Introduction

Ancient Studies in Vietnam: The Late Professor Nishimura's Area Studies and the Integration of Archaeology and History

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Nishimura Masanari was born in 1965 in Shimonoseki City, Yamaguchi Prefecture, Japan. He graduated from the Department of Archaeology at the University of Tokyo in 1990, at the age of twenty-five, and undertook fieldwork in Nghĩa Đàn District, Nghệ An Province, as a member of the Japan-Vietnam joint research team excavating ancient graves. His doctoral thesis concerned Vietnamese archaeology and ancient civilization. He learned the Vietnamese language and adopted the Vietnamese name Lý Văn Sỹ, jokingly given by his Vietnamese colleagues, and spent the last twenty-three years of his life in the study of Vietnamese archaeology, from the Neolithic through the Iron Age up to the twentieth century. He died tragically on June 9, 2013, while riding a motorcycle on the way to an excavation at the Dam Pagoda of Bac Ninh Province. He was posthumously awarded the Friendship Medal by Vietnam's president, Truong Tan Sang, and the Commemoration Medal by the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.

One of Dr. Nishimura's most important works was a book entitled *Archaeology and Ancient History of Vietnam*, published in 2011.¹ This general work, which integrated data from archaeology, history, and anthropology, was awarded a prize by the Japan Society for Southeast Asian Studies for its contribution to our knowledge of Southeast Asian history. Dr. Nishimura wrote prolifically on a wide range of subjects. In the realm of prehistory, one of his finds that was especially prized by the Vietnamese was the first example of a mold used for making bronze drums in Vietnam. Although it was long considered highly probable that drums of a type termed Dongson, after a site in northern Vietnam, had been made in that vicinity, his discovery of part of a mold for casting drums in November 1998 provided the first piece of evidence

1 *Betonamu no Koko-Kodaigaku* (Archaeology and Ancient History of Vietnam) (Tokyo: Doseisha, 2011).

to confirm this hypothesis. His publications on Vietnamese late prehistory are as follows:

“Chronology of the Neolithic Age in Southern Vietnam.” *Journal of Southeast Asian Archaeology* 22 (2002): 25–57.

“Excavation of An Son: A Neolithic Mound Site in the Middle Reach of the Vàm Cỏ Đông River, Southern Vietnam” (with Nguyễn Kim Dung). *Bulletin of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association* 22 (2002): 101–109.

“Chronological Framework from the Palaeolithic to Iron Age in the Red River Plain and the Surrounding.” Paper presented at the International Conference on Prehistoric Archaeology in South China and Southeast Asia, Guilin, China, 2003.

“Chronology of the Metal Age in the Southern Vietnam.” *Journal of Southeast Asian Archaeology* 25 (2005): 105–147.

“Recent Problems of the Iron Age to Early Historic Period between Thailand and Vietnam.” Paper presented at a seminar on Vietnamese archaeology, Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, July 2008.

“Bronze Drums Unearthed around the South China Sea and Their Cultural Context.” *Vietnam Archaeology* 3 (2008 [pub. 2009]): 73–83.

The Excavation of Đa Kai: A Neolithic Circular Settlement Site in the Upper Reach of the Đồng Nai River, Southern Vietnam (with Nguyễn Duy Tỳ and Nguyễn Xuân Lý). Southeast Asian Archaeology Data Monograph 1. Shimonoseki: The Foundation to Safeguard the Underground Cultural Heritage in Southeast Asia, 2009.

Another area of his research concerned the construction of early walled sites and the related problem of early urbanization and settlement patterns. The Red River Plain of northern Vietnam is one of the most densely populated and intensively cultivated regions in Southeast Asia. The geomorphology of the plain has exerted interesting effects on human settlement over the past three thousand years. Nishimura's publications on these subjects include the following:

“Re-examination of the Lung Khe Citadel in the Red River Delta.” In Japanese with English summary. *Southeast Asia: History and Culture* 30 (2001): 46–71.

“Settlement Patterns on the Red River Plain from the Late Prehistoric Period to the 10th Century AD.” *Bulletin of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory*

Association 25 (2002): 99–107. <http://journals.lib.washington.edu/index.php/BIPPA/article/view/11920>.

“An Archaeological Study of Settlement Formation in the Red River Plain: The Case of Bach Coc and the Surrounding Area” (with Nishino Noriko). Paper presented at the workshop “Vietnamese Peasants’ Activity: An Interaction between Culture and Nature,” Leiden University, 2002.

“Some Considerations on the Change of Site Distribution Pattern in the Red River Plain.” In *The Data Collection of Archaeological Sites in the Red River Plain*, edited by Nishimura Masanri and Nishino Noriko, 267–309. Report submitted to the Scientific Research Fund of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2003.

The Data Collection of Archaeological Sites in the Red River Plain (with N. Nishino). Report submitted to the Scientific Research Fund of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2003.

The study of settlement patterns and urbanization in Nishimura’s research was linked to the study of ceramics. In a paper presented at a conference held at the Institute for Cultural Interaction Studies at Kansai University in 2007, entitled “On the Possibility of Interdisciplinary Research in the Area Surrounding Huế Citadel: Cultural Contact, Transmission, and Interaction from the Standpoint of Archaeological or Material Culture Research Focusing on Vietnam and Surrounding Regions,”² Dr. Nishimura suggested a framework for examining the complex processes of cultural contact, transmission, and interaction through research in Vietnam and surrounding regions on bronze drums in pre-history. He demonstrated how Southeast Asian ceramics from the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries provide opportunities to investigate topics such as trade routes in the East China Sea and Southeast Asia, and citadel ruins and burial customs in Vietnam, Guangxi, and Yunnan. Articles which he published on ceramics include the following:

“Preliminary Study on the Pottery Decoration in the Vam Co River Basin” (with Vương Thu Hồng). *Journal of Southeast Asian Archaeology* 17 (1997): 78–90.

“Chronological Sequence for Late 14th to Early 15th Century Vietnamese Ceramics from Bãi Hàm Rồng, Kim Lan and Hồ Citadel” (with Nishino Noriko). *Journal of Southeast Asian Archaeology* 23 (2003): 145–163.

² <http://www.icis.kansai-u.ac.jp/en/souseio3.html>.

“The Roof Tiles in the Later Period of Champa: A Consideration for Its Origin and Diffusion.” *Journal of East Asian Cultural Interaction Studies* 3 (2010): 433–457.

Dr. Nishimura was not content to be a purely academic archaeologist. He also became intimately involved with the public side of archaeology in Vietnam. Masanari and his wife Nishino Noriko worked tirelessly for twelve years to build site museums at Duong Xa hamlet, Van An village, Yen Phong District, Bach Ninh Province; and Kim Lan village, Gia Lam District, Hanoi. In a presentation entitled “Keys for the Future of the Cultural Heritages in Vietnam: Comprehensive Research, Cooperation with Local Agencies and Building of Manpower” at the Cultural Resource Studies Asian Linkage Building Seminar held in Kanazawa University in 2010,³ he spoke at length the importance of cultural heritage management and conservation, and public archaeology. In order to preserve the Duong Xa kiln site, which was excavated in 1999, in 2000 he organized the Foundation to Safeguard the Underground Cultural Heritage in Southeast Asia to solicit donations to protect sites. This NGO raised funds from Japanese organizations and individuals. The village government provided a site and some materials for a site museum. Villagers volunteered to help transfer ancient kilns to the museum site. In 2009 the local government officially took responsibility for continuing to operate the museum.

Dr. Nishimura undertook excavations at another pottery kiln site, Kim Lan, near the famous kilns of Bát Tràng, in 2001 and 2003. Local elders took a strong interest in the project and collected information on historical documents, monuments, and relics in the village. Nixi (as Dr. Nishimura was called by his friends) collaborated with them in the study of oral history, ethnography, documentary research, and traditional ceramic production. In 2003 his foundation started raising money for another site museum. In 2009 the Hanoi city government provided additional funding for the project.

From 2004 to 2007 Nixi worked at the Thang Long citadel site in Hanoi, where artifacts span the period from the seventh to the nineteenth century, and a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage inscription for the site was proposed. He tried to create a joint team of local and Japanese specialists in archaeology, material conservation, architecture, and survey, but noted some difficulties in implementing the project.

With funding from the Toyota Foundation, he started a field school for Vietnamese archaeologists, museum curators, and cultural heritage management officers. The field school conducted sessions at the famous Dong Son

3 http://crs.w3.kanazawa-u.ac.jp/other/doc/02_5_lecturer%20paper_nishimura.pdf.

site in 2007, 2008, and 2009. Field trips to Thailand and South China were incorporated into the field school. Chinese as well as Japanese archaeologists participated in the instruction, and some graduate students from Silpakorn University, Thailand, also took part. They presented the results of their work at the Nineteenth Congress of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association in Hanoi in 2009. In the same year, Thai and British archaeologists were invited to join a seminar on public archaeology held in Hanoi. In the conclusion of his address at the conference, Nixi stressed the importance of co-operation with local people in ensuring the success of excavation and conservation.

As a final example of the breadth of Dr. Nishimura's research, one can cite his work on tea in its historical context in East Asia (with Otsuki Yoko, Shinohara Hirokata, Okamoto Hiromichi, Miyake Miho, Miyajima Junko, Kumano Hiroko, Hino Yoshihiro, and Sato Minoru).⁴ This article explores the history of the spread of tea from China to Korea and Japan, and its impact on the development of material culture such as Yue celadon and its local Vietnamese imitations from at least the tenth century; reactions to the importation of tea; religion, rites, and tea; women and tea; and tea in the context of cultural interaction studies.

To commemorate the wide range of interests and accomplishments of this archaeologist, a panel was organized at the Third Asian Association of World Historians Congress by Dr. Nishino Noriko and Dr. Ueda Shinya, sponsored by Osaka University and held in Singapore in May 2015, on the topic of "The Ancient Studies in Vietnam from the view of Integration of Archaeology and History." This issue of the *Asian Review of World Histories* contains revised versions of the papers presented at that panel.

The articles deriving from the panel deal with four main topics. The first topic is the Lung Khe citadel in Bac Ninh Province, in Northern Vietnam. Recent discoveries of a stone coffer and inscription support Dr. Nishimura's hypothesis that Lung Khe citadel was not the site of the citadels of Luy Lau or Long Bien, as hypothesized by some historians. Three articles by Pham Le Huy, Le Thi Lien, and Nishino Noriko explore various aspects of research at the important site of Lung Khe and its significance for the reconstruction of life and history and the relationship between northern and southern Vietnam at this transitional period from prehistory to history. The article by Do Truong Giang and his coauthors takes this subject further by addressing the second topic in this issue, the region of central and southern Vietnam once termed Champa.

4 "Tea in the Historical Context of East Asia: Cultural Interactions across Borders," translated by Jenine Heaton (Institute for Cultural Interaction Studies, Kansai University, 2010), http://kuir.jm.kansai-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10112/3386/1/4-1_Nishimura_etc.pdf.

The third topic explored here is that of ceramics. Dr. Nishino and her coauthors (four Japanese scholars and one Vietnamese underwater archaeologist) discuss the important discovery of the oldest shipwreck found in Vietnam, a vessel that sank around the early ninth century off Quang Ngai Province with a spectacular cargo of Chinese ceramics of the Tang Dynasty, many from the Changsha kiln complex. Dr. Nishimura was working on this material at the time of his death; the article included in this issue is the first significant publication on this site in English. The last topic, dealt with by Ueda Shinya and Nishino Noriko, focuses on village formation and a levee network in Bat Trang and Kim Lan villages, and refers to the age of commerce in early modern Vietnamese society.

The portion of this issue dedicated to Dr. Nishimura concludes with an article that takes us back to Kim Lan, where he and Dr. Nishino worked so hard to develop a site museum. The fact that so many scholars can find so much stimulation and inspiration in continuing the work of Dr. Nishimura is a reminder of what an important scholar he was, and how his legacy continues to influence the development of research of international significance in many areas of Vietnam today.