

Chronology of Vietnamese History

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Vietnam

Table of Contents

PREFACE

Introduction: Chronology of Vietnamese History

Introduction

Prehistoric Period

Map #1: Southern China and Vietnam at the Beginning of Chinese Colonization

Chinese Colonization Period

Independence Period in Vietnam

Map #2: Indochina During French Colonization

French Colonization Period

French-Indochina War

Map #3: Indochina in 1954

Map Exercise

Glossary

Exercises

Answers to the Exercises

Chapter 1: Prehistoric Vietnam, The Dawn of Civilization in the Tonkin Delta

Introduction

Map #4: Asia Today

The First Vietnamese

Map #5: Sunda Shelf

Some Early Vietnamese Groups

Shifting Cultivation and Wet Rice Agriculture

Dong Son Civilization

Map #6: Prehistoric Sites in Vietnam

Prehistoric Mythology

Cultural and Historical Influences from the South: Champa

Cultural and Historical Influences from the North: China

Map Exercises

Glossary

Important People and Places

Map #7: Southeast Asia

Exercises

Answers to the Exercises

Chapter 2: Chinese Colonization

Introduction

The Effects of Early Colonization on the Vietnamese

Map #8: Tonkin Delta at the Beginning of Chinese Colonization
Some Aspects of Sinicization
The Politics of Chinese Colonization
Map #9: Vietnam During Chinese Colonization
Rebellions and Uprisings: The Trung Sisters
Ly Bon and Other Revolutionaries
New Religions
Buddhist Monks
The Road to Independence
Map Exercise
Chinese Dynasties
Map #10: China Today
Glossary
Important People and Places
Exercises
Answers to the Exercises
Chapter 3: Vietnamese Independence (950-1859)
Introduction
Map #11: Vietnam During Independence
Chinese Political Influence
Vietnamese Leaders
Map #12: *Nam Tien*: The Advance Southward
Nam Tien: The Advance Southward
Confucianism
The Tay Son Rebellion
The Beginning of French Influence
Map Exercise
Vietnamese Dynasties
Glossary
Important People and Places
Exercises
Answers to the Exercises
Chapter 4: The Vietnamese Village
Introduction
Village Structure
Village Land
Village Economy
Buddhism and Taoism in the Village
Confucianism
Crisis in the Village
The Village During French Colonization
The Village Today
Map # 13: Vietnam Today: Land Usage
Map # 14: Vietnam Today: Provinces
Map Exercise
Glossary

Important People and Places
Exercises
Answers to the Exercises
Chapter 5: French Colonization (1858-1954)
Introduction
The Influence of the Missionaries
The End of Vietnamese Independence
Map #15: French Colonization
The Colonial Government and Economy
Colonial Conditions
French Language and Culture
Nationalism, Communism, and the End of French Colonization
The French-Indochina War
Map Exercise
Glossary
Important People and Places
Exercises
Answers to the Exercises
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chapter 1: Prehistoric Vietnam, The Dawn of Civilization in the Tonkin Delta

Introduction

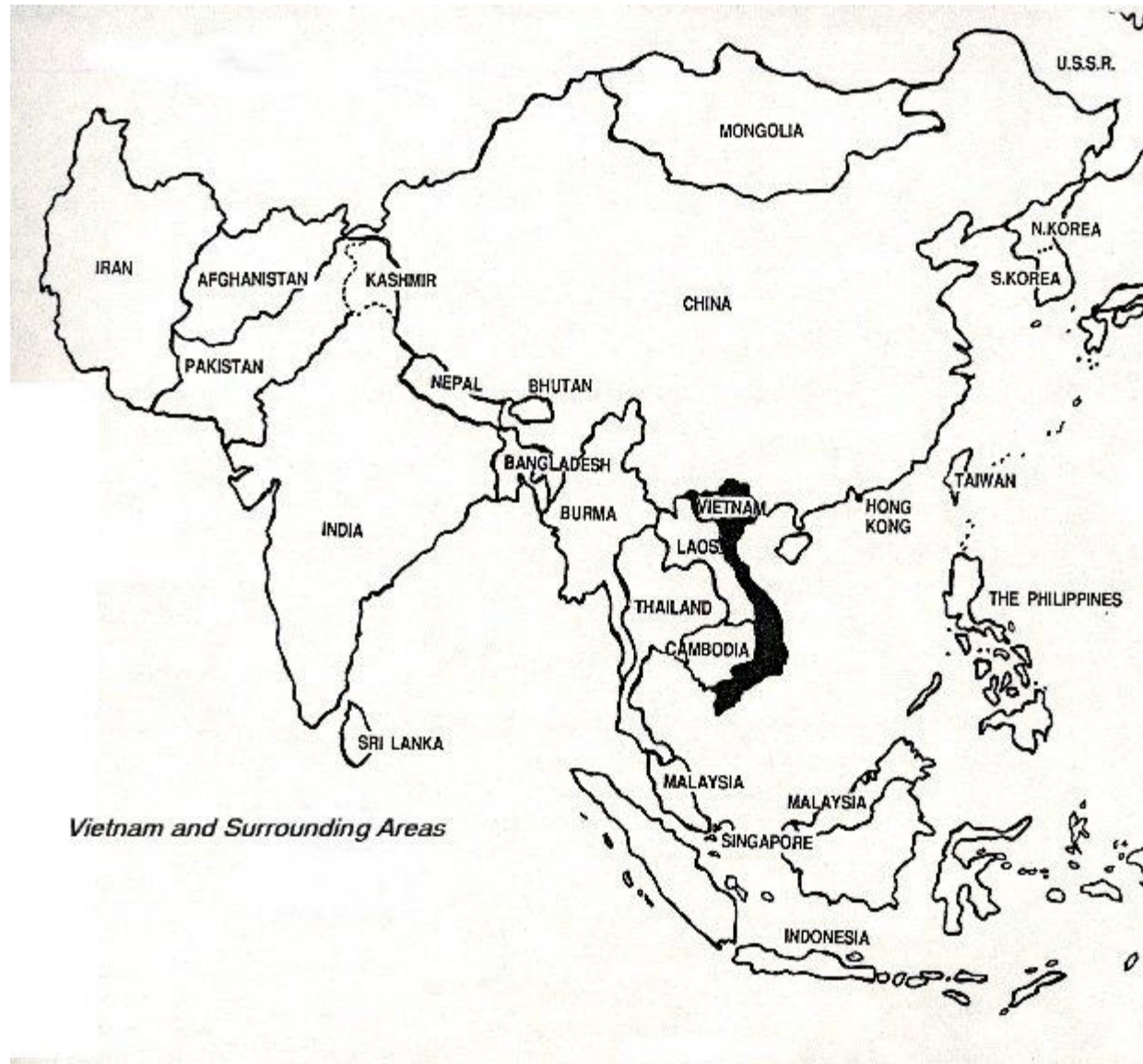
Piecing together what happened in prehistoric Vietnam, the period before Chinese colonization when written historical records were first kept, is a complex process. Many sources of information are used--data collected by linguists who study the movement of languages across *Southeast Asia*, remains from societies which have been excavated by archaeologists, historical documents kept by Chinese colonists and travelers, and *origin myths* which are still told today about the beginning of Vietnam and its people.

Even with this collection of information, no one can really be sure what happened during the 20,000 years in which human beings first wandered across the area known today as Southeast Asia and settled in the *Tonkin Delta*, a lowland plains area which includes the *Red River Basin* in northern Vietnam. One reason is that some of the data are contradictory. For example, Chinese travellers and colonists wanted to portray a society which was "barbarian" or less advanced than their own. At the same time, the Chinese claimed that all civilization in the

Tonkin Delta had moved down from China in previous centuries. This was widely believed until recently, when archaeologists collected data pointing to the fact that the first settlers were originally of Malay-Indonesian stock.

The Vietnamese first encountered by the Chinese had different customs and a different style of clothing. (For example, *sarongs* were worn by the women and loincloths were worn by the men which prompted early Chinese historians to describe them as "almost naked.") However, this certainly does not mean that the Vietnamese were barbarians. Rather, they had a complex society which had developed over about 4000 years of living in the area. During this time period, new groups entered the area from China, Thailand, and Indonesia, bringing with them new technologies, languages, and religious beliefs.

These cultural elements were probably accepted by the original inhabitants of the Tonkin Delta as needed or desired. Later, during colonization periods when cultural elements were more likely to be forced upon the Vietnamese people, they continued to preserve their own cultural identity as a framework for their lives. The list of contributors to Vietnamese culture includes the Malaysians, Indonesians, Chinese, and later the Europeans and the Americans, all of whom at one time occupied Vietnam for extended periods.



The First Vietnamese

The earliest Vietnamese people are thought to have gradually moved from Indonesia through the Malay Peninsula and Thailand until they settled on the edges of the Red River in the Tonkin Delta.

Archaeologists follow a path of stone tools from the Early *Pleistocene Age* (600,000-12,000 BC), across Java, Malaysia, Thailand and north to Burma. These stone tools are thought to be the first human tools used in Southeast Asia. Archaeologists believe that at this time the Himalayas, a chain of mountains in northern Burma and China, created an icy barrier which isolated the people of Southeast Asia.

During the *Ice Age*, (12,000-8000 BC) the extreme northern and southern parts of the earth froze into giant *glaciers* and icebergs, while at the equator temperatures did not fall below freezing. Due to the formation of icebergs in the far north, the ocean levels around the equator dropped significantly. This resulted in the exposure of the shallow areas surrounding the coasts and islands of Southeast Asia which today is known as the *Sunda Shelf*.

It is generally thought that the exposed Sunda Shelf looked like a giant salt plain, and that perhaps people ventured out across this area to settle on other coasts or islands. Later, when the glaciers melted, the Sunda Shelf was again immersed in water. Because it is a relatively shallow body of water, it has always provided a safe area for traders and travelers in small boats to pass safely without the threat of high or choppy seas.

In this way, the geography of the area has had a lot to do with the way in which cultures developed. As the map indicates, outside the Sunda Shelf are some deep ocean basins which were not often crossed until heavier and wider European vessels were able to traverse these deep and sometimes dangerous seas.

As the glaciers melted and the seas near these coasts rose, traders and other travelers who wanted to migrate to other areas, or perhaps to proselytize religion, used boats as transport. For the next 4000 years, until 8000 BC, people also moved across the mainland of Southeast Asia towards the Tonkin Delta, some stopping and settling along the way. Eventually, the descendants of these migratory peoples entered the *Neolithic Age* (from around 8000-800 BC), when humans started to use simple stone tools. In the Early Neolithic Period (8000-2500 BC), those who arrived to settle along Vietnam's northern coasts were probably *negritos*, or short, dark curly-haired people who, according to one theory, came south from China. Remains of these people and their culture have been found in the *Hoa Binh Caves* along the Red River and in the Tonkin Delta.

In the Middle Neolithic Period (2500-2000 BC), more people appeared in the area of present-day Vietnam and settled at another location called *Bac Son*, which is in a central area of the Tonkin Delta. These people were probably somewhat taller and lighter skinned than the *negritos* from Hoa Binh and were skilled in the art of basketry as well as the manufacturing and use of polished double-edged stone tools.



In the Later Neolithic Period (2000-800 BC), a variety of tools were used, including bone needles, weights for weaving and fishing, and simple spinning wheels. Remains of their boat-building technology have also been found. During this time, the people were able to support themselves sufficiently by producing two crops of rice per year. Their success in producing rice can be attributed to the ideal climate in the Tonkin Delta; hot sun and the right amount of rain result in a year-round humid environment.

In other parts of Southeast Asia from about 6800 BC, people had been growing peas, beans, almonds, peppers and cucumbers to support their diets. It is probable that some of these crops were also grown in Vietnam. This indicates to historians that in the early period of Vietnamese history the people had a healthy,

balanced diet of meat, fish, rice, grains, fruits, and vegetables, and they probably led a stable lifestyle--as long as there was no negative outside interference.

Some Early Vietnamese Groups

Sometime after the advent of the societies found at Hoa Binh and Bac Son, another group of people developed a culture at *Quynh-van (Nghe-an)* where an aspect of their religion was manifested in large mounds of mollusk shells which had been collected from the Red River Delta. Bodies had been buried under these piles of shells in a seated position with bent knees--the same position of many buried bodies found throughout Indonesia and the Philippines. This signifies to archaeologists that these early people had an advanced society based on fishing and that their religion was oriented toward the sea.

At a location further south of the Tonkin Delta, in the central region of Vietnam's coast, remains of another culture have been found at Sa Huynh. This culture existed from about 4000-1000 BC. Tools, ornamental beads, and funerary jars have also been found at these archaeological sites. These jars were usually located at the water's edge and probably signified a dead person's journey out to sea.

Throughout Southeast Asia, the Neolithic Period can be considered the period in which organized societies developed. During this period the Vietnamese people spread across a large area from the foothills of northern Vietnam's western *cordillera* to the eastern coast. It is thought that they lived in small communities with groups of extended families living in a simple communal way. The growing of rice, their staple food, had developed into two distinct methods--*shifting cultivation*, done on a dry field, usually in upland areas, and wet rice cultivation, which involved the construction of dikes around rivers that collected water into knee-deep ponds in which the rice was grown. Both methods are still used today.

Shifting Cultivation and Wet Rice Agriculture

Dry rice agriculture involves the cooperation of a small group of people, usually an extended family, which works together to cut down an area of forest. After one to two months the newly cut trees and underbrush have dried and are burned. Shifting cultivators then plant the seeds in the fertile soil-ash mix. In Vietnam the forest is cut down just after the rainy season, and planting takes place at the start of the next rains. Most shifting agriculturalists grow a variety of grains which have different

growing periods--maize, for example, takes only a few months to mature while rice may take six to eight months. During this period the fields must be guarded against rats and birds. Because dry rice agriculture quickly depletes the nutrients in the topsoil, shifting cultivators must move every two to three years to a new area, hence the name shifting cultivation. The same cultivators usually return to a plot of land after about 10 years, when the forest has had the opportunity to grow up again. Today, shifting cultivation is still practiced by groups in the highlands of Vietnam who avoided Chinese and French colonization and who, in many cases, live close to the way they did hundreds of years ago.

Wet rice agriculture demands a high level of group cooperation, usually involving more than one extended family. Here, rice is grown in *paddies*, the knee-deep ponds that are edged by dikes. These dikes depend upon a high level of labor and maintenance and since each pond feeds into another, families and small groups must work together to insure that the water flows correctly. In prehistoric times, the people in the Tonkin Delta relied upon the flooding of the Red River and other rivers each year to fill the paddies with fresh water that contained important minerals as well as small aquatic animals which fed nutrients into the ponds. In most places today the water is fed into the paddies by a more elaborate system of irrigation ditches and canals, which control the flooding of the river.

Dong Son Civilization

This brings us to the period of Vietnam's "highest" prehistoric civilization when the inhabitants of the Tonkin Delta reached the *Bronze Age*. How the people along Vietnam's northern coasts learned the technology of forging bronze is unknown. Many researchers believe it was introduced from China. The people of *Thanh Hoa* used bronze to make large ritualistic drums known as the Dong Son drums. The Dong Son people lived from about 800-200 BC and their drums tell about their lives and religious beliefs. Three-dimensional carvings, carvings in *bas-relief*, and etchings on the drums show people farming, doing daily chores such as pounding rice, walking with spears, building boats and riding in them, and playing trumpet-like instruments. Dong Son drums also portray houses built on bamboo poles or stilts in the same architectural style as they are built today in Vietnam and throughout Southeast Asia. Animals depicted on the drums include frogs, sea birds, and deer. Archaeologists believe that the frogs and sea birds symbolized some of the people's religious beliefs pertaining to the worship

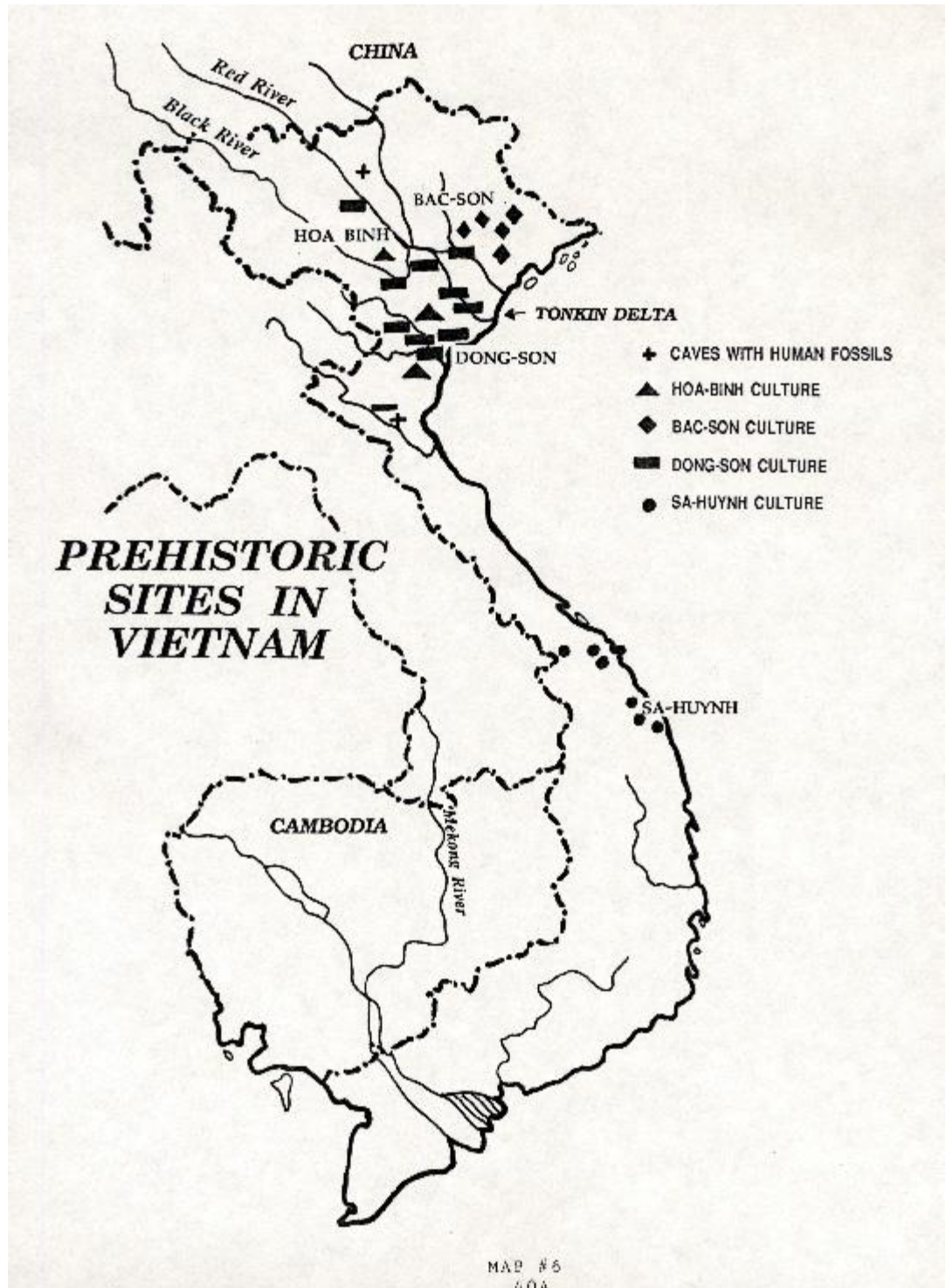
of all the natural elements which surrounded them. They gave special attention to the sun and the water (the rain, the river, and the ocean) which could be either beneficial or detrimental to their existence. Another aspect of the Dong Son religion which interests archaeologists is their method of burying the dead. In some cases this involved the building of brick tombs with three separate compartments. Some held gold, some silver, and some iron. Because only a few select individuals were buried in the elaborate tombs, archaeologists and historians believe that the Dong Son society probably developed from small communal groups into a society ruled by an *aristocracy* or monarchy.

This aristocratic or *feudalistic society* was one in which a ruling family, or group of families, gained its wealth through the labor of the working people or peasants. The peasants were usually heavily taxed but in return were guaranteed protection by the aristocracy in case of war or natural disaster. While a feudalistic relationship had obvious benefits for the aristocracy, the relationship between the king and his people also had religious overtones. The people generally believed that the system had been established by the gods long before they were born. The king or queen was considered as separate from the ordinary mortals, a medium between the peasants and the spirit world.

As the culture developed in the Tonkin Delta and southward along the coast, the people began to practice the arts of making pottery and weaving cloth. By this time, warfare between tribes, as well as with outsiders, had become more sophisticated.

Warfare is depicted on the Dong Son drums by dancing men in feather headdresses holding spears.

Some Dong Son-like drums are still used by the *Muong* people, a highland group which is found in Vietnam's western cordillera. Others have been unearthed in southern China and Indonesia. Most of the drums made and used around the Red River were probably destroyed when the Chinese filtered into the area around 300 BC and finally imposed colonization on the people of the Tonkin Delta.



Prehistoric Mythology

The movement and changing cultures of early Vietnam are explained through myths which give historians insight into what

might have happened in the Dong Son era. The most well-known origin myth says the first Vietnamese people originated from the marriage of a dragon father and a fairy mother who had 100 sons. Because the dragon was a water creature and the fairy was a land creature, they decided they could no longer stay together. The fairy mother took 50 sons to the highlands, and the dragon father took 50 sons to the coast. One of the sons who went with the dragon father became the founder of the *Hung Dynasty* which is thought to have existed from as early as 2769 BC until 100 AD.

The 50 sons who went to the coast are considered to be the people of the *Lac Kingdom*. According to historians and archaeologists, the Lac people were coastal people who had developed a sophisticated agricultural society from as early as 1500 BC. The Hungs, as depicted in the mythology, were mountain people who are believed to have had a reciprocal agreement with the Lac Kingdom so that the Hungs protected the Lacs from aggressive mountain groups in return for rice and other crops grown on the coastal plains of the Red River. These mythological stories, which in many cases can be matched with archaeological remains, tell of the joining of fire and water, or the earth people and the water people. The joining of these two elements has both historical and religious meaning. Many historians believe that the original people of Vietnam came both overland and across the water bringing different cultures, languages, and types of people together in the Tonkin Delta.

Some historians believe that the water god of the Dong Son people was the frog, which might explain the many frogs found on the Dong Son drums and might indicate that the first Dong Son people arrived in Vietnam by sea. Later this symbol was changed to the dragon following Chinese mythology. These origin myths were not written down by the Vietnamese people until about the 13th century AD, long after the Vietnamese had been colonized by the Chinese.

Origin myths also show how the early Vietnamese people saw themselves in terms of their environment. Since water and sun were the most important elements of nature, they were incorporated into their mythology in a way which gave the people and the elements a common origin. Much of early Vietnamese religion involved nature and human relationships with their surroundings. The early Vietnamese people compared the soil, the water, and the sun to God. In these elements there was energy which benefitted the people and the greater power to help or to destroy. At times this power was compared to that

of a child who may cause great destruction without even realizing it.

In the earliest times people believed in ghosts and spirits which were thought to dwell in every tree, stone, mountain, cloud, stream, and animal. Rocks and mountains were thought to be able to multiply. These spirits were said to be the wandering souls of the dead--the ancestors of the people who had settled nearby. This type of religion is known as an *ancestor cult*.

Because the ancestor spirits were the medium between living people and the greater forces of nature, they had to be honored in rituals and sacrifices in order to maintain harmony between the elements, the spirits, the ancestors, and the people. Later, as the Vietnamese people were converted to *Buddhism*, *Taoism*, and then *Confucianism* by the Chinese, most villagers maintained these original beliefs--especially those involving ancestor cults--and incorporated them into the new religions. This is an example of "creative borrowing" by a people while their own culture remains a strong underlying force.

Cultural and Historical Influences From The South: Champa

Vietnam today is characterized by two major river deltas, the *Red River Delta* in the north and the *Mekong River Delta* in the south. In prehistoric times a kingdom formed along the coasts north of the Mekong River Delta. It was composed of Malayo-Polynesian people and was highly influenced by Indian and Indonesian traders and religious people. This area developed into the kingdom of *Champa* which was similar to other *Hindu-Buddhist civilizations* which were being formed in Indonesia, Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia.

Champa did not become an established kingdom until 192 AD after which time it became quite advanced with walled cities, books and archives, palaces, and monuments, many of which were built by slaves. Residents of Champa were able to grow two crops of rice per year with a sophisticated system of irrigation which was overseen by a water chief, someone selected to monitor the irrigation ditches and canals.

While some cities in Champa remained centers of religion and trade, this kingdom was mostly made up of small territories in river valleys and on coastal plains, each with a local ruler who was seen by his subjects as a representative of the gods. The height of Cham civilization occurred during the 6th to 8th centuries. At this time, much trading occurred between the *Chams* and the highlanders who needed salt as well as with coastal villages in Vietnam and with China. Important trade

items included elephant and rhinoceros tusks, cardamom, bee wax, aromatic woods and *betel nut*. However, when times were not going well in the small coastal city-states, the people turned to looting and pirating in other coastal towns of Champa and Vietnam. After centuries of these pirate raids, the Vietnamese began to fight back and eventually conquered Champa, but not before many aspects of Cham society were incorporated into the societies of Vietnam.

Cultural and Historical Influences From The North: China

Before the Chinese actually colonized Vietnam, groups from southern China began to move into the Tonkin Delta in order to start new lives after being forced to leave their homelands. Thus, around the 3rd century BC, changes in China began to heavily influence the Dong Son culture which was thriving in Vietnam. One important series of changes occurred along the Yangtze River in southern China. According to historians, in 333 BC, three cultures, the *Shu*, the *Ch'u*, and the *Yueh* began to fight among themselves, causing the Yueh to move south in small scattered kingdoms. At the same time, the central power of northern China, the *Ch'in Dynasty*, began to split so that a large number of princes and members of the aristocracy also moved south to start their own small kingdoms.

The people of the Red River civilizations, also known as Lac society, began to feel the effects of these newcomers who gradually moved into their homelands. Many historians believe that it was not difficult for the Yueh to be incorporated into Lac society. However, the Lac lords began to fight with the Ch'in princes. While they were involved in this fighting, another group from the northwest, the Thuc (who had once been the Shu of the Yangtze River) took advantage of weakness in the area and asserted their authority. The legendary king of the Thuc family, *An Duong* led attacks in 214 BC, created a capital in the city of *Co Loa*, and built a famous *citadel*, the remains of which can still be seen today.

An Duong's arrival explains the origins of the legendary Au Lac kingdom which is usually associated with the height of Dong Son civilization. The Ou or Au people had also arrived in the area of the Red River along with the Yueh people, and King An Duong's reign in the area united these many different groups under the name of *Au Lac*.

What is clear to historians about these last three centuries BC is the amount of rapid change which occurred, much of which is depicted on the Dong Son drums. It was usually members of the

aristocracy of various groups who streamed into the area of the Red River. They attempted to live the lives to which they had been accustomed, bringing technology, food, and other customs with them to Vietnam. In addition, the newcomers wanted power of their own. After An Duong united various groups in the area, more deposed leaders of the Ch'in Dynasty (which was now losing to the emerging *Han Dynasty* in China) arrived in the area. One Ch'in leader, Chao T'o, defeated An Duong and divided the area of the Tonkin Delta into two prefects, Giao Chi and Cuu Chan in 111 BC. The Lac lords, or leaders of the Au Lac kingdom, retained their power for a while. However, this marked the end of life as the Au Lacs or Dong Son people knew it, and the beginning of the long period of Chinese colonization. Chinese people and influence gradually filtered into the area and created lasting changes for the people considered today as members of the original Vietnamese society. Exactly what life was like for these people can only be known through the piecing together of myths, elements of language, and archaeological remains. Because Chinese colonization lasted for about 1000 years, knowledge of the early society is extremely important to the Vietnamese people of today who are interested in their heritage. Until recently, the Chinese had claimed that all of Vietnamese culture and indeed, the Vietnamese people had arrived from China. As more recent data indicates, the people of the Red River Delta came overland from the west and across the water from the east, rather than from the north. Even though the original Vietnamese culture developed from a number of merging cultures in the area of the Red River, it is the Dong Son or Au Lac civilization which marks the beginning of the Vietnamese civilization which continues to thrive today.

Glossary

Ancestor cult: a belief or custom in which the spirits of the ancestors were considered to roam the land where their remaining family lives. Ancestors were frequently honored and appeased with food and gifts at celebrations, as they are thought to retain power over the living.

Aristocracy: government by a privileged class or an elite through birth; any class which justifies itself as occupying a position above the rest of the community

Bas-relief: sculptures with figures projecting only slightly from the surface; low relief

Betel nut: a nut from the areca palm which is husked, boiled, and dried, then wrapped in a leaf from the betel pepper plant

and chewed, making the mouth red and producing a mild stimulation

Bronze Age: from about 3500 BC to 200 BC; an era of human development when people began to use bronze, an alloy made from copper and tin. In Vietnam, Bronze Age peoples made the Dong Son drums.

Citadel: a fortress which commands a city and acts as a defense to the outside

Cordillera: an extensive chain of mountains

Dry rice agriculture(see shifting cultivation)

Feudalistic society: a system of political organization having as its basis the relation of lord to vassal with all land held in fee and as chief characteristics homage, the service of tenants under arms and in court, wardship, and forfeiture.

Glacier: a large body of ice which expands, moves, and spreads, carrying and pushing debris along its path

Ice Age: period when northern and southern parts of the globe were frozen into glaciers while ocean levels dropped around the equator (12,000-8000 BC)

Negritos: a group of short, dark-skinned, curly-haired people who lived in many different areas of Southeast Asia, including the Tonkin Delta during the Early Neolithic Period

Neolithic Age: latter part of the stone age; in Vietnam, period when stone and more advanced tools were used and societies were first being formed (8000-800 BC)

Origin myths: stories passed down through generations which explain a society's understanding of nature, the meaning of the universe, and humanity

Paddies: knee-deep ponds separated by dikes where rice is grown

Pleistocene Age: period in time between one million years ago and about ten thousand years ago when the earth and animal life were developing

Sarong: clothing worn by both men and women in parts of Southeast Asia; a wide piece of cloth wrapped around the waist which falls past the knees, usually of special design

Shifting cultivation: method of agriculture where the foliage on a piece of land is burned and rice and other crops are planted in the fertile ash-soil; method usually utilized by small groups who move every two or three years so the indigenous foliage can grow again

Top soil: top layer of soil which contains valuable nutrients

Wet rice agriculture: rice-growing which usually occurs near rivers or in swampy environments; rice is planted in paddies filled through complex irrigation systems which involve careful maintenance of canals, ditches, and dikes

Important People and Places

An Duong: first king of the newly merged Au Lac kingdom in 214 BC who built a famous citadel at Co Loa

Au Lac: kingdom of Vietnamese mythology which was probably a Dong Son society

Bac Son: archaeological site where remains of the Middle Neolithic Period of Vietnam were found

Champa: Hindu-Buddhist kingdom south of Vietnam which was formed in 192 AD and reached its peak of civilization in the 6th-8th centuries

Chams: people of Champa

Ch'u: a group from the Yangtze River area in Southern China who defeated another group, the Yueh, pushing them south into the Tonkin Delta

Co Loa: early city from Au Lac times where famous citadel was built by An Doung

Han Dynasty: Chinese Dynasty from 202 BC-220 AD

Hoa Binh Caves: archaeological site along the Red River where remains from negritos of the early Neolithic Period have been found

Hung Dynasty: legendary early Vietnamese dynasty; probably from about 2769 BC to about 258 BC

Lac Kingdom: mythological kingdom which may be the same as the Hung kingdom

Muong people: indigenous people of mountainous areas of Vietnam who were not affected by Chinese and French colonization

Quynh Luu: archaeological site along the Red River where shell mounds were found under which bodies were buried in an upright seated position

Red River Basin: river basin in the Tonkin Delta; site of many prehistoric archaeological remains

Sa Huynh: archaeological site from 4000-1000 BC south of the Tonkin Delta where shell mounds, tools, funerary jars, and ornamental beads were found

Shu: a group from the Yangtze River area in southern China who were defeated by the Ch'u and moved south starting the Thuc kingdom

Southeast Asia: area south of China and east of India which today is comprised of these countries: Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam

Sunda Shelf: geographical area in seas surrounding parts of Southeast Asia which is characterized by relatively shallow and calm waters

Tonkin Delta: area where the Red and other rivers meet the ocean

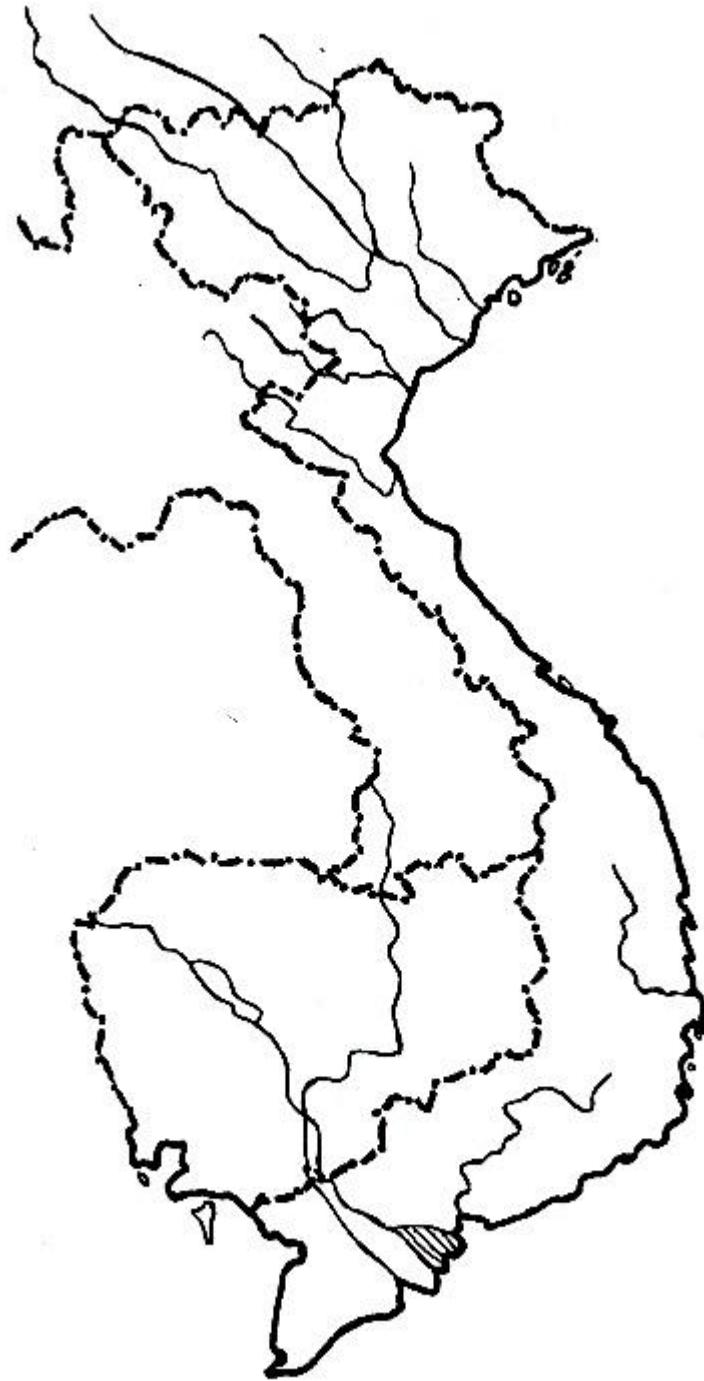
Yueh: group of people from Southern China who moved into Lac territory

Exercises

Map Exercises

Directions: Use the maps and accompanying text in this chapter as references. Then, on the two maps which follow, locate the areas indicated below.

MAP #1: Prehistoric Sites in Vietnam



MAP #5a
49A

1. Label the Red River and Black River.
2. Draw a circle around the Tonkin Delta area.
3. Put an "x" where remains of negritos have been found in Vietnam and name this area.

4. Put stars in the areas where remains of Bronze Age civilization has been found and name this culture.
5. Locate sites where shell mounds have been found and name the area in which these people originated.
6. Indicate with stripes the approximate area off the coast of Vietnam which was possibly a land mass during the Ice Age.
7. Indicate with dots the approximate area off the coast of Vietnam which is part of the Sunda Shelf.

MAP #2: Vietnam and Surrounding Areas



8. Label all the countries outlined on the map.
9. Indicate with stripes which countries are part of Southeast Asia.
10. Label the capitals of the countries of Southeast Asia, using arrows if necessary.
11. Color in the approximate area of the Sunda Shelf.

12. Draw lines indicating possible migration routes of early people across mainland areas of Asia.

Match the Columns--Prehistoric Civilization

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| ___1. Dong Son drums | A. Period when glaciers formed and ocean levels dropped |
| ___2. Wet rice agriculture | B. Area where negritos lived and used stone tools in prehistoric times |
| ___3. Millennium | C. Country to the north of Vietnam |
| ___4. Highland groups | D. Society in which wealthy families live off work of peasants |
| ___5. An Duong | E. King associated with the Co Loa citadel |
| ___6. Glacier | F. Developed with Bronze Age civilization |
| ___7. Hoa Binh Caves | G. People who avoided French and Chinese colonization |
| ___8. Ice Age | H. When kingdom of Champa was formed |
| ___9. Sunda Shelf | I. Makes teeth red when chewed |
| ___10. Bronze Age | J. Site of early Vietnamese civilizations |
| ___11. Champa | K. Hindu-Buddhist kingdom south of Vietnam |
| ___12. Sarong | L. Remnants of Bronze Age civilization |
| ___13. Red River | M. Period of 1000 years |
| ___14. China | N. Piece of material wrapped around waist |

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| ___15. Neolithic | O. Fortress |
| ___16. Aristocracy | P. Shallow ocean area near Southeast Asia |
| ___17. Citadel | Q. Age of Dong Son civilization |
| ___18. 192 AD | R. Legendary civilization in 2769 BC |
| ___19. Hung Dynasty | S. Giant, moving ice formation |
| ___20. Betel nut | T. Era when stone tools were first used |

Multiple Choice Questions--Prehistoric Civilizations

Circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. Early Chinese historians who encountered the Vietnamese of prehistoric times described them as
 - A. barbarians who were almost naked
 - B. shorter than Chinese people.
 - C. having high technological and artistic skill.
2. This is **not** depicted on the Dong Son drums:
 - A. warfare
 - B. kings of the Han Dynasty
 - C. frogs
3. This legendary kingdom was thought to be the same as the civilization known as Dong Son:
 - A. Hung
 - B. Lac
 - C. Au Lac
4. The Dong Son civilization took place during Vietnam's
 - A. Ice Age.
 - B. Bronze Age.
 - C. Pleistocene Age.
5. This group of people did **not** migrate into Vietnam's Tonkin Delta:
 - A. the Chams
 - B. the Yueh
 - C. members of the Ch'in Dynasty
6. During the Pleistocene Age,
 - A. civilizations occurred down the eastern coast of Vietnam.
 - B. people travelled across Southeast Asia and settled in Vietnam.
 - C. glaciers froze and caused ocean levels to drop.

7. In the prehistoric sites discovered at Sa Huynh, people were buried
- A. under mollusk-shell heaps.
 - B. in coffins.
 - C. in funerary jars.
8. Which came first?
- A. Later Neolithic Age
 - B. Bronze Age
 - C. Pleistocene Age
9. This is **not** part of the shifting cultivation process:
- A. burning the fields as a way of clearing them
 - B. maintaining irrigation dikes in the paddies
 - C. moving to a new area every 2-3 years
10. The power of nature in prehistoric Vietnam was sometimes compared with
- A. that of a child who might cause great destruction without realizing it.
 - B. that of a dragon who held a grudge against the Au Lac people.
 - C. that of ancestors who were resentful because they were dead.
11. No one can really be sure about what happened in prehistoric Vietnam because
- A. all written historical records from that time period were destroyed by floods.
 - B. the Chinese will not release records of what happened at that time.
 - C. Chinese colonists wanted to portray the Vietnamese people as less advanced and therefore painted an inaccurate picture.
12. Ocean levels near the equator dropped during the Ice Age because
- A. it did not rain for several years.
 - B. glaciers moved in and deposited silt.
 - C. glaciers and icebergs formed in the far north.
13. Historians and archaeologists believe that the prehistoric peoples of Southeast Asia
- A. had a balanced diet which included meat, fish, rice, grains, fruits and vegetables.
 - B. did not grow tall because of a lack of protein and other nutrients in their diet.
 - C. were hunter-gatherers who roamed the countryside in search of berries and water buffalo.
14. This was **not** the site of a Hindu-Buddhist civilization in prehistoric times:
- A. Indonesia
 - B. Champa
 - C. China
15. The first stone tools used in Southeast Asia were made during

- A. the Neolithic Age.
- B. the Ice Age.
- C. the Early Pleistocene Age.

Fill in the Blanks--Prehistoric Civilizations

Fill in the blanks with appropriate words or phrases. In some cases, more than one answer may be appropriate.

1. The type of philosophy which involves the belief that the wandering souls of dead relatives controlled events is known as the _____.
2. Feudalism involves the rule of the society by a(n) _____ which collects its wealth from _____.
3. Origin myths are _____.
4. Some crops which were grown in Southeast Asia as early as 6800 BC include: _____
5. An ideal climate for early residents of the Tonkin Delta made them successful farmers. This climate is characterized by:_____
6. The Tonkin Delta is an area where the _____ River meets the _____ Sea.
7. The Neolithic Period in Vietnam resulted in the evolution of prehistoric peoples from their use of _____ tools in 8,000 BC to the use of _____, _____, and _____ by 800 BC
8. Ponds which are divided by dikes where rice is grown in Vietnam are known as _____.
9. Life was depicted on the Dong Son drums by means of _____.
10. Warfare was depicted on the Dong Son drums by _____.
11. The _____ people of Vietnam live in the highlands of Vietnam and sometimes still use _____.
12. According to Vietnamese origin myths, people originated from a marriage between a _____ father and a _____ mother.
13. The Chinese colonized Vietnam for about _____ years.
14. People who practice shifting cultivation or dry rice agriculture must move every 2-3 years because _____
15. It is thought that during the Ice Age, the Sunda Shelf looked like a _____.

General and Essay Questions--Prehistoric Civilization

1. List at least five aspects of life which were depicted on the Dong Son drums: _____

2. Explain how origin myths were closely related to the way of life for the prehistoric people of Vietnam: _____
3. Give the major reasons for the migration of people throughout Vietnam and Southern China in the last centuries BC and the first centuries AD.

4. Explain three differences between wet and dry rice agriculture. _____
5. List at least three different types of people who probably migrated into Vietnam. _____, _____,

Answers to the Exercises

Match the Columns--Prehistoric

- L 1. Dong Son drums
- F 2. wet rice agriculture
- M 3. millennium
- G 4. highland groups
- E 5. An Duong
- S 6. Glacier
- B 7. Hoa Binh Caves
- A 8. Ice Age
- P 9. Sunda Shelf
- Q 10. Bronze Age
- K 11. Champa
- N 12. sarong
- J 13. Red River
- C 14. China
- T 15. Neolithic
- D 16. Aristocracy
- O 17. Citadel
- H 18. 192 AD
- R 19. Hung Dynasty
- I 20. Betel nut

Multiple Choice Questions--Prehistoric

1. A
2. B
3. C
4. B
5. A
6. B
7. A
8. C
9. B
10. A
11. C
12. C
13. A
14. C
15. A

Answers--Fill in the Blanks--Prehistoric

1. The type of religion which involves the belief that the wandering souls of dead relatives controlled events is known as the **ancestor cult**.
2. Feudalism involves the rule of the society by a(n) **ruling class/ruling family/aristocracy** which collects its wealth from **peasants/villagers** .
3. Origin myths are **myths about the creation of society / stories about the origin, beginning of the people, group**.
4. Some crops which were grown in Southeast Asia as early as 6800 BC include: **peas, almonds, beans, peppers, cucumbers**
5. An ideal climate for early residents of the Tonkin Delta made them successful farmers. This climate was characterized by: **plenty of sun, humid environment, plenty of rain** .
6. The Tonkin Delta is an area where the **Red** River meets the **South China** Sea.
7. The Neolithic Period in Vietnam resulted in the evolution of prehistoric peoples from their use of **stone** tools in 8,000 BC to the use of **bone needles, weights for weaving and fishing** and **simple spinning wheels** by 800 BC.
8. Ponds which are divided by dikes where rice is grown in Vietnam are known as **paddies**.
9. Life was depicted on the Dong Son drums by means of **etchings in bas relief** .
10. Warfare was depicted on the Dong Son drums by **dancing men in feather headdresses holding spears**.
11. The **Muong** people of Vietnam live in the highlands of Vietnam and sometimes still use **Dong Son drums**.

12. According to Vietnamese origin myths, people originated from a marriage between a **dragon** father and a **fairy** mother.
13. The Chinese colonized Vietnam for about **1000** years.
14. People who practice shifting cultivation or dry rice agriculture must move every 2-3 years because **dry rice agriculture quickly depletes the nutrients in the topsoil of the land** .
15. It is thought that during the Ice Age, the Sunda Shelf looked like a **giant salt plain** .

Answers--General and Essay Questions--Prehistoric

1. List at least five aspects of life which were depicted on the Dong Son drums:
agriculture, warfare, music (playing instruments, playing the trumpet), boat-building, riding in boats, pounding rice, religion, houses
2. Explain how origin myths were closely related to the way of life for the prehistoric people of Vietnam:
Origin myths show how people saw themselves in terms of their environment because the sun and water, two of the most important elements of nature for the early Vietnamese, are also the two elements from which, according to the myths, the Vietnamese people originated. (Important concepts: earth, fire, and water; people originating from the land and the sea)
3. Give the major reasons for the large amount of movement throughout Vietnam and Southern China in the last centuries BC and the first centuries AD:
Cultures were expanding. The Ch'in Dynasty was having internal troubles. The Han Dynasty was having internal troubles and Han princes wanted to find power bases somewhere else. People needed more land. New technologies developed. Individual leaders wanted more power.
4. Explain three differences between wet and dry rice agriculture:
Wet rice is grown in wet fields, fields of water, paddies. Wet rice agriculture is practiced on lowlands, relies on flooding, is near rivers for easier irrigation, has canals and irrigation ditches, needs a lot of maintenance, requires an organized society, people usually stay in one place.
Dry rice agriculture is also known as shifting cultivation. It is done on dry fields which are first burned. People must move every 2 to 5 years. They usually live in small groups, often in mountainous or upland areas.

5. List at least three different types of people who probably migrated into Vietnam: Chinese, Malaysian, Thai, Austronesian, negrito, Malayo-Polynesian, Cham, Indonesian

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