

The Thang Long Imperial Palaces: The Long Lost Treasures Revealed

Source:

<http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=219980>

These are some pictures of the massive archaeological findings at Hanoi. The artifacts here give a gleam of the ancient palaces, built by various Dynasties ranging from the Lý to Lê. These can be the proofs that the ancient architectures at the once named Thang Long Capital be more magnificent than the existing Imperial Palace at Huế.



A small part of the massive excavation site



Recovered artifacts on display



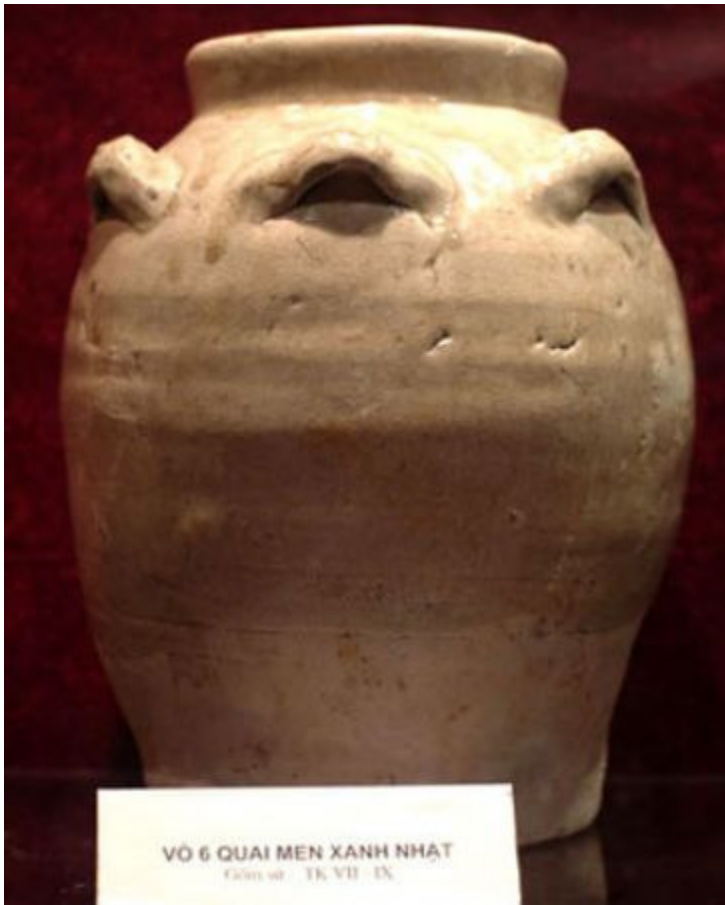
Dragon head from the Trần Dynasty (13th-14th Century)



A white-enamel pot from the Anterior Le Dynasty (15th century).



A green enamel plate from the Ly Dynasty (11th-12th Century)



A light-green enamel jar belonging to Dai La Citadel (7th-9th centuries)



A tile in the shape of a Bodhi-tree leaf with dragon designs from the Ly Dynasty (11th-12th centuries).



A brick from the Dinh-Anterior Le Dynasties (10th century).



A terracotta tile in the shape of a Bodhi-tree leaf with dragon designs from the Ly-Tran Dynasties (11th-14th centuries).



Statue of a love bird from the Tran Dynasty (12th-14th centuries).



Decorative tiles with dragon designs during the Ly Dynasty (1010-1225).



A tile with daisy design during the Ly Dynasty (1010-1225).



A water well from the Tran Dynasty (13th-14th centuries).











Story by Prof. Phan Huy Le (Published 2005)

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http://vietnam.vnagency.com.vn/VNP-Website/News_Detail/Default.asp?ID_Cat=43&ID_News=2273&language=EN&number=5&year=2005

The excavation covers an area of more than 16,000 sq.m., the largest archaeological dig ever seen in Vietnam and in Southeast Asia as well. It has uncovered a complex of relics and artefacts, plentiful and multiform, dating back to Dai La Citadel (7th-9th centuries), then Thang Long Citadel (11th-18th centuries), and Hanoi Citadel (19th century).

Thang Long - Hanoi is going to be a thousand years old in 2010, but through the passage

of time with so many historical events, the relics on the ground can be counted on the fingers of one hand. In the early 19th century, the Nguyen Dynasty moved its capital to Phu Xuan in Hue, and the royal citadel of Thang Long, contracted and shrank. It was established in the Vauban style, as a township of the northern Citadel and then the provincial town of Hanoi Province. In the late 19th century, the citadel was destroyed by the French, and only a few relics may be found, like the stone foundations of the 15th century, Kinh Thien Palace, Doan Mon Gate, Hau Lau Pavilion, the Northern Gate and the Cot Co (Flag Tower). The scientists, however, still hope the relics of the ancient Thang Long Capital City maybe preserved deep in the ground. The small-scale archaeological digs at Doan Mon Gate, Hau Lau Pavilion, the Northern Gate, yielding artefacts of the dynasties of Ly and Tran, boost this confidence. Yet, only after the much larger-scale archaeological excavations undertaken since December 2002 on the proposed sites of the new parliament building and the Ba Dinh Convention Hall (overlooking Hoang Dieu Avenue, Hoang Van Thu Boulevard, Doc Lap Road and Bac Son Street), has the belief been verified. The excavation covers an area of more than 16,000 sq.m., the largest archaeological dig ever seen in Vietnam and in Southeast Asia as well. It has uncovered a complex of relics and artefacts, plentiful and multiform, dating back to Dai La Citadel (7th-9th centuries), then Thang Long Citadel (11th-18th centuries), and Hanoi Citadel (19th century).

The excavation is on going and the archaeologists are labouring long and hard, classifying the artefacts and readying the scientific documents on the archaeological sites and artefacts. But in general terms, they have enough scientific foundations to make generalized presentations on the priceless historical and cultural values of this archaeological discovery.

The palace belonged to the western portion of the Thang Long Royal Citadel, during the dynasties of Ly, Tran, Anterior Le, Mac, and Le restored (11th- 18th centuries), from Dai La Citadel (7th-9th) to Hanoi Citadel (19th century). The relics reveal a historical period from the 7th to the 19th century, of three stages: Pre-Thang Long, Thang Long and Hanoi. The relics and cultural layers have piled up one on the other through the different historical periods, in a fairly continual manner.

The architectural relics include foundations, cornerstones, portions of brick walls, roads and tiled grounds, pebble groundworks, along with systems of drains and ditches, spring wells, traces of canals for royal boats, lotus lakes ...All of them indicate the grandeur and clear profile of part of the former Thang Long Imperial Citadel. The remnants of the foundations of a grand palace of the Ly - Tran dynasties show ten rows of cornerstones and nine pavilions, 62 metres in length and 27 metres across, far larger than the palaces in the ancient royal city of Hue and the other extant old monuments. Its pillars stood solid on cornerstones, with lotus engravings, a prominent characteristic of the Ly-Tran dynasties, all of them well laid on a groundwork of pebbles and broken bricks 1 metre in depth. Spring wells were also discovered, dating back to the periods from Dai La to the dynasties of Ly, Tran, Le and Nguyen. On the bank of a royal canal, an exotic architectural structure was unearthed, with six round foundation-stones surrounding a square corner-stone in the centre, seemingly the remnants of a hexagonal pavilion for

contemplation of the river view.

The artefacts are varied and in large numbers, including architectural materials like bricks (tiles, bricks, enamel tiles...), roofing tiles (tubes, flats...), cornerstones, sections of hardwood pillars; appliances used in the court, jewelry, Vietnamese ceramics and pottery of different periods, ceramics from China, Japan (Hizen dynasty), the Middle East; copper coins of different reigns; munitions (cannons, swords, knife-shape lances, arrows...). Quite a few articles are very rare and precious or have been discovered for the first time in the country. The tube tiles with terra-cotta statuettes for decoration of the roof-hems, with designs of the dragon, phoenix, mandarin lovebirds, leaves and flowers... look very beautiful and delicate. The court ceramics with the word "Quan"(mandarin) were of numerous categories and high standard. Pottery moulds were unearthed with faulty products sticking together, piling up into heaps, which bore proof of the presence of kilns in Thang Long capital city, churning out superior-quality ceramics. The bricks and tiles were inscribed with such words as "Giang Tay quan" (of the Chinese Tang dynasty), "Dai Viet quoc quan thanh chuyen" (the Dinh and Le dynasties of Vietnam), "Ly gia de tam de Long Thuy Thai Binh tu nien tao" (produced in the 4th year of Emperor Long Thuy Thai Binh III of the Ly dynasty - 1057). They also had the marks of different army corps like "Trang Phong quan", "Vu Ky quan", "Ho Uy quan", the names of different districts and villages such as "Thu Vat huyen, Thu Vat huong" and the names of palaces like "Truong Lac kho" (Truong Lac is the queen of King Le Thanh Tong). All the artefacts show the high technical and artistic standards of the Dai Viet Kingdom and its broad relations with the outside world.

In terms of history, this archaeological find provides priceless scientific data and information to determine the location of the centre of the former Thang Long - Dong Do - Dong Kinh Citadel, and a better understanding of the relations between Dai La Citadel and Thang Long Citadel under the dynasties of Ly, Tran and Le, and Hanoi Citadel, under the Nguyen. At the archaeological site, the remnants of Dai La Citadel were uncovered, proving the location belonged to Dai La Citadel.

Above the Dai La layer were archaeological traces and artefacts of the Ly Dynasty. All this bears proof of the fact that the monarch Ly Thai To had moved the capital from Hoa Lu to "Cao Vuong's former capital in Dai La Citadel", exactly as prescribed in "Chieu doi do" (Decree on Removal of the Capital), changing its name into Thang Long Citadel. He used the citadel and some other structures available in its early days, renovating it after that, and erecting new edifices later on. Under the Anterior Le, the centre of the imperial city was the Kinh Thien Palace, which was constructed in 1428 and rebuilt in 1465, with the marble verandah of dragon engravings put in place in 1467 that can still be seen in Hanoi Citadel today. The archaeological site lays to the west of Kinh Thien Palace. Under the Nguyen, Hanoi Citadel was built in 1805 by Emperor Gia Long, not only reducing its height, but shrinking its scale compared with the former imperial citadel of Thang Long. However the central axis of Doan Mon - Kinh Thien plus the Flag Tower and the Northern Gate were never changed.

By virtue of this archaeological find, the Government of Vietnam has made an official

decision to move Ba Dinh Convention Hall to a new site and permit the archaeologists to carry on their excavation. We are looking forward to more fresh archaeological finds. But all that has been uncovered already excites and thrills so many people who have had an opportunity to visit and behold the site, and even those who have only heard of the news and seen pictures of it over the mass media.