more items of material culture were sent to disparate collections in many different parts of the world. Not only has this created problems of access, but also problems with interpretation, as data on these collections are published in many different languages from markedly different theoretical perspectives. As part of my PhD research in 1999, I investigated the cultural materials in the Olov Janse Collection currently housed in the Peabody Museum at Harvard. The artefacts investigated came from Olov Janse's 3<sup>rd</sup> season of excavations in Indochina (and the Philippines) which were loaned to the Peabody in 1942. This paper provides a brief history of Olov Janse's archaeological work in Viet Nam and other parts of Southeast Asia and provides a summary of the 7049 artefacts obtained from 17 archaeological sites that are currently stored in the museum.

## OLOV JANSE

In 1933, Olov Janse was invited by the Director of l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) in Hanoi to

undertake a "scientific excavation" in Viet Nam of the site of Dong Son (Thanh Hoa Province). Janse was born in Norrkoeping in Sweden and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Royal University of Uppsala in 1916; he obtained a Master of Arts degree in 1920 and his doctorate from the same university in 1922. From 1920 to 1930, Janse held the post of Assistant Curator at the French National Museum of Antiquities in Saint-Germain-en-Laye. From 1925 to 1927, he was also Associate Professor of National and Prehistoric Archaeology at L'École du Louvre. Between 1928 and 1936, Janse became Associate Professor at l'École Pratique des Hautes Études at the Sorbonne. During this period, he was strongly influenced by J. G. Anderson and Henri Hubert and subsequently became very interested in Chinese bronzes.

In 1934, Janse left Paris for Hanoi to take up the position as Director of the Archaeological Expedition to Indochina. The expedition was sponsored by the Direction des Musées Nationaux (France), the Louvre (Paris), the French Governor General of Indochina (Viet Nam) and l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient (Hanoi). Janse not only excavated the Dong Son site in Thanh Hoa Province but also investigated numerous Chinese monuments and brick tombs attributed to the Han (206 BC-AD 220) and Tang (AD 618-907) dynasties. His first excavations in Viet Nam were undertaken between November 1934 and May 1935; the second and third season took place between October 1936 and November 1938 (Janse 1947, 1951, 1958).

The cultural materials from Janse's first season of excavations in Viet Nam were sent to Europe where they were divided between the Louvre (Paris), the Guimet Museum, the Cernushi Museum, the Museum of Art and History (Brussels), and the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (Stockholm). Some of the artefacts were given to private collectors; the few remaining items were given to l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient in Hanoi. Janse's excavations in Viet Nam were completed in 1938. While he had intended extending his research to Laos, when war broke out his plans were abandoned because he contracted typhoid. In 1939, Janse proceeded to the Malaysian Peninsula and collected Chinese ceramics. These artefacts are now preserved in the Raffles Museum in Singapore. In 1939, he went on to the Philippines to investigate archaeological evidence for the Dong Son people at sites in Luzon with the archaeologist, H. Otley Beyer. He also

investigated a series of graves with imported Chinese tradewares at Kay Thomas, Calatagan, Batangas Province. In 1940 Janse continued on to the United States of America where he contributed to the war effort.

All of the cultural materials from Janse's third season of excavations were shipped to the Harvard-Yenching Institute and displayed in the Smitic Museum in Cambridge, the Fogg Museum and the Peabody Museum. In 1943, l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient made an agreement with the Peabody Museum to deposit these collections in the museum. Table 1 (below) gives a summary of the cultural materials from 17 archaeological sites that were loaned to the Peabody Museum in 1942.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research has drawn attention to the problems that were created when artefacts recovered by a single archaeologist working in Viet Nam were dispersed into different collections located in many parts of the world with subsequent reports published in many different languages. The research also highlights the problems inherent in the interpretation of collections out of their cultural context in Viet Nam and argues that many foreign interpretations are open to challenge and need to be revised. For example, French scholars have long held that Xiang Province in northern Viet Nam was first settled in 214 BC by Chinese from the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BC), as stated in Chinese historical records. Recently, however, Vietnamese scholars have demonstrated that so-called

Han tombs in Viet Nam are different to Han tombs in southern China and may not have actually belonged to sinicized Chinese. The unpublished materials in museum collections from this period can assist with these revisions. Much could be gained from greater access and research into the 1517 artefacts from the Sa Huynh collection in the Peabody Museum and the 388 artefacts excavated from the Philippines as well as the cultural materials from the Ly-Tran and Le Dynasties that remain housed in the Olov Janse Collection.

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## REFERENCES

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Table 1: Summary of artefacts from Janse's excavations in the Peabody Museum.

Site	Location	Number of items	Description	Period
Man Thon	Thanh Hoa	374	Han tombs 1A, 1B	mid to late Eastern Han (AD 25-220)
Bim Son	Thanh Hoa	2232	Han tombs 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15	late Eastern Han to Jin dynasties (AD 25-420)
Ngoc Am	Thanh Hoa	200	Han tomb	mid to late Eastern Han (AD 25-220)
Lien Huong	Thanh Hoa	3	Han tomb	mid to late Eastern Han (AD 25-220)
Phu Coc	Thanh Hoa	150	Han tomb	late Eastern Han (AD 25-220)
Vuc Trung	Thanh Hoa	26	Han tomb	mid to late Eastern Han (AD 25-220)
Tam Tho	Thanh Hoa	1428	Kilns IA, IB, III	mid to late Eastern Han (AD 25-220)
Dong Son & Ham Rong	Thanh Hoa	124	purchased items	Late Dong Son – Tang (AD 700-900)
Thanh Hoa	Thanh Hoa	53	purchased items	Han (AD 206-220) and Ly Tran dynasties (AD 1100-1225)
Van Trai	Thanh Hoa	122	Tombs 1, 2, 3a, 3b, 4	Ly Tran dynasty (AD 1100-1225)
Chau Re	Pham Rang	210	Settlement site	Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907)
Sa Huynh	Quang Ngai	1517	Urn burials 1,2,3,4,5,6, 6(2), 6(3) and surrounds	Sa Huynh culture
unknown	North Viet Nam	3	purchases	unknown
Somrong Sen	Cambodia	19	surface finds	(c. 1000 BC)
Johore	Malaysia	200	glass beads	Ming dynasty and later (1368-1644) and Ly dynasty (1500-1800).
Calatagan	Batangas, Philippines	380	burial site	Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Ly dynasty (1500-1800)
Kay Thomas	Luzon	8	burial site	AD 1400-1600