

# Structure of Thang Long Capital City and Location of Forbidden City over Historical Periods

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**Abstract:** In the paper, the author provides supplementary information to the issues of the structure of the Thang Long capital city with its changes through historical periods. The citadel, with its three enclosed citadels/ramparts, witnessed ups and downs from the Ly dynasty (1009-1226) to the Restored Le dynasty (1593 - 1789). The outer citadel was called “Dai La” or “La” citadel, the middle citadel was called “Long” (Dragon), or “Phuong” (Phoenix) citadel during the Ly and Tran dynasties, “Imperial Citadel” under the Le dynasty, and the inner citadel had the name of “Cam” (Forbidden) or “Cung” (Palace) citadel. According to historical and archaeological data, the archaeological site unearthed at No. 18, Hoang Dieu Street is located in proximity to the centre of the Forbidden Citadel. It is highly significant that the Forbidden Citadel of the Le dynasty was located nearly in the same position as the one of the Ly and Tran periods. As a result, many architectural relics and artefacts with typical features of the imperial palaces of the capital of Thang Long from 1010 to 1788 were found at the archaeological site and the location of the ancient Hanoi citadel.

**Keywords:** Thang Long, capital city, Imperial Citadel, Forbidden City, Kinh Thien.

## 1. Structure of Thang Long capital city

I had an opportunity to present research findings on the structure of Thang Long (Vietnamese: *Thăng Long*) capital city and Hanoi citadel, contributing to the determination of the location of the Thang Long Imperial Citadel archaeological vestige site at No. 18, Hoang Dieu St. [11, pp.31-56; 12, pp.757-810]. In this monograph, I would like to deliver some additional points

on the structure of the Imperial Citadel (*Hoàng thành*) of Thang Long, focusing on Thang Long Forbidden City (*Cấm thành*) and its changes over historical periods. While mentioning, to a necessary extent, some architectural works inside the Forbidden City, I will neither make a detailed description of the architecture and composition of royal courts, nor study the political, social and architectural relations between the Forbidden City and the outside, though there were various structural and

historical relations between them. Instead, my goal is to continue affirming that the vestige site of Thang Long Imperial Citadel and Hanoi citadel are located inside the central area of Thang Long Forbidden City over historical periods.

Soon after setting up the capital in Thang Long, the Ly dynasty (1009-1226) carried out construction of the new capital, building palaces, castles and citadel walls. Under the dynasty, the “triple-citadel structure” was clearly shaped. In history, Co Loa citadel built by King An Duong Vuong in the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC also had the same triple-citadel structure, comprising three areas named by local people as the innermost citadel, the middle citadel, and the outermost citadel. As for Thang Long citadel, the triple-citadel structure was maintained from the Ly dynasty to the Restored Le (or Later Le dynasty warlord, Vietnamese: *Lê trung hưng*) period (1593-1789), but some changes were also made over the periods. In general, the outermost citadel was named Dai La or La Thanh; the middle one was named *Long thành* (Dragon citadel), *Phượng thành* (Phoenix citadel) or *Long Phượng thành* (Dragon-Phoenix citadel) under the Ly and Tran dynasties, and *Hoàng thành* (Imperial Citadel) under the Le dynasty; and, the innermost citadel was named *Cấm thành* (Forbidden City) or *Cung thành* (Royal palace citadel).

### 1.1. The outermost citadel named Dai La or La Thanh

As regards this citadel, research-based opinions basically do not much differ. It is a citadel surrounding the imperial city, which can be seen as the outermost ramparts to

defend the entire court and people inside the imperial citadel. In 1014, the Ly dynasty “built rammed earth walls along all the four sides of the imperial citadel” [34, II-7a, Vol. 1, p.244]. It was the first time the citadel was built, followed by a number of repairs afterwards. In 1078, it was repaired and named Dai La (*Đại La*). Generally speaking, the citadel was built along Nhi River in the east (i.e. the Red River, or *sông Hồng*; written in Chinese as 珥, it should have been pronounced as *Nhĩ*, but in reality commonly pronounced as *Nhị*), Tô Lịch River in the north and west, and Kim Ngưu River in the south. The citadel was surrounded by rivers along all the four sides, forming “a river rectangle” that played the role of a water transport system, drainage, and a natural moat. In addition to the function of protecting the citadel, the citadel wall was also used as the dyke for flood prevention. However, the rivers changed due to the erosion and extension of deposits as well as impacts of the natural conditions. Because of the movement and changes in Nhi River, the eastern part of the citadel varied considerably over historical periods, moving gradually towards the east. From the Ly dynasty to the Later Le dynasty early period (*Lê sơ*), the eastern part of Dai La citadel was located further to the west, compared to the dyke we can see at present. It was probably located in the place of the current Hoan Kiem Lake (the Sword Lake), which used to be a tributary of Nhi River. The locations of two important ports in Dai La citadel, including the East port/quay (or Dong Bo Dau port, located between what is now Hoe Nhai slope and Long Bien bridge) and Giang Khau gate (now the area of Cho

Gao and Nguyen Sieu streets), also changed till the 18<sup>th</sup> century. To Lich River was connected with the West Lake in the north via Ho Khau gate and with Nhi River via Giang Khau gate. In *Hồng Đức bản đồ* (Hong Duc map collection) as well as other maps in the Le and Nguyen dynasties, the river was drawn very clearly. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Nguyen dynasty started building the Vauban-styled fortification that adopted the name of Hanoi citadel in 1831. At that time, To Lich River was connected with the northwest moat of Hanoi citadel, before joining Nhi River in Giang Khau; i.e. the current location of Nguyen Sieu and Cho Gao streets. From 1895 to 1897, the French colonial government destroyed Hanoi citadel, filling in the moats and part of To Lich River from Thuy Khue to Giang Khau. Consequently, part of To Lich River running from Buoi (Vietnamese: *Buổi*) through Ho Khau to the current Tam Da slope became a small ditch. Previously, the west part of To Lich River joined Thien Phu River to get more water from Nhi River near Buoi junction, so it had a relatively great flow and a quite strong current. As time went by, the river was gradually filled with deposits. Although embankments were built along the river lately, it is seriously polluted due to the lack of a current. In the south, at the same time, Kim Nguu River was completely filled during the improvement of Yen So drainage system.

Under the Ly and Tran dynasties, Dai La citadel had some entrances, including Trieu Dong or Dong Bo Dau gate (somewhere between Hoe Nhai slope and the river), Tay Duong gate (in Cau Giay), Truong Quang gate (in Cho Dua), Cua Nam (Vietnamese: *Cửa Nam*, or South Gate - in Cau Den), and

Van Xuan gate (in Ong Mac – Vietnamese: *Ông Mạc*, or Dong Mac – Vietnamese: *Đông Mạc*).

In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, from the Mac dynasty (1527-1592) to the beginning of the Restored Le dynasty (1593-1789), Dai La citadel experienced some significant changes. During the Le – Mac civil war, in 1588 the Mac rulers “commanded the local troops in four *trấn* (regions) to entrench three sets of ramparts outside Dai La citadel in Thang Long, from Nhat Chieu ward across the West Lake, Dua bridge, and Den bridge (Vietnamese: *Cầu Dền*) to Thanh Tri district, reaching the north of Nhi River. The ramparts were some scores of “*trượng*” (Chinese: *zhang*, each *trượng* was equivalent to 4m during the Later Le dynasty) higher than Thang Long citadel; they were 25 *trượng* (100m) wide, comprising three moats; bamboos were also planted tens of miles long surrounding the citadel”, aiming at strengthening the defensive system of the imperial citadel [34, XVII-18b, Vol. 3, p.164]. As a result, three defensive ramparts were built outside Dai La citadel, of which the innermost was almost connected with Dai La citadel and the outermost one covered the West Lake. During fierce battles in the capital city in 1592, the Trinh Lord’s troops “destroyed completely several thousand *trượng* of the rammed earth citadel, chopping down all the defensive trees, filling in the moats and ditches, and levelling out the ramparts” for a few days, following the order given by the lord [34, XVII-29b, Vol. 3, p.173]. Then, Dai La citadel disappeared almost completely; and Thang Long capital city has, ever since, consisted of two citadels: the Imperial Citadel and the Forbidden City. It was a big change in the structure of the capital city late of the Mac dynasty and early in the period of the Restored Le dynasty.

In the time of the Restored Le dynasty, the power system also changed significantly. Besides the royal court of the Le kings, there was also a power system ruled by the Trinh lords. This led to the second change in the structure of the capital city. The royal court of the Le king, which existed nominally in the capacity of the monarchy of a united nation, for ceremonies and foreign relations, remained in the Forbidden City. Meanwhile, the Trinh lord, who held the real power, built a new complex of architectural works next to Hoan Kiem Lake. It was located inside the residential area of the capital city dwellers and outside the Imperial Citadel. Although the palace of the Trinh lord was also surrounded by defensive walls, it was more open in the space for eventful socio-economic activities conducted by people living in the wards/guilds and streets of the capital city. The King's Court and the Lord's Palace together created a new power structure as well as a big change in the structure of the capital city during the period of the Le kings and Trinh lords.

To cope with the threats from peasants' revolts in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, in 1749 Lord Trinh Doanh promulgated the order: "In our country, when the Ly dynasty moved the capital to Thang Long, Dai La citadel was built. Now, I want to rebuild it so that we will no longer worry about internal affairs, when we have to deal with external affairs"; and thus, local people from nine adjacent districts were mobilised to build Dai Do (Great Capital) citadel [35, p. 217]. The citadel had five entrances, including: An Hoa, Van Bao, Van Xuan, Thinh Quang, and Tho Khang, each of which had both left and right doors. According to *Khâm định Việt sử thông giám*

*cương mục* (Imperially Ordered Annotated Text Completely Reflecting the History of Viet), however, the citadel had eight entrances, each of which had both left and right doors [40, XL-33a, Vol. 2, p.601]. Dai Do citadel can be seen very clearly in *Hoài Đức phủ toàn đồ* (Complete Map of Hoài Duc Prefecture) drawn by Le Duc Loc and Nguyen Cong Tien in the 12<sup>th</sup> year of the rule of Emperor Minh Mang, (1831)<sup>2</sup>. According to the map, the wall of Dai Do citadel ran from what is now Yen Phu Road, along Thanh Nien Road and Hoang Hoa Tham Street, before turning around the west of Bach Thao (i.e. botanic garden) Park and running along Ngoc Ha Street to Kim Ma bus station. It then continued to run along Giang Vo, La Thanh, Dai Co Viet, and Tran Khat Chan streets to Dong Mac city gate (Vietnamese: *Ô Đống Mác*). In the east side, the citadel wall started from the bank of Nhi River, running from Yen Phu along Ben Nua and Nguyen Huu Huan, Ly Thai To, Le Thanh Tong, Hang Chuoi streets to Dong Mac gate. There were 16 gates around the citadel, including: Kim Hoa, Yen Tho, Thanh Lang, Nhan Hoa, Tay Long, Dong Yen, My Loc, Trung Thanh, Dong Ha, Phuc Lam, Thach Khoi, Yen Tinh, Yen Hoa, Tay Ho, Van Bao, and Thinh Quang<sup>3</sup>. In the maps of Hanoi drawn by Pham Dinh Bach in 1873 and released by the Indochinese agency of geology in 1916, the names of the 16 gates are noted with some changes in the place-names. The locations of the gates can be determined in the current map of Hanoi, but the only gate, of which we can find vestige, is Dong Ha gate (Vietnamese: *Ô Đống Hà*) named commonly as Quan Chuong gate

(Vietnamese: *Ô Quan Chưởng*) located at one end of Hang Chieu Street. Thus, the entire West Lake and the western part of Thang Long Imperial Citadel were excluded from the Dai Do citadel. Located inside Dai Do citadel were the Forbidden City, part of the Imperial Citadel, the palace of Trinh Lords, and some smaller residential areas. Once again, the size and structure of the capital changed in the trend of further reduction.

Dai La citadel played a defensive role for the entire area of the capital city with the ramparts and gates for entrance control, but it was also open to neighbouring areas, including craft villages and those specialised in agricultural production in the outskirts, for economic, social, and cultural exchange.

*1.2. The citadel named Long thành (Dragon citadel) and Phượng thành (Phoenix citadel) under the Ly and Tran dynasties and Hoàng thành (Imperial Citadel) under the Later Le dynasty early period*

After moving the capital from Hoa Lu to Dai La citadel, which was renamed Thang Long, in the autumn of the lunar year *Canh Tuất* (1010), King Ly Thai To ordered people to build a number of palaces, “setting up a treasure house, entrenching citadels, and digging moats. An entrance was built in each of the four sides. The east entrance was named Truong Phu; the west entrance was named Quang Phuc; the south entrance was named Dai Hung; and, the north entrance was named Dieu Duc” [34, II-3a, Vol.1, p.241]. Like many other scholars, I used to identify the citadel surrounding the palaces built in 1010 as the

Forbidden City, based on the above-mentioned note. According to the information provided in the text, however, it is obvious that the citadel had 4 entrances, of which Dai Hung has been identified by all documents as the southern gate of the Imperial Citadel; consequently, it cannot be a gate of the Forbidden City. “Moat-digging and citadel entrenching” were also mentioned, whereas there have never been any moats surrounding the Forbidden City in history since the time of the Ly dynasty. I, therefore, believe the citadel built in 1010 is the very middle citadel of Thang Long imperial citadel, which was named *Long thành* (Dragon citadel), *Phượng thành* (Phoenix citadel) or *Long Phượng thành* (Dragon-Phoenix citadel) under the Ly and Tran dynasties and named altogether *Hoàng thành* (Imperial Citadel) under the Later Le dynasty early period.

According to the records in both *Đại Việt sử lược* (*Abridged Chronicles of Great Viet*) and *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* (*Complete Annals of Great Viet*) on the construction of palaces during 1029 and 1030, the palaces were surrounded by a citadel named *Long thành* (Dragon citadel), which many scholars and I used to suppose it was the Forbidden City. In the chapter on “the rebellion of three princes” in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, it is clearly recorded that in 1028, after learning that King Ly Thai To already passed away in Long An palace, “three princes, namely Dong Chinh, Duc Thanh and Vu Duc, sent their own troops to the Forbidden City to lie in wait (i.e. ambush); Prince Dong Chinh himself lay in wait in the Dragon citadel” (Vol.2-10b); this means

that there was already a citadel named Dragon at that time and it was differentiated from the Forbidden City. As recorded in *Đại Việt sử lược*, during the conflict over power under the late Ly dynasty, in 1212, Tu Khanh furiously sent his troops to gather all mandarins into the Forbidden City [36, III-24b). After taking this into account, I believe that *Long thành* (Dragon citadel) was the middle citadel built for the first time in 1010; it was also named *Thăng Long* (Soaring/Ascending dragon) citadel, or *Long thành*, under the Later Le dynasty early period. Therefore, it was written that “Thang Long capital city was under repair” [34, II-9b] or “Thang Long citadel was built” [36, II-4a] in 1024. As regards the same event, it is written more clearly in *Khâm định Việt sử thông giám cương mục* (Imperially Ordered Annotated Text Completely Reflecting the History of Viet): “Thang Long citadel built firstly in the first year of Thuan Thien (name of the reigning years of King Ly Thai To), or 1010, was now being repaired” [40, II-24a, Vol.1, p.298]. In my opinion, *Long thành* (Dragon citadel) is an abbreviated name of Thang Long (Vietnamese: *Thăng Long*, meaning “Soaring Dragon”) citadel. It was built in 1010 with many repairs afterwards, including those conducted in 1024 and 1029. In the ancient historical documents, the words of “*kinh thành*” (“capital city”) or “*kinh thành Thăng Long*” (“Thang Long capital city”) were often used to indicate the entire area of the capital city surrounded by Dai La citadel; whereas, “Thang Long citadel” or “Dragon citadel” and “Phoenix

citadel” were used to indicate the middle citadel; and, “the Forbidden City” or “the Royal palace citadel” were used to indicate the innermost citadel, where kings and royal family members lived; it was also the workplace of the royal court.

The name of *Phượng thành* (Phoenix citadel) appeared for the first time in 1049, as written in *Đại Việt sử lược*: “A royal arroyo was dug outside the Phoenix citadel” [36, II-8b, p.89], but its precise location cannot be specified yet. The name existed from the Tran dynasty to the Later Le dynasty early period. Under the Tran dynasty, the name of “Phoenix citadel” appeared in 1230, 1243, and 1304. In 1304, after 44 candidates successfully passed the metropolitan/second-degree exam (*thi Hội*), including Mac Dinh Chi who got the first prize (thus winning the title of “*trạng nguyên*”), Bui Mo - the second prize (with the title of “*bảng nhãn*”), and Truong Phong - the third prize (the title of “*thám hoa*”), “the three best laureates were taken to Long Mon gate of Phoenix citadel to enjoy the street sightseeing for 3 days”<sup>4</sup> [34, VI-19a, Vol.2, p.88]. As the gate of the citadel led to streets, it could not have been the Forbidden City; instead, it must have been the middle citadel. Dragon citadel was also named Phoenix citadel<sup>5</sup> [33, p.329]. The document also reveals that there was a gate named Long Mon in Phoenix citadel at that time. According to the regulations of the Tran dynasty, one type of criminal punishment was the confinement with hard labour; criminals were stigmatised with four Chinese characters in the neck; they had to “mow the lawn in Thang Long -

Phoenix citadel, under the administration of the *Tứ sương* armed force” [34, V-6a, Vol.2, p.12]. The troops of the force undertook the role of watching the entrances of the Dragon citadel (named also Phoenix citadel, Thang Long citadel, or Dragon-Phoenix citadel); whereas, the imperial guards undertook the role of watching the Forbidden City. During the Later Le dynasty early period, when King Le Thanh Tong decided to expand the Imperial Citadel in 1490, “Phoenix citadel was enlarged following the regulations of the Ly and Tran dynasties”<sup>6</sup> [34, XV-65a, Vol.2, p.508]. During the Later Le dynasty early period, it was commonly named “Imperial Citadel”, but also sometimes called “Phoenix citadel”. Based on the above-mentioned evidence, I suppose that the middle citadel bore many names such as Thang Long citadel, Dragon citadel, Phoenix citadel, Dragon-Phoenix citadel, and Imperial Citadel.

Among the four gates of the Dragon citadel built in 1010 under the Ly dynasty, Tuong Phu gate is identified to be located in the east; it was then renamed Dong Hoa or Dong Mon (East Gate) located near Bach Ma temple by the mouth of To Lich River (Giang Khau); there are remaining traces of the gate, such as: Cau Dong (or, in Chinese characters pronounced in Vietnamese way: *Đông Kiều*) pagoda, or Cua Dong (or, “*Đông Môn*” – East Gate) pagoda at No. 38B, Hang Duong Street; Dong Mon communal house at No. 8, Hang Can Street; Hau Dong Hoa communal house at No. 2, Cha Ca Street; and, the stele dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> year of Emperor Gia Long’s

rule (1817) in Phuc Kien (Chinese: Fujian, or Fukien) Chinese Society’s premise at No. 40, Lan Ong Street. The traces of the East Gate are also reflected on in some place-names under the Nguyen dynasty, such as: the village of Dong Hoa Mon, Hau Dong Hoa Mon (Vietnamese pronunciation of Chinese character: “*môn*”, which means “gate”) in Huu Tuc canton, Huu Dong Mon village, Dong Thanh Thi, Dong thanh (Vietnamese: *Đông thành*, or Eastern city) in Tien Tuc canton during the rule of Emperor Gia Long [43, p.14]. They are also found in the land register in the period of Emperor Minh Mang as the village of Huu Dong Mon and Dong Thanh Thi in Thuan My canton [20, Vol.1, pp.397-408] as well as in *Đồng Khánh địa dư chí lược* (*Abridged Geography Book of Dong Khanh*) composed late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century [37, Vol.1, pp.11, 52]. The eastern part of the Imperial Citadel was located in the place of the current Thuoc Bac Street. Late in the Le dynasty and early in the Nguyen dynasty, Pham Dinh Ho (1768-1839) witnessed and made a comment on a stele carved with the Chinese characters 東華門, read into Vietnamese as “*Đông Hoa Môn*”; he affirmed that it was the imperial autograph of a King of Ly dynasty: “The three Chinese characters of 東華門 carved in the stele are the very imperial autograph of the Ly King; the penmanship is naturally forceful, different from that of ordinary people; his dots and strokes in the characters created a foundation for the writing style of our country” [6, p.30]. Dai Hung gate (or Cua Nam – Vietnamese: *Cửa*

*Nam* = South Gate) was located in the south, near the market in the current Cua Nam Street; the wall of the Imperial Citadel in the southern gate ran roughly along the current Tran Phu Street.

According to *Đại Nam nhất thống chí* (*Dai Nam Comprehensive Encyclopaedia*), Dieu Duc gate was located in the north; it was severely eroded and subsequently fell down into To Lich River [30, Vol. 3, p.165]. When Le Loi, who later became the first King of the Later Le dynasty, carried out the siege of Dong Quan citadel in 1427, he ordered the troops to “entrench the ramparts from Yen Hoa (Vietnamese: *Yên Hoa*) ward to the North Gate” [34, X-43a, Vol.2, p.278]. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the ramparts were strengthened by local people in Yen Phu ward, separating Truc Bach Lake from the West Lake; i.e. where it is now Thanh Nien Road. Tran Vu temple for defence of the north side was also located due north of the North Gate. Accordingly, it can be inferred that Dieu Duc Gate (or the North Gate) was located due south of To Lich River, somewhere between Phan Dinh Phung Street and Hoang Hoa Tham Road.

The only gate, of which the precise location has not been identified yet, is Quang Phuc. Some people assume that it was located close to the *Chùa Một Cột* (One-Pillar Pagoda) and Hung Vuong Road [25, p.151]; while others assume that it was located next to To Lich River in the west, somewhere near to the current Bui Road [15, pp.38-39]. After spending a lot of time thinking about the location of Quang Phuc gate, I supposed its location should be closely connected to the western space of the Imperial Citadel. Thus, I carried out an investigation in the vestige of Doai Mon

(the West Gate) in Cong Vi (Bui Road of Ba Dinh district), which local people usually name Dau Dong or Dau Dong Quan. In October 2003, however, an excavation was conducted by the Museum of History and Hanoi Department of Culture and Information in the vestige. According to the excavation findings, it was a small-sized citadel (54m x 52m) dating back to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, of which the underlying habitation layer ranges in times from the Ly dynasty to the Later Le dynasty early period. In 2013, test excavations were conducted by the Institute of Archaeology in some intersections, of which one was near Cau Giay and the others in Dao Tan and Doi Can streets. As a result, layers of rammed earth dating back to the time of the Ly and Tran dynasties were discovered, but there was no evidence to demonstrate whether it was a vestige of Dragon citadel, Dai La citadel, or the dyke of To Lich River. Moreover, it is just an on-site report made by the Institute of Archaeology. To get a final report, it is certainly necessary to carry out revision and systematisation of excavated artefacts. If Quang Phuc gate was located near Bui Street, far away from the Forbidden City, it would be very difficult to give a reasonable explanation how Le Phung Hieu, who undertook the role of supporting the crown prince in Can Nguyen palatial hall (Vietnamese: *điện Càn Nguyên*), could “draw the sword and run straight to Quang Phuc gate” to annihilate the troops of Prince Vu Duc, who were “lying in wait to ambush near Quang Phuc gate in Dragon citadel” during the situation of “the rebellion of three princes” taking place in 1028 [34, II-10b, Vol.1, p.248]<sup>7</sup>. After contemplation, I



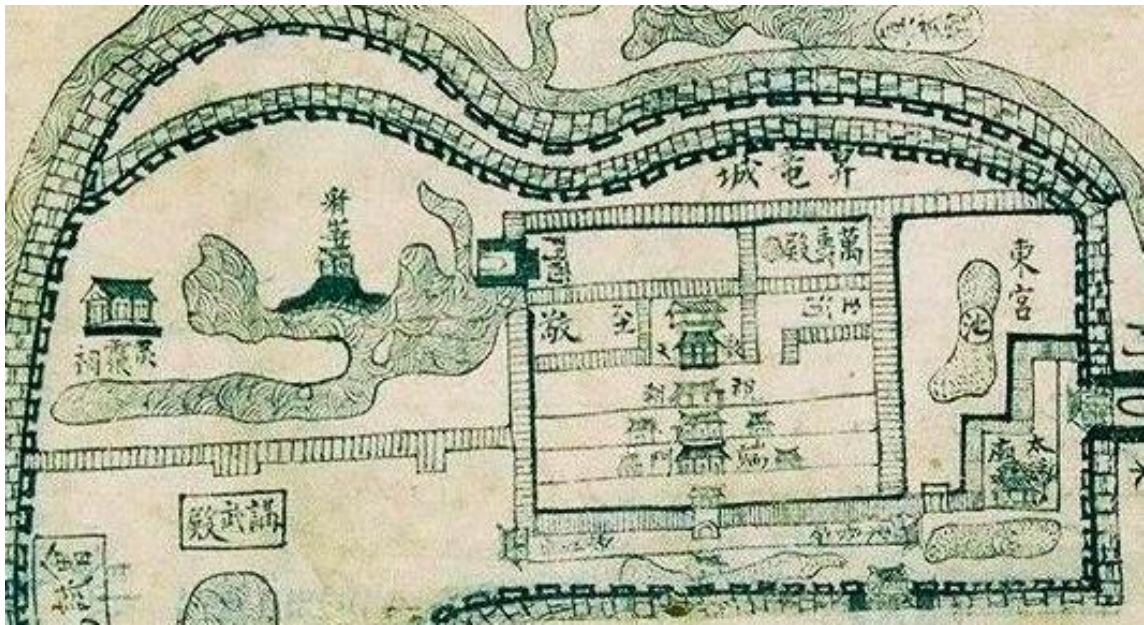
have recently supposed that at the time of the Ly and Tran dynasties the western part of the Dragon citadel might run from Hoang Hoa Tham Road, along Ngoc Ha Street and around Bach Thao park, to Kim Ma, where it was connected to the part of the citadel located in the current Nguyen Thai Hoc Street. It is the western section of Dai Do citadel built by Lord Trinh Doanh in 1749 based on a section of an ancient citadel. It is, of course, a hypothesis that should be verified by further archaeological excavations and investigations.

Under the Later Le dynasty early period, the Imperial Citadel was drawn quite clearly in the map of Dong Kinh (Eastern capital city) from the *Hồng Đức map collection*. The name of *Hoàng thành* (Imperial Citadel) appeared for the first time in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* in 1463 and was mentioned again in 1514 and 1516. In the chapter on the Forbidden City protection in *Quốc triều hình luật* (*Penal Code of the Royal Court*), a number of strict regulations were promulgated to protect the Imperial Citadel and impose penalties against trespassing the Imperial Citadel, such as those in Articles No. 51, 52, 53, 56, 62, 80, 81, 82, 91, 92, 94, and 96. At the time of the Later Le dynasty early period, the Imperial Citadel was also named Thang Long, Dragon, or Phoenix citadel.

During the period of the Later Le dynasty early period, King Le Thanh Tong considered the Imperial Citadel “too low and narrow”, so he gave the order to mobilise troops to reinforce the Imperial Citadel in 1467 [34, XII-44a, Vol.2, p.430]. The construction was carried out on a large scale, but we are not sure if any enlargement was made, besides the reinforcement of the previous Dragon

citadel built under the Ly and Tran dynasties. Based on the words “low and narrow”, we can assume that the previous citadel was expanded and built higher. If the Imperial Citadel was expanded at that time, it would be possible that the western part was enlarged to include a vast area, of which the northern side was the current Hoang Hoa Tham Street; the western side was Buoí Street; and the southern side was Kim Ma Street, into the Imperial Citadel. In the *Hồng Đức* maps (archived in the Institute of Han - Nom Studies and coded A.2499, A.2716, A.1362, A.73, A.3034, A.1081), a part of the citadel wall ran eastwards from Linh Lang Street (Voi Phuc, Vietnamese: *Voi Phục*, or Kneeling Elephant temple) and reached the Forbidden City somewhere near the current Kim Ma Street. Is it possibly a part of the citadel built in 1467? Before Kim Ma Street was widened and other streets were built in the area, there were traces of a range of mounds named *Gò Dài*, *Gò Giữa*, *Gò Đất*, and *Gò Miếu Ông* (“gò” = mound) connecting to each other and running from Voi Phuc temple to Nui Bo, almost parallel to Kim Ma Street. Is it possibly a remaining trace of the Imperial Citadel in the area? They are the very questions we need to take into account, when verifying the hypothesis about the expansion of the Imperial Citadel in 1467.

Under the Later Le dynasty early period as well, two fairly large-scale expansions of the Imperial Citadel were surely carried out: one in the 21<sup>st</sup> year of Hong Duc (Vietnamese: *Hồng Đức*) - the reign of King Le Thanh Tong (1490) and the other in the 8<sup>th</sup> year of Hong Thuan in the reign of King Tuong Duc (1516).



Map 1. Map of Dong Kinh

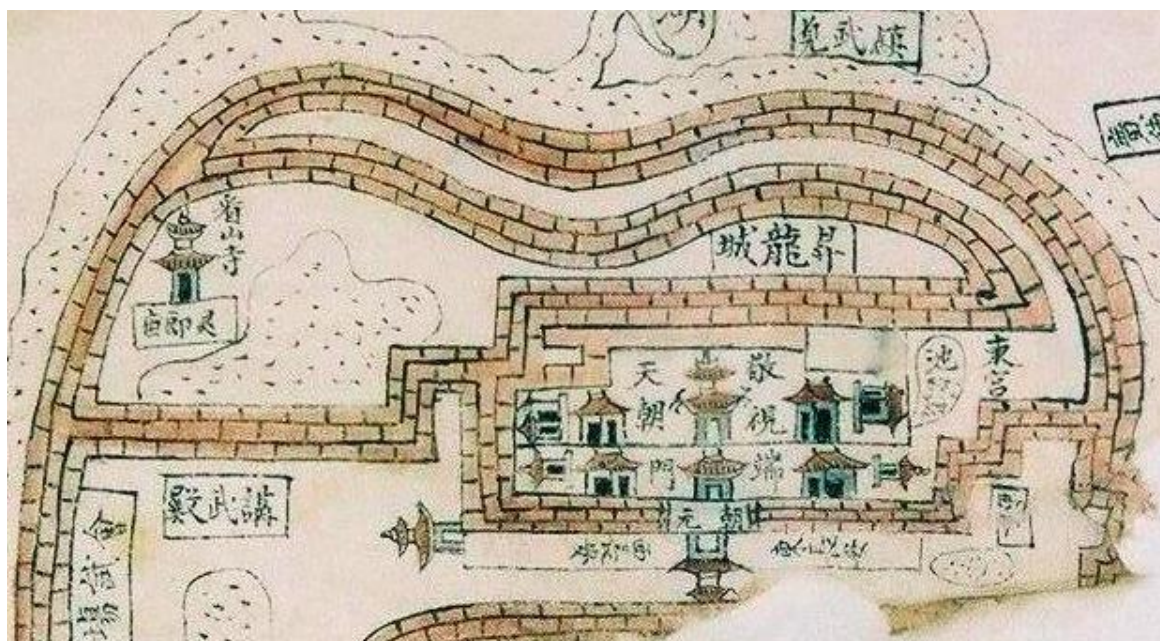
Source: *Institute of Han-Nom Studies A.2499.*

In 1490, “the Phoenix citadel was expanded in line with the regulations of the Ly and Tran dynasties. Vigilant against a possible incident of assassination like the one aimed at an earlier king - Nhan Tong, the king ordered the troops to strengthen the citadel. At the same time, it was expanded by 8 *dặm* (miles, in Later Le dynasty, 1 *dặm* = 720m) from the Dau Vo military arena. It took 8 months to accomplish the work” [34, XIII-65a, Vol.2, p.508]. The military arena, or *Giảo Trường*, used to be the place, where martial arts were exercised (as the meaning of Dau Vo, Vietnamese: *Đấu Võ*) under the Ly and Tran dynasties; it was also the place for the performance of martial arts in Dong Quan citadel during the period under the domination of the Chinese Ming dynasty; currently, it covers an area of Giang Vo and Ngoc Khanh in Ba Dinh

district. Resulting from the expansion in 1490, the Imperial Citadel covered a large area in the north; it was contiguous with To Lich River in the west and included both Giang Vo and Ngoc Khanh streets in the southwest. The citadel wall, consequently, ran along Hoang Hoa Tham Street in the north and Buoi Road in the west to Cau Giay, where it continued to run along La Thanh Road and Giang Vo Street to Nguyen Thai Hoc Street. In a hole excavated in Hoang Hoa Tham Road near Van Cao Street in 2012 and other ones excavated in the intersections near Cau Giay, Dao Tan and Doi Can streets in 2013, archaeologists found vestiges of the Imperial Citadel built under the Later Le dynasty early period. The wall was built solidly of rammed earth. Its part along To Lich River was especially consolidated by

many layers of bricks as well as broken bricks and tiles. Under the Le dynasty, the Imperial Citadel was made of rammed earth,

which was supported by an outer brick wall, as shown in the *Hồng Đức* maps.



Map 2. Map of Dong Kinh 2

Source: *Institute of Han-Nom Studies A.3034*.

In 1516, King Tuong Duc gave the order “to build a citadel wall several thousand *trượng* long, embracing Tuong Quang hall, Chan Vu temple, Thien Hoa pagoda in Kim Co ward and running from the east to the northwest, crossing To Lich River, where the wall of the Imperial Citadel was built with a sluice underneath; the foundation was consolidated by broken tiles mixed with rammed earth and iron bars placed horizontally; its surface was covered by flat pieces of schist and square bricks” [34, XV-26b, Vol.3, p.74]. In reality, there are different opinions raised by scientists on the expansion of the Imperial Citadel. Some of them feel doubtful whether such a large-scale work could be done, when the Le dynasty was weakening rapidly; in addition,

King Tuong Duc set the plan at the beginning of *Bính Tý* (1516) but he was killed by Trinh Duy San in the fourth month of the same lunar year. If the plan was actually effectuated, would it be possible that Thuy Khue Street is the very trace of the fact that the Imperial Citadel was expanded to cover To Lich River as well? In many maps of Dong Kinh in the Hong Duc (*Hồng Đức*) map collection, the Imperial Citadel was drawn with two citadel walls in the north, which has led to the question of whether the northern one was the citadel wall expanded during the reign of King Tuong Duc corresponding to the current Thuy Khue Street. To verify the opinion, it is necessary to wait for findings of the archaeological excavations in Thuy

Khue Street. Resulting from the two expansions of the Imperial Citadel conducted in 1490 and 1516, however, the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long got its largest size in the history of the capital city.

According to the maps in the Hong Duc map collection, under the Le dynasty the Imperial Citadel had three gates, including Dai Hung (South Gate), Dong Mon (East Gate), and Bao Khanh. Bao Khanh gate was located on La Thanh Road, near the junction with Giang Vo Street. A remaining trace of the gate is Bao Khanh village (in Giang Vo camp, Noi canton, Vinh Thuan district at the time of the Nguyen dynasty) [20, pp.582-583]. The locations of Dong Mon and Dai Hung gates remained almost the same or varied just very little. In 1491, King Le Thanh Tong gave the order to build a hall named Quang Van outside Dai Hung gate, where orders and regulations of the royal court were posted. According to Phan Huy Chu, under the Le dynasty (uncertain whether it was the Later Le dynasty's early period or warlord period) the Imperial Citadel started to have four gates, namely Dong Hoa, Dai Hung, Bac Than, and Thien Huu [1, Vol.2, p.114]. Based on the chronicles, in 1516 there was already the gate named Bac Than in the Imperial Citadel, and Bao Khanh gate was still maintained [34, XV-27b, Vol.3, p.75].

After Dai Do citadel was built in 1749, the entire westward expansion built in 1490 was excluded from the Imperial Citadel. The area was rapidly reclaimed for agricultural production and rural development. It was the time when people from Le Mat (Gia Lam district, Hanoi) and other villages came to settle down, forming *Thập tam trại* (13 camps) [16, pp.25-33]. Dai Do citadel still consisted

of a part of the previous imperial citadel, including Dai Hung gate as well. During the ruling period of the Tay Son dynasty, King Quang Trung issued the order to repair the citadel, rebuilding the wall running from Dong Hoa to Dai Hung gate.

As regards the structure of the imperial citadel, the middle citadel named differently as Dragon, Phoenix, and Dragon-Phoenix played the most important role in the defensive system of the imperial citadel. It was built solidly from rammed earth. Since the time of the Later Le early period at least, it was consolidated with an outer brick wall. Although the size of the imperial citadel varied considerably from the Ly dynasty to the Restored Le dynasty, the eastern part of the citadel was kept almost the same. The Forbidden City was located inside this eastern part of the Imperial Citadel.

## 2. Location and size of the Forbidden City

### 2.1. Under the Ly dynasty (1009-1226)

Regarding the name of the innermost citadel under the Ly dynasty, there is a difference between the records in *Đại Việt sử lược* (*Abridged Chronicles of Great Viet*) and those in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* (*Complete Annals of Great Viet*). In *Đại Việt sử lược*, it is named 禁中 (Cấm trung – Forbidden Area), when mentioning events in 1209 [36, III-19b], 1212 [36, III-24b], 1213 [36, III-25a] and 1214 [[36, III-26a]]<sup>8</sup>. Meanwhile, it is named in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* as 禁城 (Cấm thành – Forbidden City) in the section of the book on the 1028 rebellion of three princes (recorded in *Đại*



*Việt sử lược* as the rebellion of two princes) [34, II-11a]. It is similarly named as Forbidden City in the historical documents written afterwards, such as *Đại Việt sử ký tiền biên* (*Chronicles of Great Viet*) under the Tay Son dynasty and *Khâm định Việt sử thông giám cương mục* (*Imperially Ordered Annotated Text Reflecting Completely the History of Viet*) under the Nguyen dynasty [33, p.206]. Perhaps, they were written in accordance with *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*. In the epitaph in Sung Thien Dien Linh tower composed and carved by Nguyen Cong Bat in 1121, it is named Tây Cấm - 西禁 (Forbidden West, “Tây” = “West”, “Cấm” = to ban, to forbid): “Dien Huu (or One-Pillar) pagoda was built, facing the famous garden in the Forbidden West [Forbidden City or Forbidden area?]”<sup>9</sup> [48, p.136]. The “Forbidden West” in the epitaph is understood by a lot of people as the west of the “Forbidden City” or the “Forbidden Area”.

Under the Ly dynasty, the construction of palaces and other architectural works took place many times, of which the three large-scale ones were conducted in 1010, 1029-1030, and 1203.

As regards the one taking place in 1010, as written in *Đại Việt sử lược*, soon after the capital was moved to Thang Long, “in the Imperial City of Thang Long, Trieu Nguyen [palatial] hall was built; Tap Hien and Giang Vo [palatial] halls were built to its left and right respectively. There was Phi Long gate on the left and Dan Phuong gate on the right. In the meanwhile, Cao palatial hall (Vietnamese: *Cao điện*) was located due south. The front yard was named Long Tri, consisting of corridors running around the four sides. Behind Can Nguyen hall, there

were two halls named Long An and Long Thuy in the middle; Nhat Quang hall was built on the left and Nguyet Minh hall was built on the right. Thuy Hoa palace was built behind all of them”<sup>10</sup> [36, II-3a, p.70]. As regards the same construction, it is recorded in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* as below: “Again, palaces [including palatial halls] were built in the citadel of Thang Long. Can Nguyen hall, where the king’s audience took place, was built in the centre; Tap Hien hall was built to its left and Giang Vo hall was to its right. Phi Long gate was set up to link Can Nguyen hall to Nghenh Xuan hall; Dan Phuong gate was linked to Uy Vien gate. Cao Minh hall was built due south. There was the dragon yard (Long Tri, Vietnamese: *Long Tri*) consisting of corridors running around the four sides. Behind Can Nguyen hall, two halls named Long An and Long Thuy were built for the king’s rest. Nhat Quang was built on the left and Nguyet Minh was built on the right. Thuy Hoa and Long Thuy palaces, where imperial maids stayed, were built behind all of them”<sup>11</sup> [34, II-3a, Vol.1, p.241]. It was recorded that the 2 “*cung*” (palaces, which are mostly used for residence) of Thuy Hoa and Long Thuy were built behind the 2 “*điện*” (palatial halls) of Nhat Quang and Nguyet Minh. In *Đại Việt sử lược*, however, only one “*cung*” named “Thuy Hoa” was mentioned, with a “*điện*” called Long Thuy, built behind Can Nguyen hall, being the place where the king rested. In my opinion, it was impossible that two palaces (one “*cung*” and one “*điện*”) were named the same in the imperial citadel; thus, the information in *Đại Việt sử lược* is more reliable; i.e. there was only the hall called Long Thuy (Vietnamese: *điện Long*

*Thuy*) behind the hall of Can Nguyen. (including palatial halls) in the imperial  
Based on the above-mentioned understanding, citadel in 1010, as below:  
we can draw a supposed layout of palaces

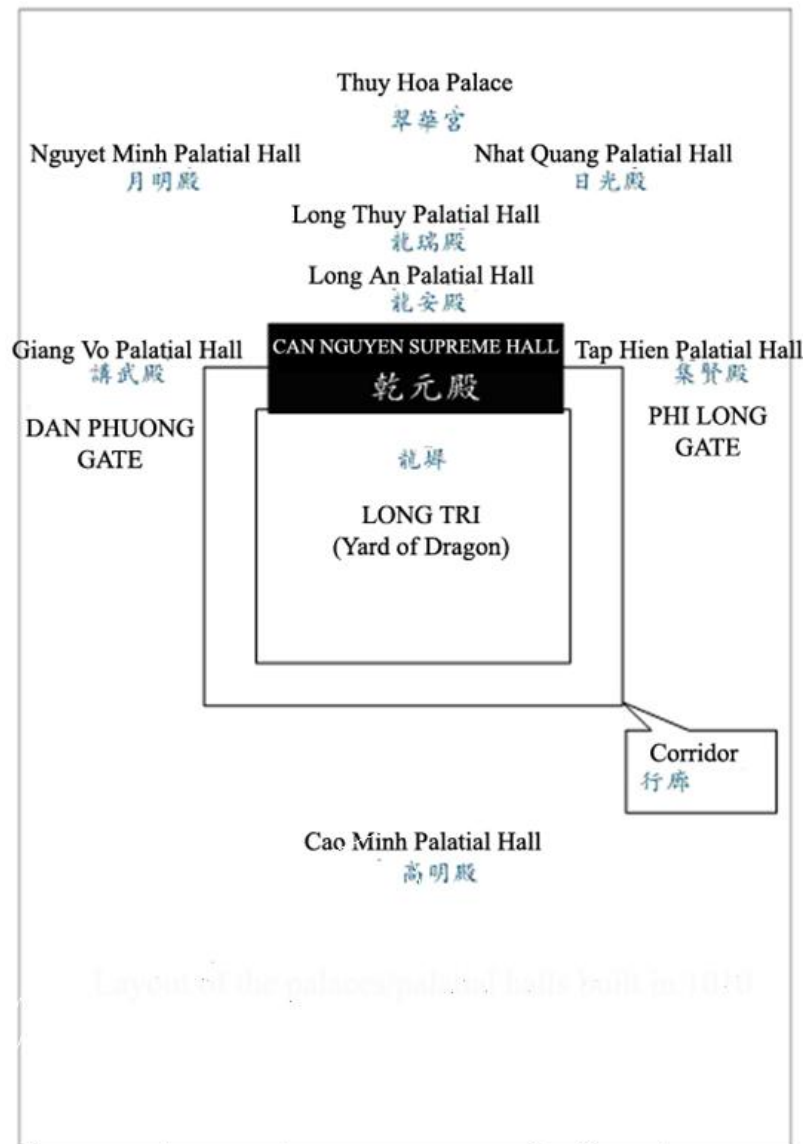


Figure 1. Layout of the Palaces/Palatial Halls Built in 1010

Among the royal architectural works, there was a pagoda named Hung Thien, where a gold bell weighing 310 *lạng* (1 *lạng* was equal to approx. 37 grams) cast in 1014 under the Ly dynasty was hung, yet we have not found out its precise location. The above-mentioned palaces

(including [palatial] halls) were started to be built in the autumn (the seventh month of the year *Canh Tuất* - 1010), and some of them took several months to complete; for instance, the construction of Thuy Hoa palace was inaugurated in the last month of the year.

In addition to the construction of halls in 1010, the Ly dynasty also built the first citadel with four gates, including the Dai Hung in the south that, as I proved above, belonged to the middle citadel, which was named Dragon or Phoenix afterwards and renamed Imperial Citadel since the Later Le dynasty early period. Herein, a question arises as to whether or not there was a citadel for protection of the halls inside the Forbidden City at that time. In my opinion, after moving the capital to Dai La, at first the Ly dynasty temporarily used the citadel, which used to be “the capital city of Gao Wang (高王)”, including some architectural works inside as well. A well of Dai La was found in Section B of the excavated area, the mouth of which was covered by a layer of bricks determined clearly by archaeological methods as dating back to the Ly dynasty. Vestiges of Dai La citadel have been found all over the excavation site at No. 18, Hoang Dieu St., in Section E (the premise of Ba Dinh Hall which used to house the National Assembly) and the nearby Rose Garden (*Vườn hồng*), where the parking basement of the National Assembly Building was built underneath and due south of Bac Son Street. Particularly, a part of Dai La citadel was found in the lowest stratum under the Rose Garden. It was the first vestige of Dai La citadel discovered by researchers. While utilising some previously made architectural works in Dai La, the Ly dynasty needed to build promptly some new palaces, including palatial halls, for the king’s audience, the court’s work, and the royal home, creating a new face for the royal dynasty. Some vestiges of the architectural works under the dynasty was found in the above layer of the

part of Dai La citadel in the Rose Garden, which demonstrates that during the period of the dynasty the part of the citadel was destroyed to build a new palace. In the beginning, therefore, the Ly dynasty utilised Dai La citadel as a defensive wall for palaces. However, they did not keep the entire citadel, but some parts of the citadel were destroyed or improved. The evidence found in the south shows that part of the citadel was destroyed under the dynasty.

After the 1028 three-prince rebellion, King Ly Thai Tong succeeded to the throne. In 1029, he gave the order to rebuild and rename some palaces. According to *Đại Việt sử lược*, “Can Nguyen hall was renamed Thien An, of which Tuyen Duc hall was built to the left and Dien Phuc hall was built to the right; the front ground was still named Long Tri, of which Van Minh hall was built to the east and Quang Vo hall was built to the west. Bell towers were built to both left and right of Long Tri for the purpose of listening to complaints on injustice. In the front was located Phung Thien hall, where Chinh Duong mansion was built to know the time. Truong Xuan hall with a pavilion named Long Cac (Dragon pavilion) was built behind. They all were surrounded by a wall named Dragon citadel”. In 1030, “Thien Khanh hall and a mansion named Phuong Hoang were additionally built behind” [36, II-5b, p.79].

Meanwhile, it is recorded in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* that “Can Nguyen hall was renamed Thien An, of which Tuyen Duc hall was built to the left and Dien Phuc hall was built to the right. The front yard was named Long Tri (Yard of Dragon), of which Van Minh hall was built to the east and Quang Vu hall was built to the west.

Bell towers were located opposite on two sides of Long Tri so that people could ring the bell to claim innocence. There were corridors running around the four sides, where mandarins and imperial guards gathered. Phung Thien hall and a mansion named Chinh Duong, which was used to calculate the time of the day, were built in front of Thien An hall. Truong Xuan hall with a pavilion named Long Do for rest-taking and sight-seeing was built behind Thien An hall. A wall named Dragon

citadel was built around the whole area". In the following year, "Thien Khanh hall was built in front of Truong Xuan hall to provide a place for state affairs discussions; it had octagonal shape with bridges named Phung Hoang built both in front and behind" [34, II-19b, 20a, Vol.1, p.254]. Based on the above-mentioned information, we can draw a layout of palaces, including palatial halls, in the imperial citadel in 1029-1030, as below:

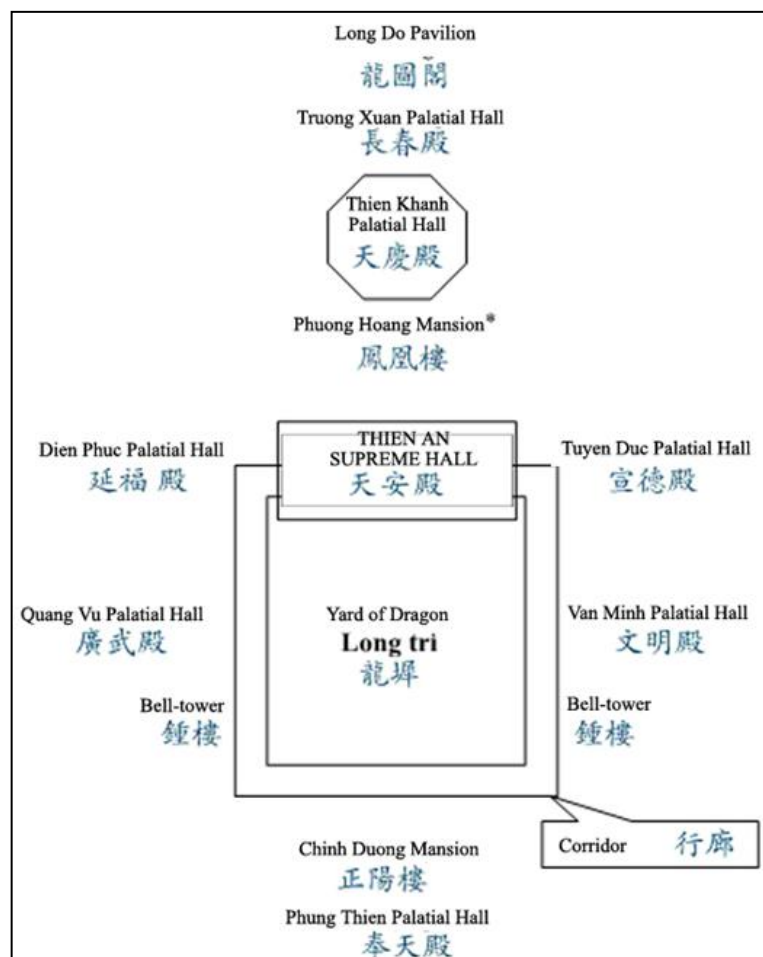


Figure 2. Layout of the Palaces/Palatial Halls Built in 1029 – 1030

(According to *Dại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, Phung Hoang bridges were built both in front of and behind Thien Khanh supreme hall)



Apart from the two times of large-scale construction conducted during the heyday of the Ly dynasty, in 1203, when the dynasty was falling into decline, King Ly Cao Tong (1175 – 1210) gave the order to build a relatively large complex of halls to the west of the *tâm điện* (hall of imperial residence). As described in *Đại Việt sử lược*, “a royal complex of new palaces was built to the west of the hall of residence. In the centre of the complex was Thien Thuy hall, to the left of which was built the Duong Minh hall; Thiem Quang hall was built to the right; and Chinh Nghi hall with a hall named Kinh Thien was built in front. The veranda floor was named Le Giao. Vinh Nghiem gate was built in the middle; whereas Viet Thanh gate was built on the right with a veranda floor named Ngan Hong. A palatial hall named Thang Tho with a pavilion named Thanh Tho was built behind Thien Thuy hall. Meanwhile, Nhat Kim and Nguyet Bao pavilions were built to the left and the right of Thang Tho. There was a corridor named Kim Tinh running around. On the left, there was a ground named Luong Thach Toa (where rocks were placed for sitting to get cool air) and then a bathing place. Behind was a pavilion named Phu Quoc with a front yard named Phuong Tieu. A gate named Thau Vien and a fish pond named Duong Ngu (Vietnamese: *Dưỡng Ngư* = breeding/tending the fish) were built behind the front yard. A house named Ngoan Y was built over the waters of the pond. Exotic flowers and plants were grown along three sides of the temple. The pond was connected with a river; the Ngoan Y house had very skilful wooden carvings

and sculptural decorations, which had never been seen before” [36, III-14a, 14b, pp.165-166; 34]. The literature provides a description of the complex by directions on the right, on the left, in front, behind, above, and in the centre. Matching it with the common directions of the entire royal citadel in the two previous times of construction, i.e. it faces south, we suppose that “on the right” is the west; “on the left” is the east; “in front” is the south; and “behind” is the north. There was, furthermore, a “*điện*” named Kinh Thien built on the *điện* named Chinh Nghi”; i.e. a new *điện* on another one. This can hardly be understood. Reviewing the information recorded in *Đại Việt sử lược* that in 1206 “the king came to Kinh Thien pavilion” (Vol.III-16b), I assume that “a pavilion named Kinh Thien was built on Chinh Nghi hall”, like the case of Thanh Tho pavilion built on Thang Tho hall. For Viet Thanh gate, it was recorded in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* that the gate was built to the right; i.e. the west of Chinh Nghi hall. It is, however, described in *Đại Việt sử lược* that Viet Thanh gate was located in the east: “Viet Thanh gate faced Trieu Dong port (Eastern Port, or Dong Bo Dau)” [36, III-19a]. I think it was incorrectly recorded in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* and therefore assume that Viet Thanh gate was built on the east; i.e. to the left of Chinh Nghi hall. Due to unclear descriptions, it is sometimes difficult to envision the locations of all architectural works. As a result, the layout of new royal halls built in 1203 just provides a relative insight. Researchers may have different views on this.

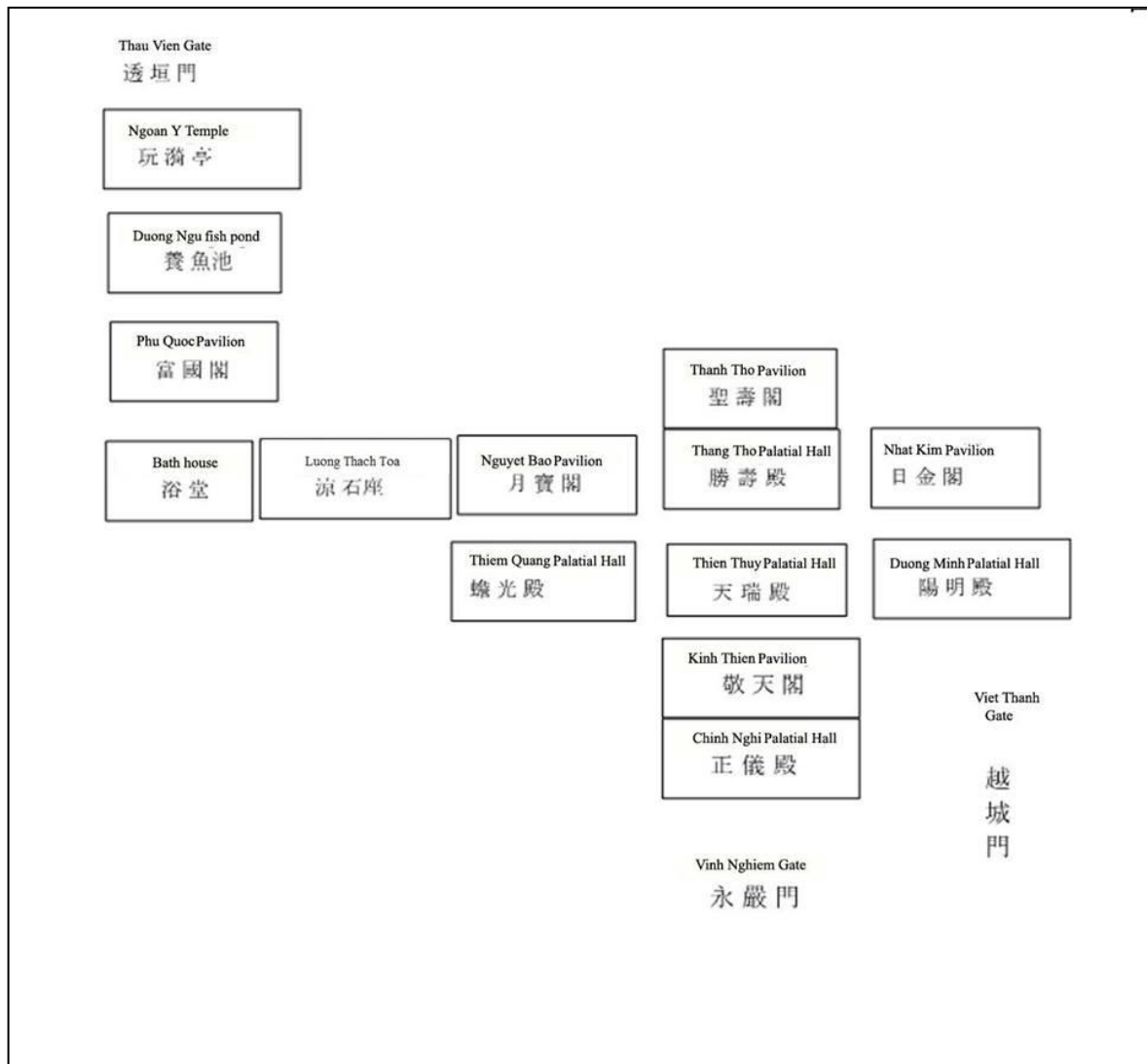


Figure 3. Layout of the New Royal Palace Built in 1203

The construction of the new royal halls took place, when the Ly dynasty was falling in decline and King Ly Cao Tong indulged in dissipation. He asked for the building of many costly works, while “rebellions were occurring everywhere” (literally translated: emerging like bees; [36, III-16b]) and conflicts amongst factions were extremely severe. We do not know clearly how much of the complex was successfully built and

whether all the halls were accomplished or not. According to the document, the construction of Thien Thuy hall was completed in 1205 and the king “bestowed a three-day feast on the court mandarins to celebrate it” [36, III-16b, p.170]. Historical events taking place in the late years under the Ly dynasty were also related to some architectural works in the complex of new royal halls such as Viet Thanh gate, Kinh

Thien pavilion, Thien Thuy and Thang Tho halls, etc. Although the relationships between the new halls in the complex and the previous ones in the Forbidden City have been unknown by now, we can realise that a lot of the previous works such as Long Tri and Thien An palace remained in use in the late years under the Ly dynasty. During the period of chaos in the late years of the dynasty, the kings sometimes had to leave the Forbidden City and stayed in temporary palaces named “*thảo điện*” (“*thảo*” = grass); for instance, in 1215, “a *thảo điện* was built in the area of Do An’s home” [36, III-29b] in Chi Tac alley next to Tay Duong bridge (now Cau Giay bridge); and, in 1216, “a *thảo điện* was built in Tay Phu Liet (Thanh Oai district) as a replicate of the *Đại nội* (Area of royal palaces)” [36, III-30a].

Of all the halls inside the Forbidden City, Can Nguyen/Thien An hall and the front yard named Long Tri (Yard of Dragon) played a very significant role in the royal ceremonies and activities. Can Nguyen hall was the place where the king gave audience and national rituals were carried out. It was initially built in 1010 during the first construction of the capital city. In 1017, it was struck by lightning and the king had to give audience in the eastern palatial hall named Tap Hien, according to the notes in *Khâm định Việt sử thông giám cương mục* (*Imperially Ordered Annotated Text Reflecting Completely the History of Viet*). In 1020, the eastern hall was, in turn, struck by lightning and the king had to give audience in the western hall named Giang Vo according to the same book. Consequently, three new halls were built afterwards, of which the front one was used

for the king’s audience and the rest two ones were used for state affairs discussions. Although Can Nguyen hall was struck by lightning and collapsed, “the image of a dragon” appeared on its foundation and the king supposed it was “the sacred land of the dragon” [36, II-5b] “located in the middle of earth and heaven” (*Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, Vol.II-19B). In 1029, it was therefore rebuilt and renamed Thien An (Vietnamese: *Thiên An* = heavenly peacefulness).

Long Tri was a solemn space in front of Can Nguyen/Thien An hall; there were corridors running around, “where mandarins and guards of the 6 royal armed forces were gathered”. In 1029, King Ly Thai Tong gave the order to build 2 bell towers (*Chung lâu*) on the left and the right sides of Long Tri “for the purpose of listening to complaints of injustice” [36, II-5b]. In 1033, a big bell weighing ten thousand *cân* was cast and hung on the bell tower. In a monarchic regime, it was really unusual that grassroots could ring the bell at the court area to claim innocence. Meanwhile, the crown prince stayed in a palace named Long Duc, which was built outside Truong Quang gate; i.e. an entrance of Dai La citadel. A lot of national, religious, and spiritual festivities were held in front of Can Nguyen/Thien An hall and in Long Tri, such as: La Han ceremony in 1040, Nhan Vuong ceremonies in 1077 and 1126, Quang Chieu ceremony of decorative lanterns in 1126, and the ceremonies for pledging allegiance to the nation in 1119, 1128, 1137, and 1225. After commanding personally the troops to defeat the Kingdom of Champa in 1044, King Ly Thai Tong held a ceremony to proclaim his victory in the temple dedicated to King Ly Thai To

(Le Loi, the founder of the dynasty) and then held a feast in Thien An hall. In 1225, Queen Ly Chieu Hoang (a female monarch, and the last King of Ly dynasty) held a ceremony in the very hall to abdicate and give the throne to Tran Canh, who became the first King of Tran dynasty. In Long Tri, the Ly dynasty carried out a wide range of entertaining activities, such as shuttlecock-playing matches between the king and princes (in 1126 and 1130) and the elephant hunt witnessed by the king (in 1149)...

In the Imperial Citadel site unearthed at No. 18, Hoang Dieu St., archaeologists found 53 vestiges of the architectural foundation, 7 vestiges of the surrounding walls, 6 water wells, and 13 drainage sewers from the Ly dynasty. There were traces of the foundation, buttresses, supports, and the yard of the royal palaces. The foundation was built of rammed clay consolidated around by bricks. The yard was paved with yellow square bricks baked at a high temperature. As architectural works were made of wood, the entire weight was concentrated on the pillars placed on the stone bases and solid buttresses. The buttresses often had a square-shaped cross-section, of which each side ranged from 1m to 2m; they were fixed from 1.5m to 3m deep into ground and consolidated by many layers of broken bricks, tiles, and pebbles to prevent subsidence. Based on the vestiges of the foundation and buttresses, we can identify the architectural plan of halls under the Ly dynasty. It often had a rectangular shape with sets of collar beams and a number ranging from two to eight rows of pillars. There were various architectural types, of which some had long corridors running

along different compartments and some had as many as 10 to 13 compartments. All the compartments were quite large with a side of 5.7m; some of them were larger with a side ranging from 6m to 7.5m. The wooden works were completely destroyed, but building materials are left abundantly, including bricks and tiles of various types such as double tiles, flat tiles, tubular tiles, and tiles decorated with designs of dragons, phoenixes, flowers and leaves. There are also a lot of terra-cotta statues that have a shape of the dragon head, phoenix, and loving-birds to be used for decorations in the ridges and the corners of the roof... [24, pp.20-24].

Of all the architectural types, some had the octagonal or hexagonal shapes. Herein, I would like to provide some relevant historical documents for archaeological reference. According to *Đại Việt sử lược* and *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, three out of the architectural works in the Forbidden City under the Ly dynasty were octagonal, including: Thien Khanh hall built in 1030 [34, II-20a], Ho Thien hall built in 1058 by Kim Minh pond [36, II-11a], and an octagonal house for storage of Buddhist sutras built in 1021 [34, II-9a]. Kim Minh pond, by which that Ho Thien hall was built, was dug in 1049. There were a three-summit rockery and a bridge named Ngu Phuong in the pond. The historical information can be used to identify the octagonal work discovered by archaeologists. Regarding hexagonal works, a bell tower named “獨柱六角蓮花鐘樓” - “*độc trụ lục giác liên hoa chung lâu*” (One-pillar lotus-shaped hexagonal bell tower) was built in 1058; it had one pillar standing on a

base of six-petal lotus shape [36, II-11a]. The type is similar to that of the bell towers built in 1029 on both sides of Long Tri. Certainly, the hexagonal works discovered by archaeologists cannot be the bell towers, because they were located quite symmetrically with respect to an architectural work: 11 units were found in the east and 3 in the west. However, the architectural type can be used for reference.

According to the *Lingwai daida* (“Collection of Notes on Overseas Places”, 岭外代答, Vietnamese pronunciation: *Lĩnh ngoại đại đáp*) written by Qufei Zhou, who lived under the Chinese Song dynasty, it is noticeable that apart from Thuy Tinh palace and Thien Nguyen palatial hall, in the imperial citadel of the Ly dynasty was “a building where there was a board with the characters that mean ‘Office of [Dominated] Annam Ruler’” (“安南都護府” – “*An Nam đô hộ phủ*”)” [18]. Thien Nguyen hall can be supposed to be the very Thien An hall built under the Ly dynasty on the foundation of Can Nguyen hall that collapsed and renamed, after rebuilt, Thien An in 1029. The pavilion with the signboard of the “Annam Ruler’s Office” is highly likely to be an architectural work of Dai La citadel that was still in use under the Ly dynasty.

I would like to take this opportunity to discuss the three issues raised recently by archaeological and historical researchers.

### 2.1.1. Was it named *Cấm trung* (Forbidden Area) or *Cấm thành* (Forbidden City)?

The citadel is constantly named *Cấm trung* (禁中: Forbidden Area - the area, of which commoners are banned from entering) in

*Đại Việt sử lược*, but it is named *Cấm thành* (禁城: Forbidden City - the area surrounded by a citadel, which commoners are banned from entering) in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*. *Đại Việt sử lược* is the earliest historical document in our country. It remains controversial as to who was the author of the work, but the compilation was actually accomplished late in the Tran dynasty (circa 1377) with a volume titled *Trần triều kỷ niên* (*Annals of the Tran dynasty*), which is ended with the sentence “*Kim vương: Xương Phù nguyên niên Đinh Tỵ* (The current king: The first year of *Xương Phù* (name of the reigning year of the contemporary King), *Đinh Tỵ* year; i.e. 1377)”. As regards *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, a part was compiled by Ngo Si Lien in 1479 on the basis of *Đại Việt sử ký* (*Annals of Great Viet*) written earlier by Le Van Huu in 1272; the rest, for the period from the Tran dynasty to the end of the domination of the Chinese Ming dynasty, was compiled by Phan Phu Tien. In the preface of *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, Ngo Si Lien stated clearly: “The book is compiled based on the two volumes of *Đại Việt sử ký* by Le Van Huu and Phan Phu Tien” [34, *Thủ-1a*, Vol.1, p.2103]. Except for the section on later years of Ly dynasty, of which the source of materials is relatively little, the rest sections seem to be more copious than *Đại Việt sử lược*. Regarding the historical documentation generally, *Đại Việt sử lược* was compiled before *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* at the nearest time to the Ly dynasty, so it is more valuable and more reliable. However, *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* contains additional information, which is not included in *Đại Việt sử lược*. It is, therefore, necessary to appreciate highly

the additional information. Let us take the move of the capital city from Hoa Lu to Dai La and the renaming to Thang Long as an example. In *Đại Việt sử lược*, three activities were recorded, including: (1) to change the dynastic name (also translated as “dynastic title”, “reigning title”, meaning the name of reigning years of a King); (2) to move the capital city; and, (3) to build palaces and citadels. In the meanwhile, the following activities were additionally recorded in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*: (1) the visit to Co Phap in the spring; (2) the compilation of the full text of the royal edict on moving the capital; (3) the moving of the capital in the seventh month of the lunar year - in the autumn; (4) the promulgation of some policies, such as granting a general amnesty, changing 10 *đạo* (an administrative division) to 10 *lộ*... For the same event, if the information in the two historical documents differs, the one recorded in *Đại Việt sử lược* will be viewed generally more reliable, but we sometimes have to make careful reference and verification; the information recorded in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* should not be ignored simply. I thought much about the name “*Cấm trung*” in *Đại Việt sử lược* and “*Cấm thành*” in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, wondering which one is correct.

Referring to Chinese ancient bibliographies, the name “*Cấm trung*” (禁中) was used very early at the time of the Qin dynasty (史記, *The Scribe's Records*, Vol. 6). It was used for a long time through the Western Han dynasty (前漢書, *History of Former Han*, Vol.19 Upper), the Eastern Han (後漢書, *Book of the Later Han*, Vol.4), the Three Kingdoms

era (三國志, *Records of the Three Kingdoms*, Vol.6 on the Cao Wei), the Jin dynasty (晉書, *Book of Jin*, Vol.34), the Tang dynasty (舊唐書, *Old Book of Tang*, Vol.6), the Five-Dynasty era (舊五代史, *Old History of the Five Dynasties*, Vol.38; 新五代史, *New History of the Five Dynasties*, Vol.16), the Song dynasty (宋史, *History of Song*, Vol.7), and the Ming dynasty (明史, *History of Ming*, Vol.14). The name “*Cấm thành*” (禁城) appeared initially at the time of the Jin dynasty (晉書, *Book of Jin*, Vol.122) and was also used in the Tang dynasty (舊唐書, *Old Book of Tang*, Vol. 15), the Five-Dynasty era (新五代史, *New History of the Five Dynasties*, Vol.40), and the Song dynasty (宋史, *History of Song*, Vol.32) [44]. As regards the imperial city in China, thus, “*Cấm trung*” and “*Cấm thành*” were used at the same time to show the Forbidden City under some dynasties, including the Song, that was corresponding to the time of the Ly dynasty in Vietnam. It is probably reasonable that under the Ly dynasty, the innermost citadel of Thang Long citadel was called with both names of “*Cấm trung*” and “*Cấm thành*”. Thus, the names recorded in *Đại Việt sử lược* and *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* are different, but they are not incorrect and cannot be mutually exclusive.

The entire area of the Forbidden City was also named *Đại nội*, [36, II-8a, p.1045, II-10a, p.1055, II-12a, p.1063, III-10a, p.1180; 34, II-36b, p.1045, III-1a, p.1055; 45, 65a], *Cấm đình* [36, II-15b, p.1074, III-4b, p.1148; 34, II-19b, p.1041, III-8a, p.1074], and *Cấm nội* [36, III-2b; 45 Vol.1-29b]... However, the name “*Đại nội*” was not specified clearly and it sometimes may not indicate the Forbidden City.

### 2.1.2. Was the Forbidden City surrounded by a defensive wall at that time?

The palaces and pavilions illustrated in the above-mentioned layouts were all located inside the Forbidden City. However, it is difficult to know whether the entire area of the palaces, halls and pavilions were surrounded by a defensive wall under the Ly dynasty. According to the epitaph in Sung Thien Dien Linh tower composed on the 6<sup>th</sup> of the seventh lunar month of *Tân Sửu* - the second year of Thien Phu Due Vu reigning title (1121) compiled by Nguyen Cong Bat, who was bestowed by the Ly king with the titles of Minister of Justice and *Viên ngoại lang* – a notable mandarin - of the Ministry of War, “建廣昭之登台向端門之廷上”- “a high tower named Quang Chieu was built, facing the front yard of Doan Mon” [46]. The information means that Doan Mon gate was built, before the Quang Chieu ceremony of decorative lanterns. Under the Ly dynasty, the king held Quang Chieu ceremonies of decorative lanterns 4 times in 1116, 1120, and 1126 (the first and the ninth lunar months). As recorded in the historical documents, the first Quang Chieu ceremony (1116) was held outside Dai Hung gate; whereas, the fourth one (1126) was held in Long Tri [36, II-22a; 34, III-20b, III-24a, III-24b]. Thus, the Quang Chieu ceremony mentioned in the epitaph of Sung Thien Dien Linh tower took place before 1121, i.e. in 1116 or 1120, and, correspondingly, Doan Mon gate was built in 1120 at the latest. The Doan Mon gate that we can see in the citadel of Hanoi was rebuilt under the Le dynasty. Based on historical documents and findings of archaeological excavations, some scholars assume that it was rebuilt on the foundation of the Doan Mon gate built under the Ly

and Tran dynasties. The test excavation conducted in 1999 shows that under the Doan Mon, there were traces and artefacts dating from the Ly and Tran dynasties; a part of the foundation running towards Kinh Thien hall was consolidated in both sides by bricks arranged in the lemon-flower pattern, which was typical for the architecture under the Tran dynasty. The part is 15.80m long and 1.30m wide. According to archaeologists, under the Ly dynasty Doan Mon gate was initially built by bricks, tiles, and the tile-caps decorated with the lotus design. And then, it was rebuilt during the time of the Tran dynasty with the contemporary building materials as well as those used at the time of the Ly dynasty [22]. Having made a thorough consideration, I realised that the evidence provided by the archaeological test excavations only demonstrates that an architectural vestige of the Ly and Tran dynasty is found under the Doan Mon gate of Hanoi citadel. To affirm whether it is the very vestige of the Doan Mon gate built under the Ly and Tran dynasties, it is necessary to carry out additional excavations and research. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, under the Le dynasty, previous architectural works were destroyed and a new Doan Mon gate was built, of which the remaining vestige also experienced many repairs.

I think a citadel wall was definitely built, because there was a citadel gate named Doan Mon. Another noticeable point is that King Ly Thai To gave the order to build Ngu Phuong mansion (Vietnamese: *Ngũ phương tinh lâu*), when the first construction of palaces was taking place in 1010. I wonder whether the Ly dynasty utilised some architectural works of Dai La citadel and part of Dai La citadel wall, or the whole Dai La citadel at that time. Ngu

Phuong hall built in 1010 by the Ly dynasty is determined by Pham Le Huy to be probably the southern gate of the Forbidden City, according to the model of the Luoyang citadel used in China from the Tang dynasty to the Northern Song dynasty [7, pp.40-43]. In my opinion, it was a very important gate of the Forbidden City, so King Ly Thai To decided to build Ngu Phuong mansion first and then a gate named Doan Mon in 1120 at the latest. In *Hà Nội địa dư (Geography Book of Hanoi)* compiled by Duong Ba Cung in the fourth year of Tu Duc reign (1851), it is recorded: “Ngu Mon mansion was located in *Vọng cung* (the palace where people bowed to the king who is afar and not seen). Two Chinese characters “Đoan Môn” was written in the centre. It was the very Ngu Phuong mansion under the Ly dynasty” [3, p.844]. Duong Ba Cung and other historians at the time of the late Le and the early Nguyen dynasties assumed that the Doan Mon gate under the Le dynasty was located in the same place of the Doan Mon gate under the Ly dynasty and the Chinese characters “Đoan Môn” were written originally under the Ly dynasty. This requires further research, but we can come to a conclusion that Ngu Phuong was already built on attachment to Doan Mon gate under the Ly dynasty [9, p.408]<sup>12</sup>.

The perimeter of Dai La citadel is nearly 6km, bigger than Hanoi citadel under the Nguyen dynasty. The inside perimeter is about 4km. When the Forbidden City built under the Le dynasty was destroyed to build the citadel in 1803, King Gia Long made a comment: “The previous citadel was too cramped, so it is necessary to expand it” [31, Vol.3, p.102]; i.e. Hanoi citadel is larger than the Forbidden Citadel. Dai La citadel had an inner citadel named *Tử thành*

(Purple citadel) and an outer defensive citadel named *La thành*, which had three gates, including the eastern, western, and southern gates [8, pp.34-51]<sup>13</sup>. It remains unknown how the Ly dynasty utilised previous Dai La citadel, but they surely did not use the entire citadel with the perimeter of nearly 6km; instead, they probably used some parts of the citadel, while new planning and construction were rapidly carried out. In the excavation site in the Rose Garden, archaeologists found part of the wooden citadel wall with the traces of holes for pillar placement, including five rows of pillars 5m thick running from east to west to the hill base in the south. The wooden vestige was located in the southern part of Dai La citadel, approx. 92m due south of the worship platform (or worship esplanade, an architectural work for worshipping; literally translated from Vietnamese *Đàn tế*). According to the preliminary assessment of Pham Van Trieu, who directly took part in the excavation, the wooden citadel probably used to be a part of the citadel in the south of the Forbidden City. If the vestige is identified exactly to be a part of the wooden citadel under the Ly dynasty, it will show that the southern part of Dai La citadel was destroyed under the Ly dynasty in order to build a new citadel, which was expanded southwards. Thus, the location of Doan Mon gate under the Ly dynasty might be different from that of the Doan Mon gate under the Le dynasty. The name “Doan Mon” existed from the period of the Ly dynasty to the Restored Le dynasty at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In the archaeological site at No.18, Hoang Dieu St., a vestige of the wall foundation running inside the Forbidden



City under the Ly dynasty was discovered. Part of the wall foundation, 170m long and 1.9m wide, which runs in the east - west direction, was unearthed. Archaeologists guessed it was a vestige of the wall used to separate the Forbidden City into two areas, of which the southern one was used for the workplace of the king and the court; whereas the northern one was used as home for the royal family [24, p.23]. In Section E (the premise of the former Ba Dinh Hall), traces of gates and the foundation of a smaller enclosure wall running around an area consisting of one or several palaces were found. Based on the vestiges of the enclosure wall in combination with written materials, we can carry out further research on the inner composition of the Forbidden City. Since there was an enclosure wall inside the Forbidden City, it was definitely surrounded by a defensive wall.

Historical documents also reveal that it was possible to sail a boat along To Lich River to the Forbidden City in 1174, because Prince Long Xuong once sailed to Ngan Ha gate in the year and was stopped there [36, III, p.9a]. Ngan Ha gate was built in 1063 [36, II, p.12a]. It is highly probable that Ngan Ha gate (the same as Ngoc Ha under the Le dynasty later on) was a waterway entrance to the Forbidden City from To Lich River.

Due to the strict defensive regulations, I think, under the Ly dynasty the halls and the entire Forbidden City were already surrounded by enclosure walls with some entrances, including at least Doan Mon gate in the south and a waterway gate connected to To Lich River.

### *2.1.3. Where is the central axis of the Forbidden City under the Ly dynasty?*

After conducting careful research on the vestiges of the architectural works under the Ly dynasty in the excavation sites, including Sections A, B, C, and D, Vietnamese and Japanese archaeologists made a drawing of the vestiges. The drawing shows a complex of architectural works built relatively symmetrically to the north - south axis; it is slightly inclined to the east by nearly  $5^{\circ}$  ( $4^{\circ}59'E$ ) [26, p.45]. Located on the axis is an octagonal work, of which the central pile-base is square-shaped with each side measuring 2.84m; there are two rounds of bases outside, of which each consists of 8 smaller square-shaped pile-bases. The architectural work is fairly large with a diameter measuring 21.40m and a surface area measuring  $682m^2$  [23, p.33]. A vestige of the foundation entrenchment made of raking-bond bricks was found on the west. Those bricks can be differentiated by their typical designs and divided into those under the Ly dynasty and those under the Tran dynasty. In the excavation site in the Rose Garden due south of the vestige site at No. 18, Hoang Dieu St., archaeologists also discovered relatively large pile-bases dating back to the Ly dynasty. They are also located along the symmetric axis. A vestige of Dai La citadel, of which the foundation was strengthened by dense piles for subsidence prevention, was also discovered to the south of those pile-bases. In the southern part of Dai La citadel, the vestige of a very strange architectural style was found, but both Vietnamese and international scholars have not identified what it was. Thus, it is

temporarily named “Đàn tế” (*lit.* worship platform/esplanade). It consists of a group of works in the centre and two works in the east and the west. Regarding the group of works in the centre, there is a square wooden pillar placed vertically and tied densely by rattan stems; a staircase made of wood and rattan stems is set on both sides. There is a frame made of four wooden bars that have a rectangular cross-section; they are joined by grooves, forming a square hole, of which the inside is carved round. The base is a stone component, of which the centre is concave to fit the round hole of the wooden frame. There are two circles surrounding the main work. The diameter of the outer circle is 14.5m and that of the inner is 9.34m; there are 16 holes for placement of pillars in each circle. The two outer works are located 9.6m to the east and the west of the central one. Each of them has four wooden bars joined together by grooves, forming a round hole like that in the central work. That is a very strange architectural style

which has been never found in East Asian countries such as China, Japan, and Korea. Since its precise name has not been identified, scientists gave it a temporary name of *Đàn tế*. It dates back to the early period of the Ly dynasty. The vestige site is also located on the central axis, slightly inclined to the east by 1.7m [14].

Based on particular calculation and thorough research of architectural works in the vestiges, Inoue Kazuto - a Japanese archaeologist - has determined that under the Ly dynasty the measurement unit of *thước* was a little more than 29.9cm; i.e. almost the same as the corresponding measurement unit used in the Song dynasty in China (30cm) [26, p.45]. Under the Ly dynasty, the sizes of compartments and the distances between architectural works are multiples of the unit. Architectural works follow the north - south direction, inclined to the northeast by 5° and the same measurement unit was used for all of them. That illustrates the standard of those architectural works.



Photos 1 – 2. Vestige of the Central Work of the *Đàn tế*

Source: Institute of Archaeology.

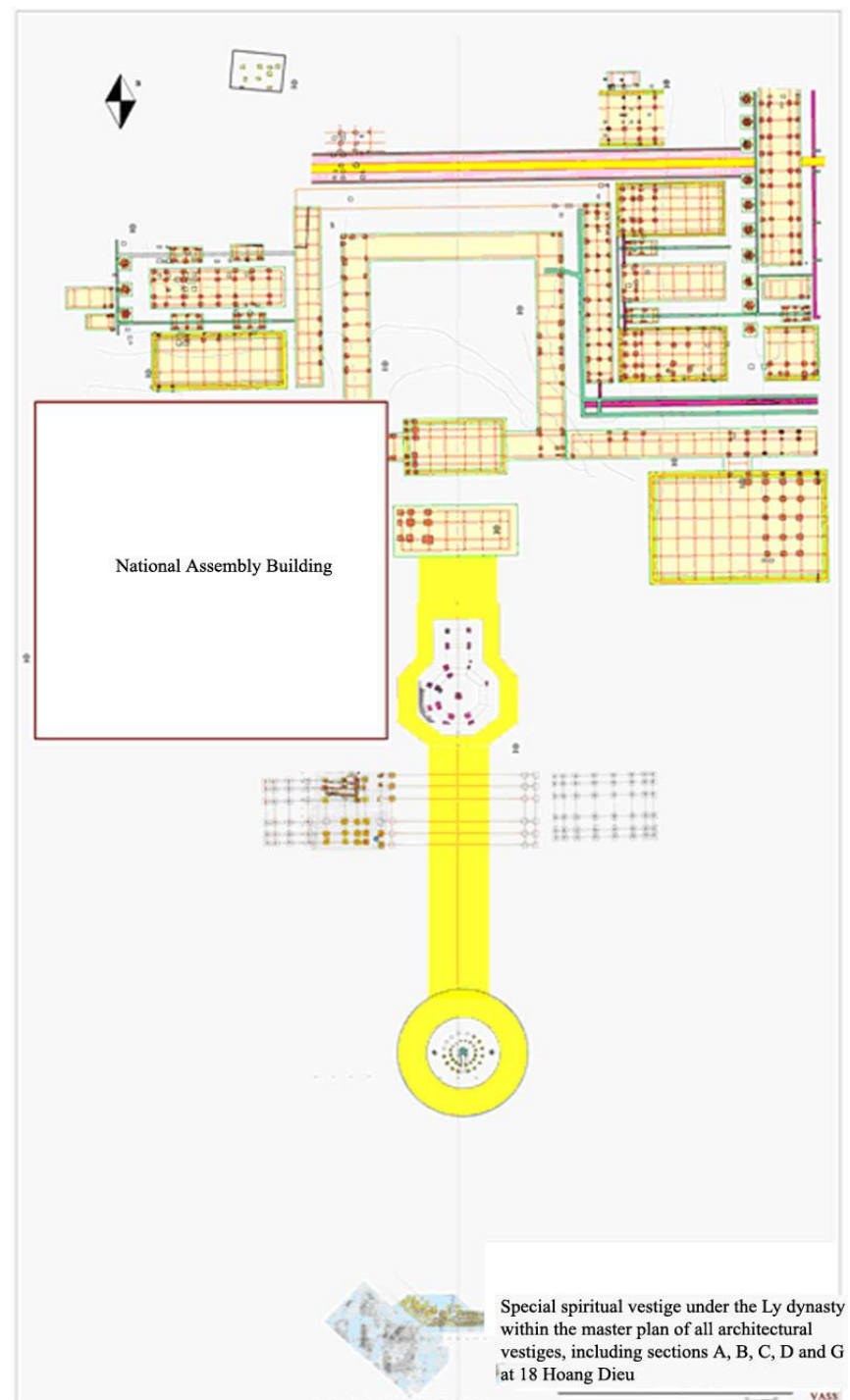


Figure 3. Master Plan of the Architectural Works under the Ly Dynasty in Sections A, B, C, D, G

*Source: Pham Quang Trieu.*

Based on the above-mentioned findings, a big question is raised, attracting a lot of attention from Vietnamese and international researchers: is the group of architectural works really located on the central axis of the Forbidden City under the Ly dynasty? What are their linkages with other architectural works in the Forbidden City? If that is the very central axis of the Forbidden City during the period of the Ly dynasty, the octagonal work must be Thien Khanh hall, according to the layout of palaces built in 1029-1030; and, Thien An hall must be located due south. Archaeological discoveries, however, are not sufficient to prove that hypothesis. The central axis of the Forbidden City under the Later Le early period and the Restored Le period has been identified to run across Doan Mon gate and Kinh Thien hall, of which the vestiges can be seen on the ground nowadays. Does it mean the central axis of the Forbidden City changed significantly from the Ly dynasty to the Later Le dynasty early period, switching from the west to the east?

It is necessary to pay attention to written documents. All the documents compiled during the periods of the Le and Nguyen dynasties show that both Can Nguyen/Thien An hall built under the Ly and Tran dynasties and Kinh Thien hall built under the Le dynasty were located at Nung hill, which was also named *Long Đổ* (dragon's navel), because it was the convergent point of the sacred spirit of the country according to Feng shui (Chinese geomancy) [29]. Based on those documents and the viewpoint of Feng shui, the Can Nguyen/Thien An hall under the Ly dynasty and Kinh Thien hall under

the Le dynasty, were surely built at Nung hill. That means the location of the central hall did not vary at all. Owing to the test excavations conducted from 2011 to 2014 in an area from Doan Mon gate to Kinh Thien hall in Hanoi citadel, many vestiges of the architectural works under the Ly and Tran dynasties were discovered. Particularly, the vestige of a big canal was found due north of the Doan Mon gate built under the Ly dynasty. It was 2m wide and 2m high, running in the east - west direction. The canal bed was paved with bricks; the two banks were built of bricks and reinforced solidly by wooden piles. Some vestiges of architectural works with gravel bases and brick foundations built under the Ly dynasty were found along the canal. In the excavation site, they also discovered an architectural work built under the Tran dynasty with a brick foundation, a base reinforced by broken tiles, and a sluice. To prove that the central axis of the Forbidden City did not change from the Ly and Tran dynasties to the Le dynasty, however, we have to wait for findings of future archaeological excavations conducted in the area along the central axis under the Le dynasty.

Based on the archaeological findings available at present, I think no one can deny the existence of a group of architectural works built symmetrically to a central axis that runs across the octagonal architectural work in Section C. The *Đàn tế* discovered in the area of the Rose Garden in 2014 is also located on the axis (only 1.7m away from the axis) but outside Dai La citadel. Under the Ly dynasty, a worship platform/esplanade named Xa Tac was built outside Truong Quang gate

(O Cho Dua) in 1048 and another worship platform named Vien Khau was built near the southern gate of Dai La citadel in 1154. Both of the worship platforms were located in the south, outside not only the Forbidden City but also the Imperial Citadel. In my opinion, that is a *group of architectural works of spiritual culture*; they are related to religions, especially Buddhism and *Mật giáo* (Secret Buddhism) and the contemporary folk faiths. Is it, therefore, possible that the octagonal work used to be a building for storage of sutras? In 1021, King Ly Thai To gave the order to build an octagonal building for storage of sutras, indeed. Earlier, in 1018 the Ly dynasty sent two notables, including Nguyen Dao Thanh and Pham Hac, as the king's envoys to the Song dynasty, asking for Tripitaka. In 1020, Ly Dao Thanh got Tripitaka and went back, so the king sent the Sangharaja named Phi Tri to Guangzhou to pick up the sutras. It is possible that the dynasty needed to build a spacious building for storage of the sutras in that area, due to the requirement of Buddhist development and the reception of the Buddhist sutras. Hung Thien Pagoda built in 1010 was probably located in the same area. Of course, this is just a hypothesis to be raised for discussion, as I am in two minds as to how to interpret it.

## 2.2. Tran dynasty (1226-1400)

Due to the royal conflicts taking place in the late years of the Ly dynasty, many palaces were damaged or completely destroyed. After the Tran dynasty was

founded, it had to rebuild a lot. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the imperial citadel of Thang Long was occupied three times by the Chinese-Mongol invaders and it was consequently severely devastated. After defeating the invaders in 1288, the royal family came back to the palaces, but “the *thượng hoàng* (can be translated as the “elder king” - the predecessor-emperor, who retired and gave the throne to the ruling king, usually his son) had to stay in the corridor, which had been used for imperial guards before, because all the palaces had been burnt down by the enemy” [34, V-55a]. During the post-war period, the dynasty certainly had to repair and rebuild many palaces.

Inside the Forbidden City, the main architectural work remained Thien An palatial hall with a large front yard named Long Tri (Yard of Dragon), where a parade of imperial guards took place in 1351 under the review of the king from Thien An hall. There were other halls (Vietnamese: *điện*, Chinese character: 殿) named Tap Hien, Tho Quang, Bat Giac, Dien Hong, Dai Minh, and Dien Hien. Le Thien palace was renamed Thuong Xuan in 1236, where concubines stayed. Of all the palaces under the Tran dynasty, the two most important were the “*cung*” (Chinese character: 宮) of Thanh Tu (also named Bac Cung – North Palace, Van Tho, or Phu Thien), where the *thượng hoàng* stayed, and of Quan Trieu, where the [incumbent] king stayed. Under the regime of the Tran dynasty, after abdicating in favour of his son, the *thượng hoàng* still held great power; he took part in all affairs of the nation and made important decisions; moreover, he could even appoint

another to replace the incumbent king. Thus, the emperor had his own hall name Thanh Tu in the capital city, although he often stayed in Thien Truong (Nam Dinh province). There was an apparatus of mandarins working in Thanh Tu as an office of the *thượng hoàng*. It was managed by a nobleman or a high-ranking mandarin, who was appointed the *Tri Thánh Từ cung* or *Thiêm tri Thánh Từ cung* (chief of Thanh Tu palace) or *Hành khiển ty* (Head of the Special-Envoy Department); in 1325, the apparatus was renamed *Môn hạ sảnh* (Subordinate Division). In 1236, the position of the chief of Thanh Tu was held by Tran Lieu, who had the title *Hiển Hoàng* (Senior Prince Hien). Before holding the position of *An phủ sứ* of Thanh Hoa in 1326, Nguyen Trung Ngan also held the position. The organisational structure in Thanh Tu palace was almost similar to that in Quan Trieu palace of the king.

In 1368, a long corridor was built, running from Nguyen Huyen pavilion to Dai Trieu gate in the west so that mandarins could shun the sun and the rain when going to attend sessions as the king's audience. According to *Tam tổ thực lục* (*Records on Three Patriarchs*), there was Tu Phuc pagoda in Đại nội (大内 - Area of Royal Palaces). The pagoda was definitely located inside the Forbidden City, because King Tran Nhan Tong often took siestas there<sup>14</sup>. In *Lịch triều hiến chương loại chí*, (*Records on Administrative Systems of Successive Dynasties*) compiled by Phan Huy Chu, the story on mandarin Doan Nhu Hai also mentions that Thien Phuc pagoda was located near the hall, where King Tran Anh

Tong once had drinks and drowsed, while *thượng hoàng* Tran Nhan Tong arrived to examine the palaces" [1, p.189].

After paying a visit to Thang Long as the Chinese king's envoy in 1293, Chen Fu, also known as Gangzhong, wrote a book titled *An Nam tức sự* (*Notes Inspired by Annam Trip*), consisting of poems and notes. There was a part describing Thang Long as below: "Coming to the home of the chieftain (*the way the Chinese called the Vietnamese king* – editor's note), we can see a main gate named Duong Minh, on which a pavilion named Trieu Thien is located. A smaller gate on the left is named Nhat Tan; and another smaller gate located on the right is named Van Hoi. Located inside the main gate is a shaft some tens of *trượng* large (approx. 60m)<sup>15</sup>. Looking up from the veranda steps, one can see a signboard saying Tap Hien hall, on which a big pavilion named Minh Linh is located. A pathway running to a large hall named Duc Huy is found on the right. The left entrance is named Dong Lac and the right one is named Kieu Ung. All the signboards are written with golden colour" [19]. The "Story of Annam" in *Nguyên sử* (元史, *History of [Chinese-Mongol] Yuan [dynasty]*) also provides the following description of the Tran halls: "There is a signboard saying Dai Hung Mon (= Dai Hung gate), which has 5 doors, [therefore called] "*Ngũ Môn*" (Vietnamese: *Ngũ môn* = 5 doors). Two side doors are located on the left and the right. The central palatial hall consists of 9 compartments and is named Thien An royal hall; the southern pavilion is named Trieu Thien" [41]. Dai Hung gate was the southern gate of the middle citadel, which was named Phoenix

or Dragon-Phoenix under the Tran dynasty. The five doors it consisted of included a main door, two secondary, and two side ones. Duong Minh gate was the entrance to the Forbidden City, on which a pavilion named Trieu Thien was located; there were two smaller doors named Nhat Tan and Van Hoi on both sides. Coming inside, we could see first Tap Hien hall, on which a pavilion named Minh Linh was located, and then Duc Huy hall, of which two gates named Dong Lac and Kieu Ung were set on two sides. Thien An hall, also named Thien An royal hall, consisted of nine compartments. Considered the central hall, it was located in the centre of the architectural works of the Forbidden City. There are not any documents saying that Doan Mon gate was built during the period of the Ly dynasty. Based on the above-mention descriptions, however, Duong Minh gate with Trieu Thien pavilion above was named Chinh Nam gate (Exactly South Gate), which was also the name of Doan Mon gate under the Tran dynasty. This is corresponding to the description in the contemporary history books, which say that in 1281, Chai Chun- an envoy of the Yuan king, rode a horse straight through Duong Minh gate to Tap Hien hall. Only there at the entrance of the hall did he dismount [34, V-40b, 41a, Vol.2, pp.46-47]. Another envoy of the Yuan king named Zhang Lidao, who came to Thang Long in 1292, described that he had to cross a bridge named Ngoan Nguyet and go through Truong Minh hall, before coming to the southern gate, where he dismounted, carried the royal proclamation, and went through “Minh Duong” gate;

whereas, the following mandarins had to use Van Hoi door and Vietnamese mandarins had to use Nhat Tan door [21, p.93]. The southern gate was named Duong Minh, but it was incorrectly written “Minh Duong”; the two side doors were named Van Hoi and Nhat Tan, similarly to the above-mentioned description by Chen Fu.

At No. 18, Hoang Dieu St., archaeologists discovered 7 vestiges of the foundation, 2 wells, 2 sluices, and 9 vestiges of the wall foundation running around halls. A particular feature of the architecture under the Tran dynasty is that the foundation of walls was often reinforced by bricks and tiles arranged in the lemon-flower shape. That has been found in both Thang Long Imperial Citadel and Thien Truong palace (Nam Dinh). Based on the vestiges of architectural works, we can realise that the Tran dynasty at first utilised some architectural works built under the Ly dynasty, but then carried out new planning, destroying some of them to build new ones. The architecture of the Tran dynasty, which is shown in the designs and arrangements of bricks, tiles, and terra-cotta statues placed in the ridges and edges of the roof, expresses a more liberal and powerful view. In addition to the architectural vestiges, archaeologists have also found royal pottery artefacts covered with white, turquoise, and brownish glaze, of which some have a big size. They have also demonstrated successfully that pottery-kilns already existed in Thang Long in the period of the Ly dynasty and continued to develop, providing high-quality products for the royal family and for export as well [24, pp.26-27].

2.3. *The Later Le dynasty early period (1428-1527), the Mac dynasty (1527-1592), and the Restored Le dynasty (1593-1789)*

After defeating the Ming invaders and bringing peace to the country, in the fourth month of the lunar year of *Mậu Thân* (1428), Le Loi moved from his thatch palatial hall in Bo De, which was situated on the other side of the Red River and where he had stationed the troops to besiege invaders, to Dong Quan citadel. On the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month, he officially came to the throne in Kinh Thien hall, founding the Later Le dynasty. It was for the first time the name of Kinh Thien hall was mentioned. In 1430, Dong Quan/Dong Do citadel (Eastern City/Capital) under the Tran dynasty was renamed by the Le dynasty as Dong Kinh (Eastern capital city) – the capital of Great Viet. Immediately in the same year of 1428, the Le dynasty carried out new planning of the Forbidden City. Kinh Thien hall was rebuilt; a new hall named Van Tho was built together with two others to its left and right, which were named *Tả* (left) and *Hữu* (right); another hall named Can Chanh was also built. Under the Later Le dynasty early period, the Forbidden City was renamed *Cung thành* (Royal palace citadel) (1467).

Under the Later Le dynasty early period (1428-1527), a tremendous upheaval took place in 1459. On a night in the tenth month of the lunar year of *Kỷ Mão* (1459), Prince Nghi Dan and his accomplices used ladders to climb over the eastern gate of the Imperial Citadel; they stole into the Forbidden City and killed King Le Nhan Tong and the queen mother. Nghi Dan then came onto the throne by himself. In 1460, loyal subjects of

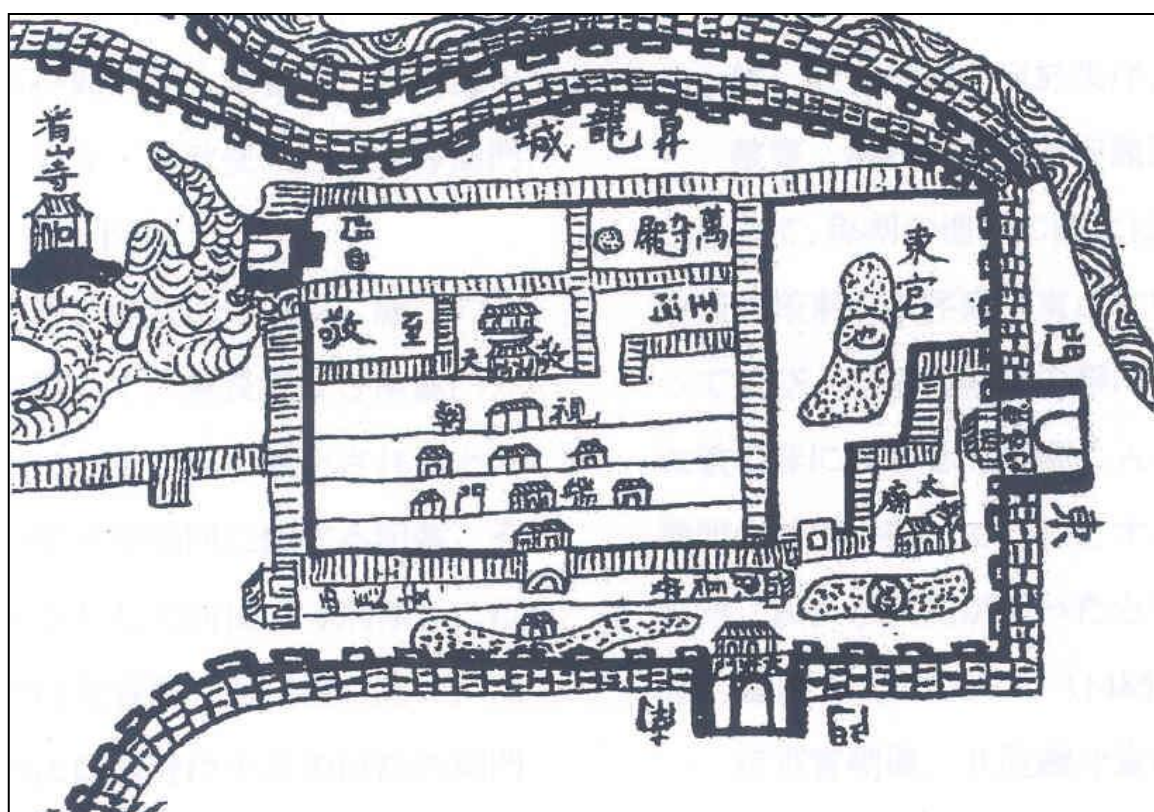
the Le dynasty extirpated Nghi Dan and his rebellious force, putting Prince Le Tu Thanh on the throne, who became King Le Thanh Tong. Due to that 1459 incident, Le Thanh Tong was very vigilant. He paid more attention to repairing the Imperial Citadel and the Royal palace citadel. Apart from the construction of the *Hoàng thành* - Imperial Citadel, in 1467 the King gave the order to build the *Cung thành* - Royal palace citadel. Unluckily, the country suffered from a bad harvest and consequently the rice price shot up. As the result, the construction was postponed.

The Forbidden City under the Later Le dynasty early period is shown in the map of Dong Kinh in *Hồng Đức bản đồ* (Hong Duc map collection). This can be seen as the first national set of maps, which were done very meticulously according to the guideline promulgated by King Le Thanh Tong. In 1466, the king divided the whole country into 12 *thừa tuyên* (an administrative unit similar to a province; in 1471, Quang Nam was added to the list to become the 13<sup>rd</sup> *thừa tuyên*). In 1467, the king ordered the head of every *thừa tuyên* to study the local topographic investigations, information and products to make a map with detailed notes. In 1469, the king ordered *Bộ Hộ* (Ministry of Finance) to collect the maps and materials of all the *thừa tuyên* to make a set of maps for the entire country. The work was eventually accomplished in the 21<sup>st</sup> year of the reign of Hong Duc, which is the reigning title of Kinh Le Thanh Tong, or 1490. This was the original Hong Duc map collection, which is, unfortunately, not available nowadays. There are, however, copies drawn based on the collection during



the period from the late Le dynasty to the early Nguyen dynasty with some additional geographic names and architectural works. The Hong Duc map collection available at present consists of 15 maps, including 1 map of the whole country, 1 map of Trung Do (i.e. Dong Kinh), and 13 maps of *thừa tuyên*. The maps were drawn by the contemporary mapping methods. They were not based on precise data, ratios, and directions gained from the fieldwork

measurement, but just played the symbolic role, showing relatively the borders, ratios and directions. Each of the maps represents the topography of mountains, rivers, coasts, islands, administrative units, and some important architectural works. Below is the Forbidden City shown in the map of Dong Kinh (part of the Hong Duc map collection) preserved with the code A.2499 at the Institute of Han-Nom Studies.



Map 3. Map of the Forbidden City in Dong Kinh citadel

Source: *Hong Duc Map Collection*, coded A.2499.

According to the map, Kinh Thien hall is located in the centre of the Forbidden City. Chi Kinh and Ngoc Ha halls are located to its west and east respectively. Van Tho hall is found in front of Ngoc Ha hall. Thi Trieu

hall and Doan Mon gate are located in front of Kinh Thien hall. The Forbidden City is surrounded by a citadel wall, which is nearly square-shaped. The western gate is located in the northwest. A big entrance is

located in the south with two doors named Eastern Trang An and Western Trang An outside. There are walls dividing the Forbidden City into different parts. The eastern part contains Dong Cung (Eastern Palace), which is located next to a large pond and surrounded by a wall. Thai Mieu – the place to worship the King’s ancestors and predecessors – is located due southeast of Dong Cung. The entire Forbidden City lies in the eastern part of the Imperial Citadel named Thang Long with two entrances named Dong Mon (East Gate) and Nam Mon (South Gate).

The map of the Forbidden City shows locations of some palaces, including palatial halls, of which the most prominent one is Kinh Thien surrounded by a wall along three sides (in the east, west, and north). According to the chronicles, many halls built under the Later Le early period are not included in the Hong Duc maps. They are, for example: Can Chanh hall and two side halls named *Tả* (Left) and *Hữu* (Right) built in 1428; Can Duc hall and Hoi Anh hall (1434); Khanh Phuong hall (1440); Thua Thien pavilion (1448); *Nghị sự đường* (House of Court Discussions) and Tuong Quang hall (1460); Can Duc (Vietnamese “*Căn Đức*”) hall (1465), House of Phung Nghi (1467); Do Tri, Thuong Duong, Giam Tri, Truong Sinh, Luu Boi, Hoang Cuc, and Hung Minh halls (1504); Truong Lac palace (1505); Kim Quang hall and Doan Khang palace (1509); Trung Hoa palace (1510); and Quang Tri hall (1513)...

The Forbidden City under the Le dynasty was described in detail by Nguyen Van Sieu (also known as Phuong Dinh, 1799-1872) in *Phương Đình địa dư địa chí* (*Geographic records by Phuong Dinh*):

“According to the map of Thang Long at the time of Hong Duc, the citadel had the shape of a carpenter’s square. Three sides, including the east, the south and the north, were straight; the length of the western and the southern sides was half of the lengths of the eastern and the northern ones. The wall ran northwards from *Cửa Đông* (East Gate) in Duc Mon village (formerly named Dong Mon) of Dong Xuan canton to To Lich River, where it started to run along the left bank of the river to *Cửa Bắc* (North Gate); and then, it ran westwards to Nhat Chieu ward, where it turned southwards to Bao Khanh gate. It then continued southwards to the front right of *Văn Miếu* (Temple of Literature) and turned left behind the temple to *Cửa Nam* (South Gate), where it ran straight to the east. They are the traces of Thang Long citadel, where *Cung thành* (Royal palace citadel, or Forbidden City) was located in the centre. After getting into the *Cung thành* through its entrance, one could see Doan Mon gate, behind which Thi Trieu hall was located. Kinh Thien hall with two other halls located to its right and left and named Chi Kinh and Van Tho respectively was found behind Thi Trieu. *Tây Tràng An* (West Trang An) and *Đông Tràng An* (East Trang An) were located to the right and the left of Doan Mon respectively. *Suối Ngọc* (Jade Stream) was located inside that area. *Hoàng thành* (Imperial Citadel) was the outer citadel of the *Cung thành* (Royal palace citadel). Regarding the eastern part of the Imperial Citadel, the front hall was Thai Mieu and a palace named Dong Cung (Eastern Palace) was located behind it” [20, p.533]. According to the description made by Nguyen Van Sieu, the Imperial Citadel was

named Thang Long; the Royal palace citadel, or the Forbidden City, was located inside, consisting of the palaces shown in the Hong Duc map; thus, Thai Mieu and Dong Cung were located outside the Royal palace citadel.

The regulations on the ceremonials for coming to attend sessions as the king's audience in the times of Hong Duc rule (i.e. under King Le Thanh Tong) also reveal that the front court, where people had to wait before attending, was named Dan Tri (*Dan Tri*).

In 1472, before coming to attend the king's audience, military officers had to stand in line on the eastern and western sides outside Doan Mon gate; on the first and fifteenth days of the lunar month, they had to wait outside Van Minh and Sung Vu doors. After three drum rolls, they started to enter Dan Tri (Red yard) to arrange the imperial equipage. Thus, the doors that military officers used to go into Dan Tri to arrange the imperial equipage were located behind Doan Mon gate and named Van Minh and Sung Vu. As stipulated in 1485, all mandarins, including high-ranking, civil and military ones, had to get off a horse or a palanquin outside Doan Mon gate. Dukes, marquises, earls, and princesses' consorts would be accompanied by two page-boys; and the highest-ranked mandarins - by one, but they had to stop outside Ngoan Thiem door. This reveals that there was a door named Ngoan Thiem for servants behind Doan Mon.

In 1485, the regulations on the ceremonials for coming to attend the king's audience were also issued as below: "From now on, on the day of the king's audience, after the first drum roll, guardian mandarins start to come in Dan Tri in the ranking

order. After the second drum roll, other mandarins start to come in Dan Tri in the ranking order; jostle against others is forbidden. All of those who still remain outside Chu Tuoc door after the third drum roll as well as those who remain on the left and the right outside Doan Mon gate after the 50<sup>th</sup> bell sound will be stopped by the door-keeping mandarins. They will be reported by the *Ty xá nhân vệ cấm y* that is in charge of internal supervision, to the king for punishment" [34, XII-74a, XIII-46a, Vol.2, pp.460, 495]. Dan Tri was a ceremonial space located in front of Kinh Thien hall. All those who came to attend the king's audience in Dan Tri had to go through Chu Tuoc and Doan Mon doors first. When they reached Dai Hung gate of the Imperial Citadel, they had to get off the horse or palanquin to go on foot from there to Dan Tri. As a result, King Le Thanh Tong decided to build two rows of houses outside Dai Hung gate so that mandarins had a place to wait, before coming to attend the king's audience. After ascending the throne in 1497, King Lê Hiến Tông (1497-1504) immediately gave the order to build a waiting facility which served as a reception venue and was named *Viện Đãi lậu* (Reception Institute) outside Dai Hung gate. The facility was comprised of two rows, each of which consisted of three compartments and two wings [34, XIII-85a, Vol.2, p.525]. According to the document, such a waiting house was already built outside the West Gate during the period of King Le Thai To, and it existed over the periods of King Le Thai Tong and King Le Nhan Tong. However, the document did not provide any information as to where the gate was located and how to get

in the front yard named Dan Tri. In the Hong Duc map drawn in 1490, the West Gate was located in the northwest corner of the Forbidden City. I therefore wonder how to go from there to Dan Tri in front of Kinh Thien hall.

As mentioned in the article on the imperial guardians and military administration in *Hình luật chí* (Criminal code) of *Lịch triều hiến chương loại chí* (歷朝憲章類誌 *Records on Administrative Systems of Successive Dynasties*) compiled by Phan Huy Chu, the Imperial Citadel had some gates named Dong Hoa, Thien Huu, Dai Hung and Bac Than; and, it was necessary to go through many gates to get in the Forbidden City. The enclosure wall of the Forbidden City was named “forbidden wall”; the gate of the forbidden wall was named “forbidden gate”; the wall enclosing a palace/hall was named “palace/hall wall” and the gate into a palace/hall was named “palace/hall gate”. The forbidden wall had multiple gates named Doan Minh (probably Doan Mon?), Ta Duc, Huu Duc, Tuong Huy, Dai Dinh, Truong Lac, Dai Khanh, Kien Binh, and Huyen Vu. In the palaces and halls, there were also the first and the second gates [1, p.114]. The map of Dong Kinh in the Hong Duc map collection shows clearly the separating walls inside the Forbidden City. Particularly, the wall of Kinh Thien hall enclosed three sides in the north, the east, and the west; the hall gate was located in the south. According to historical records, water inside the area of Kinh Thien rose by 4 *thước* (approx. 1.6m) due to a heavy rain in 1491, making the wall collapse. Pursuant to *Hình luật chí*, those who climbed over the forbidden walls would be

garrotted; those who climbed over the hall walls would be guillotined. In the chapter on the imperial guardians of the *Quốc triều hình luật* - the law under the Restored Le dynasty - there is an article differentiating between the forbidden wall and the forbidden gate, between the palace/hall wall and the palace/hall gate; very strict punishments were stipulated to be imposed on those who violated the no-trespassing area of the Forbidden City [42, pp.50-54].

Based on the written historical documents, we can name the halls and gates of the Forbidden City, as described above. Yet, it is extremely difficult to identify their specific locations and make a comprehensive layout.

The central palatial hall Kinh Thien and the Dan Tri were the most important architectural works and space for the king's audience as well as for the reception of foreign envoys and national ceremonies. Kinh Thien hall was built for the first time in 1428 and rebuilt in 1465. The rebuilding work started in the third month of the lunar year *Ất Dậu* (1465) and was accomplished in the eleventh month of the same year. In 1467, four stone banisters were set up along the 9 steps of the front yard, dividing it into three separate pathways to the hall; the central pathway was used by the king and the two side ones were used by mandarins. Under the Later Le early period (it still remains unknown what year it was), two big bells named Can Nguyen were hung inside Kinh Thien hall. In 1509, the handle of the bell was broken, so it fell down.

Whenever the king gave audience, he did it in Kinh Thien hall. Courtiers came in Dan Tri in the ranking order. In 1473, it was

stipulated that those who came to attend the king's audience were forbidden to spit the residue of betel by the entrance or in Dan Tri. At that time, the custom of chewing betel was very common in society among both men and women, commoners and notables. When receiving the envoy of the Ming dynasty, the king stayed in Kinh Thien to receive the Chinese imperial edicts. The feasts were held afterwards in Can Chanh hall. In the Later Le dynasty early period, the king and courtiers highly appreciated the Confucian education and examinations. In 1442, the first *thi Hội* was held by the Le dynasty in Thang Long Imperial Citadel. In 1463, King Le Thanh Tong stipulated that *thi Hội* be held once every three years. From 1442 to 1526, *thi Hội* was held 26 times by the dynasty, getting 989 *tiến sĩ* (進士, successful candidates at the metropolitan exam), 41 *tam khôi* (三魁 the three best candidates at the national exam, including: *trạng nguyên* - 狀元 the winner of the first prize; *bảng nhãn* - 榜眼 second prize; and, *thám hoa* - 探花 third prize), of whom 15 were *trạng nguyên* (since 1484, laureates of the first prize were named *Tiến sĩ cập đệ, đệ nhất giáp, đệ nhất danh*; i.e. the first successful candidate at the examination). In the entire period of King Le Thanh Tong alone, as said above, *thi Hội* was held regularly - once every three years; thus, 12 times of *thi Hội* were held, getting 501 *tiến sĩ*, of whom 19 were *tam khôi* and 12 were *trạng nguyên*. After passing *thi Hội*, successful candidates were allowed to take *thi Đình* (Court exam) in the front yard of Dan Tri; questions of the exam were given by the king himself. The king stayed in Kinh Thien hall and gave

questions to candidates. After all the exam papers were marked, the king came to Kinh Thien again to attend the ceremony for reading aloud the names of new *tiến sĩ* with congratulations from mandarins in the court dress. The roll of honour, in which names of successful candidates were listed, was hung outside Dong Hoa gate. Since 1502, it was hung on the door of Thai Hoc house (Vietnamese: Thái Học = Highest Learning). From the Ly and Tran dynasties to the Later Le dynasty early period, the ceremonial activities held in Kinh Thien hall and Dan Tri gradually changed due to development of the centralised monarchy and Confucian domination.

The Mac dynasty (1527-1592) mainly emphasised the importance of strengthening Dai La citadel and the Imperial Citadel. More ramparts were built outside Dai La citadel to cope with attacks launched by the Trinh lords' army. Nothing new was built in the Forbidden City. In 1584, King Mac Mau Hop gave the order to repair the imperial city, carrying out large-scale constructions; new kilns were set up to produce bricks and tiles. An Bang and Ninh Soc were assigned to carry bamboo and wood to the imperial city. It took one year, from 1584 to 1585, for the construction work to be accomplished [4, p.344; 34, XVII-14b, Vol.3, p.161; 40, XIX-15b, Vol.2, p.177]. The document, however, did not mention specifically which architectural works were done, especially those in the Forbidden City.

Under the Restored Le dynasty (1593-1789), after the Trinh lord set up a hall outside the Imperial Citadel, the Forbidden

City of the Le king was no longer renewed or repaired regularly; as a result, it was no longer so splendid as before; some parts were damaged or completely broken. In the chronicles, it is recorded that repairs as well as construction of new works were carried out several times; for example, in 1596, Thai Mieu was repaired; in 1630, 3 inner halls and 10 compartments of corridors were built. Meanwhile, some palaces collapsed or were burnt during the years. For example, part of Kinh Thien hall was destroyed because of a meteor; and, in 1619, Doan Mon mansion was burnt...

After building Dai Do citadel in 1749, the Imperial Citadel - an outer defensive citadel of the Forbidden City - became less significant. Activities of the Le king were also limited to some national ceremonies, such as the ritual ceremonies in Thai Mieu and the Nam Giao heaven worshipping rites, the audience-giving, the ceremony of coronation, and the granting of the imperial edict on the enthronement, the ceremony of ordaining the Trinh lord the title of Grand Marshal, and the receiving of foreign envoys, etc. According to the chronicles, many palaces, such as Kinh Thien, Thi Trieu, Van Tho, and Can Chanh, etc. remained till the late period of the Le dynasty.

As regards the Restored Le dynasty, especially in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, apart from ancient bibliographies and archaeological documents, we also have a lot of sources of materials written by Western clergymen and merchants about the Forbidden City of Thang Long. As described by Samuel Baron in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the most grandiose

is the three-layer wall enclosing the ancient citadel and palaces. The remaining ruins have demonstrated its strength and solidity together with large and stable gates paved with marble. The circumference of the entire area ranges from 6 to 7 miles. All the palaces, gates, and yards look very magnificent [28, p.141]. As described by J. Richard in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, the three-layer walls surrounding the citadel and the old palaces, as well as the yards paved with marble and the ruins of the gates and rooms, reminisce spectators about their heyday with a deep regret that one of the most beautiful and the largest architectural works in Asia has collapsed. Those palaces alone cover an area with the circumference ranging from 6 to 7 miles [27, p.274]<sup>16</sup>. To the eye of foreigners, the Forbidden City and the palaces inside were downgraded, but the remaining ruins were still reflecting the heyday of the past.

After taking the army to the North and overthrew the government of the Trinh Lord in 1786, Nguyen Hue - the leader of Tay Son Army - came in Van Tho hall to visit King Lê Hiển Tông, who was lying on the bed because of sickness. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month of the lunar year *Bính Ngọ* (1786), an official ceremony of the king giving audience was held in Kinh Thien hall. Nguyen Hue, heading Tay Son military generals, went through Doan Mon gate to Dan Tri to make a respect-paying audience to the Le king. He made clear the target of overthrowing the Trinh lord and supporting the Le king and submitting the administrative records of the troops and the people, which symbolised the power of sovereignty, to the king. On the

seventeenth day of the same month, imperial equipage and *nhã nhạc* (court music) performance were held by King Lê Hiển Tông in the east and the west of Dan Tri. The king gave audience, promulgating the royal proclamation on the national unity, which was then hung outside Dai Hung gate [10, pp.576, 579]. It was a really significant audience-giving ceremony held by the Le king in the Forbidden City of Thang Long.

In 1788, Nguyen Hue acceded to the throne on Ban mountain (Hue), founding the Tay Son royal dynasty and became Emperor Quang Trung. Phu Xuan (Hue) was chosen to be the capital city. After Nguyen Hue routed the invaders of the Qing dynasty, liberating the imperial citadel of Thang Long and afterwards the whole country in the spring of *Kỷ Dậu* (1789), the northern city of Thang Long became a metropolis of *Bắc Thành* (North City) comprising 7 inner *trấn* (the administrative unit similar to a province today) such as: Thanh Hoa Ngoai, Son Nam Thuong, Son Nam Ha, Son Tay, Kinh Bac, Hai Duong, Phung Thien and 6 outer *trấn* namely Lang Son, Cao Bang, Tuyen Quang, Hung Hoa, Thai Nguyen and Yen Quang (quite similar to the division of administrative localities in the current Northern Vietnam). Emperor Quang Trung quickly re-established the diplomatic relations with the Qing dynasty. In the summer of 1789, a Tay Son diplomatic mission led by Nguyen Quang Hien was solemnly received by the Qing dynasty in Beijing. At the end of the same year, a mission of the Qing dynasty led by Cheng Lin came to Thang Long to confer the kingship and grant the seal of Annam King

to Quang Trung. In the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the tenth month of the lunar year *Kỷ Dậu* (01 December 1789), the Qing mission moved from the reception in Kien Nghia communal house (of which the trace can be found at No. 2A, Nguyen Huu Huan St.) through Quang Van hall and then Doan Mon gate to Tiep Thu hall, and, finally, Kinh Thien hall. On behalf of Emperor Quang Trung, Pham Cong Tri received the kingship and the seal; a welcome reception was then held for the diplomatic mission in Can Chanh hall [32, p.219].

Under the Nguyen dynasty (1802-1945), the capital was located in Phu Xuan (Hue); with Thang Long remaining the metropolis of *Bắc Thành* and became the administrative centre of Hanoi province since 1831. In 1805, the dynasty destroyed the Forbidden City to build a new citadel with the Vauban style. In 1831, it was named Hanoi citadel. The central axis of Hanoi citadel was almost the same as that of Thang Long Forbidden City. The Nguyen dynasty rebuilt some palaces and halls inside the Forbidden City and carried out new planning of the *hành cung* (royal step-over palace, out-of-capital palace) to be used by the kings, whenever they paid a visit to the North. In 1816, Kinh Thien hall built of wood started to go rotten, so the dynasty gave the order to demolish and rebuild it. During the rules of King Gia Long (1802-1819) and King Minh Mạng (1820-1841), the royal step-over place was repaired and rebuilt many times; it was sometimes enlarged, but also sometimes narrowed. In the period of King Thieu Tri (1841-1847), the royal step-over place in Hanoi consisted of: a *Đại điện* (Great royal-court palatial hall), a *Hậu điện* (Rear royal

palatial hall), a hall named *Coi châu* (Royal review/the king giving audience), and one named *Cần chính*. In 1841, Kinh Thien shall was renamed Long Thien [39, Vol.13I, pp.61, 66; 31, Vol.23, p.442].

Late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after occupying Hanoi, French troops were garrisoned inside the citadel. Consequently, they destroyed Long Thien in 1886 to build the headquarters of artillery. From 1895 to 1897, the French colonial government destroyed almost all Hanoi citadel, except for some works such as Doan Mon gate, the foundation of Kinh Thien hall with its steps and stone banisters carved with the design of the dragon in the past Forbidden City, the North Gate, and the Flag Tower (Vietnamese: *Cột cờ*, or *Kỳ Đài*) of Hanoi citadel.

#### 2.4. Location and size of the Forbidden City

Based on the aboveground vestiges and findings of recent archaeological excavations, we can identify initially some vestiges of the Forbidden City under the Later Le dynasty early period and the Restored Le dynasty (period) as below:

**Doan Mon gate** is an inner gate in the south of the Forbidden City. The vestige of Doan Mon that we can see now is the gate built under the Later Le dynasty early period; it is a nearly U-shaped architectural work made of stone and wooden-hammer bricks. It has 5 archways. The central archway is the largest (4.0m high and 2.7m wide), above which a flagstone carved with “Đoan Môn” in Chinese characters (端 門) is hung. The archway was used only by the king. The two side archways are smaller (3.8m high and 2.5m wide) used by mandarins and royal family

members. The two secondary side archways were used by the troops and servants. Because of the 5-archway architecture, Doan Mon is also named *Ngũ Môn* (Five-door gate; “ngũ” = 5). The entire Doan Mon gate is a large block 46.5m wide, 26.5m thick, and 6m high<sup>17</sup>. After thorough consideration, we can realise that Doan Mon gate has experienced some repairs. Especially, Mon Lau mansion was already destroyed and the square-shaped architecture that we can see at present was built under the Nguyen dynasty and then restored in 1998. The archaeological test excavations conducted in 1999 show that there were architectural works and artefacts from the Ly and Tran dynasties beneath Doan Mon gate. In the recent excavation in the Rose Garden, part of the wall of the Forbidden City was found, running westwards to Doan Mon gate. The wall of the Forbidden City was made of rammed earth and reinforced by bricks both inside and outside.

**Kinh Thien hall** was the central palatial hall in the Forbidden City. Legend has it that it was built at Nung hill - the dragon’s navel (*Long Đố*), which was considered the centre of heaven and earth and where the sacred spirit of the country was crystallised. The hall was demolished in 1816 and Long Thien hall, which was the royal step-over place of the Nguyen dynasty, was also destroyed in 1886. At present, the remaining vestige is the ground of Kinh Thien hall with 9 steps and 4 stone banisters carved with the designs of dragons and clouds, which were set up in 1467 to divide the 9 steps into 3 separate pathways. The two banisters in the middle are blocks of rock carved into two dragons



with 5-claw legs and other patterns, which are typical for the art under the Later Le dynasty early period. Behind the hall, there are also upward steps with two stone dragons typical for the art in the 17<sup>th</sup> century under the Restored Le dynasty. The findings from the 4 holes of test excavation on both sides of the front as well as the back steps of Kinh Thien hall show that it experienced large-scale construction twice, one in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the other in 17<sup>th</sup> century.

**Dan Tri (Red yard)** is the yard of dragon located between Kinh Thien hall and Doan Mon gate. The photograph taken by Hocquart in 1886 shows that the traces of Dan Tri could be seen in front of Kinh Thien at that time, but all the paving bricks were removed; there was just a pathway in the middle left. That was the very pathway used by the king (*ngự đạo* - the imperial pathway), running from the main hall to Doan Mon gate. From 2011 to 2013, and especially in 2014, excavations were continually carried out in an area of 1,000m<sup>2</sup>. It was, consequently, discovered that there were two separate layers beneath Dan Tri and the imperial pathway dating back to the Later Le dynasty early in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the Restored Le dynasty in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Dan Tri of the Later Le dynasty early period was built on a foundation of rammed yellow clay and paved with bricks. Both sides of the imperial pathway were reinforced by bricks. In 2013 and 2014 particularly, the foundation of the enclosure wall of Dan Tri was found, running in the north-south direction. The western part of the foundation is 1.7m wide and 57m long (within the area of the excavations), while

the eastern part is 1.5m wide. The wall is made of rammed earth and consolidated quite solidly by bricks built in both sides. Building materials are mainly wooden-hammer bricks, of which some bore the phrase “*Thu Vât hương Thu Vât huyện*” (Thu Vat village, Thu Vat district) like the bricks dating back to the date of the Le dynasty found at No. 18, Hoang Dieu St. In the southwest, a vestige of the entrance gate into Dan Tri was discovered, including a middle pathway and two side ones. The distance from the wall foundation in the west to that in the east is roughly 12m. Within the area of Dan Tri, there are architectural vestiges dating from the Later Le dynasty early as well as restored periods, consisting of very big-sized pile foundations from the restored period [47]. In the Hong Duc maps, some works, including Thi Trieu hall, are also shown between Kinh Thien hall and Doan Mon gate.

Based on the above-mentioned findings of historical and archaeological research works, we can identify initially the location and size of the Forbidden City under the Le dynasty as below:

- *In the centre was located Kinh Thien palace hall (điện Kính Thiên), of which the remaining traces we have found by now are its foundation and stone steps.*

- *The western boundary of the Forbidden City was located near the One-Pillar Pagoda and Khan Son (Khán Sơn) hill. The One-Pillar Pagoda, also known as Dien Huu Pagoda under the Ly dynasty, was located due west of the Forbidden West garden (Tây Cấm) as agreed by many people, based on the epitaph carved in Sung Thien Dien Linh tower in 1121.*

Khan Son hill was located outside and due northwest of the Forbidden City, according to the Hong Duc map and other documents. After the Nguyen dynasty rebuilt the citadel of Thang Long (renamed Hanoi citadel in 1831), Khan Son was located inside the northwest corner of the citadel [38], somewhere near the current intersection between Phan Dinh Phung and Hung Vuong streets. Based on the two above-mentioned points, the western boundary of the Forbidden City ran across the centre of Ba Dinh Square; i.e. between the current Hung Vuong and Doc Lap streets.

- *The northern boundary of the Forbidden City was located due south of Tam Son hills.* It originally consisted of two natural mounds, which were roughly 20 *trượng* (80m) far from each other. And then, another mound/small hill, the circumference of which was about 30 *trượng* (120m) was man-made between the two. It was considered the pillow (枕) of Nung hill, according to Feng shui. It was located inside the Forbidden City and due north of Nung hill, where the central hall of the Forbidden City was built. After the Nguyen dynasty built the citadel of Thang Long/Hanoi, Tam Son was located inside it near the present *Cửa Bắc* (North Gate) of Hanoi citadel [29]. Thus, the northern boundary of the Forbidden City ran due south of the North Gate in the present Phan Dinh Phung Street; i.e. between the North Gate and *Hậu Lâu* mansion.

- *For the southern boundary, still remains the Doan Mon.* According to the Hong Duc map and other historical documents, however, the southern entrance

of the Forbidden City had a multi-gate structure, of which Doan Mon was the innermost gate. In the Hong Duc map, due south of Doan Mon, we can see one big gate first, and then two ones named East Trang An and West Trang An, and finally a smaller one located next to a large pond outside. The map was drawn symbolically without names, so we cannot identify the specific names of those gates. As mentioned in the historical literature, apart from Doan Mon, there were other gates named Van Minh, Sung Vu, Ngoc Thiem, and Chu Tuoc. Based on the remaining traces and historical documents, we can determine that the outermost gate in the south was Tam Son or Chu Tuoc. *Kỳ Đài* or *Cột cờ* (i.e. the Flag Tower) built by the Nguyen dynasty in 1805 is located on the previous foundation of *Tam Môn* (three gates) in front of Ngu Mon Lau (or Doan Mon), according to *Long Biên bách nhị vịnh* (102 Poems on the Scenery of Long Bien) composed by Bui Quang Co, who lived in late the 18<sup>th</sup> century and early the 19<sup>th</sup> century [2]. *Hà Nội địa dư* (Geography of Hanoi) compiled by Duong Ba Cung in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century reveals: “Legend has it that *Kỳ đài* used to be at Chu Tuoc gate, which was also named Tam Phụng pavilion”<sup>18</sup> [3, p.52]. The gate had three doors, so it was named *Tam Môn* (three gates) or *Tam Phụng* (Three Phoenixes), similar to the case of Doan Mon, which was named *Ngũ Môn Lâu* (Five - Gate Mansion) or *Ngũ Phụng Lâu* (Five-Phoenix Mansion) because of having 5 doors. At present, the vestige of *Kỳ Đài* still remains as the “benchmark” of the outermost gate in the south of the Forbidden City.

- By now, we have not found yet any specific locations to be used as the “benchmark” to define the eastern boundary of the Forbidden City.

According to the Hong Duc map, however, the Forbidden City (excluding the areas of Dong Cung and Thai Mieu, which were located outside the Forbidden City) had a nearly square shape. Assuming that the Forbidden City had a square shape, some important locations can be defined as below:

+ The centre was the ground of Kinh Thien hall.

+ In the north, it was adjacent to Tam Son somewhere due south of *Cửa Bắc* (North Gate).

+ In the south, Doan Mon was the main gate located inside the citadel; the outermost gate was Tam Mon or Chu Tuoc, where the Flag Tower of Hanoi is located at present.

+ In the west, the One-Pillar Pagoda was located due west of the Forbidden City; and, Khan Son was located somewhere near the intersection of Phan Dinh Phung and Hung Vuong streets, outside and due northwest of the Forbidden City.

That is the scope and dimensions of the Forbidden City under the Le dynasty. Based on the digital map of Hanoi, I once calculated the distance from *Kỳ Đài* (*Tam Môn/Chu Tuốc*) to the south of *Tam Son*, near the north of *Hậu Lâu* and the result was roughly 700m. Thus, each side of the square Forbidden City was about 700m<sup>19</sup> [11; 25, p.152; 5; 17, p.15]. Owing to data of the fieldwork measurement provided by the Thang Long - Hanoi Heritage Conservation Centre, we can now have

more precise and specific figures. In the north-south direction, there are not any traces of Tam Son left, but we realise that it was located due north of the Forbidden City and inside the citadel of Hanoi, somewhere due south of *Cửa Bắc* (North Gate). I assume Tam Son was located between *Cửa Bắc* and *Hậu Lâu*, where archaeologists discovered a vestige considered to be a palace in the north of the Forbidden City under the Ly dynasty, and the distance from Tam Son to *Kỳ Đài* was measured to be 771m. It is the very length of each side of the Forbidden City, which is square as drawn in the Hong Duc map. Based on the data, *the size of the Forbidden City from Tam Mon/Chu Tuoc to Tam Son can be estimated to be approx. 770m*. It is the entire space of the Forbidden City under the Le dynasty.

However, the Hong Duc map shows that the southern part of the citadel wall did not reach the outermost gate named Chu Tuoc, but it just reached a similar place of the southern gate; i.e. Doan Mon. In the Hong Duc map, that southern part was not drawn very clearly; with the 2 characters of “Đoan Môn” behind the gate located due north of East Trang An and West Trang An. According to the findings of the excavations in the area of the Rose Garden, part of the Forbidden City wall was found exactly in the location of Doan Mon; consequently, the east-west wall in the south of the Forbidden City ran across Doan Mon, which means the southern end of the citadel wall was Doan Mon and the northern end was south of Tam Son. *The distance from Tam Son to Doan Mon is 462m. It was the central area of the Forbidden City*, where most of the royal palaces, including also the

Supreme Royal hall (*Chính điện*) and the Dragon yard (*Sân Rồng*) were located. The area is smaller than the entire Forbidden City, which had a rectangular shape with the east-west side being 770m long and the north-south side 462m long, as estimated above.

Based on the above-mentioned location and size of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long, *the unearthed archaeological site at No. 18, Hoang Dieu St. was completely located inside the Forbidden City*. Moreover, the vestige site is roughly 100m far from the foundation of Kinh Thien hall, *so it was surely located near the central area of the Forbidden City*. In the vestige site, archaeologists discovered 4 architectural works, 9 water wells, 3 drainage sewers and a lot of artefacts dating back to the Later Le dynasty early period [23, pp.40-41]. The building materials consist of wooden-hammer bricks, double tiles decorated with the design of dragons and chrysanthemums, and very special tiles of the dragon shape covered with yellow or green glaze, which could be only found in the period of the Later Le dynasty early period. In addition, there are a lot of high-quality ceramic products decorated with the design of a 5-claw dragon, which were used by the king, and other products bearing the characters “*quan*” (i.e. mandarin, implying “the state”), “*Trường Lạc cung*” (Trường Lạc palace), or “*Trường Lạc khố*” (Trường Lạc treasure-house)... There are fewer artefacts dating back to the Mac dynasty and the Restored Le dynasty, partly because of the historical situation (the Mac – Le war) and the decline of the Forbidden City during the period of the Le kings – Trinh lords;

furthermore, the cultural layer of the period was damaged by construction works carried out in the later years during the period of the Nguyen dynasty. Although many vestiges were completely destroyed and flattened, archaeologists also found some royal ceramic products as well as bricks/tiles decorated with the design of dragons and covered beautifully with glaze. The findings of archaeological excavations and research works have affirmed that the vestige site was located inside the Forbidden City. It is very important that the Forbidden City under the Later Le dynasty early period was basically located in the same area of the Forbidden City under the Ly and Tran dynasties. Consequently, a lot of architectural works and artefacts bearing the stamp of the royal court have been discovered at No. 18, Hoang Dieu St., specifically and all over the ancient citadel of Hanoi generally, showing continuously the history of Thang Long from 1010 to 1788. This has also explained why various cultural layers of vestiges showing the entire history of Thang Long capital city are found overlapping each other within a relatively small area.

## Notes

<sup>2</sup> This map coded A.2.3.32 is preserved in the Institute of Social Sciences Information and was introduced to the public in 2010 on the occasion of the 1000<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Thang Long – Hanoi. In 1956, Tran Huy Ba re-drew it with notes in the Vietnamese language.

<sup>3</sup> In *Hoài Đức phủ toàn đồ* (*Complete Map of Hoài Duc prefecture*), it is additionally mentioned on Ham Long gate (*Ô Hàm Long*) as below: “*The distance*

from *Thịnh Quang gate (Ô Thịnh Quang)* to *Ham Long gate* is 3 dặm 17 trượng and 5 thước”. This needs further verification.

<sup>4</sup> “*Du vãng nhai tam nhật*” is translated by me as “to go street sightseeing for 3 days”.

<sup>5</sup> For the recording of the event in 1236 that Tran Lieu with the title *Hiển Hoàng* (顯皇 – Senior Prince Hien) was promoted to be chief of Thanh Tu palace; he sailed a boat to the court, attending the king audience, and violated a former concubine of Ly Dynasty in Le Thien Palace; therefore, he was demoted/downgraded to *Hoài vương* (懷王-Prince Hoai), there was an incorrect note that “Thanh Tu was located on the left inside Phoenix citadel”.

<sup>6</sup> The original Chinese version is “廣築鳳城，因李陳之制也”.

<sup>7</sup> “Điện” in Vietnamese, “dian” in Chinese; and “cung” in Vietnamese, and “gong” in Chinese, can both be translated into English as “palaces”. So they can be called in a combined way as “palaces”. However, as they are called differently in both the languages of Vietnamese and Chinese, and sometimes differ in the fact that the former can be the places for hosting events/royal audiences, whereas the latter are mostly used for residence; to facilitate the understanding/distinguishing, especially in cases where a *điện* and a *cung* had the same name, this English paper will denote the former as “palatial halls” or “halls”, and the latter as “palaces”. When they are mentioned in a combined way, they will be referred to as “palaces”, or “palaces, including [palatial] halls”.

<sup>8</sup> *Đại Việt sử lược* (“*Abridged Chronicles of Great Viet*” published by China’s Commercial Press in 1936 with the title “*Việt sử lược*” (“*Abridged Chronicles of Viet*”), the version of “*A Series of Chronicles*” (*Tùng thư tập thành*); also compared with the version by Tran Kinh Hoa (Tokyo, 1987) and referred to the translated version by Tran Quoc

Vuong, Publishing House of Literature, History and Geography, Hanoi, 1960.

<sup>9</sup> The section on “Dien Huu pagoda building” (廣延祐之光寺 - quảng Diên Hựu chi quang tự) in the epitaph was blurred; in its copies, the character 廣 (“quảng”) was sometimes used instead of 廟 (“xưởng”). In “*Thơ văn Lý, Trần*” (Poetry and Prose under the Ly and Tran dynasties, Hanoi, 1977, Vol.1, p.397), 廣 (“quảng”) was used.

<sup>10</sup> The name of Trieu Nguyen palatial hall is used in this section of *Đại Việt sử lược*. In the following section, however, it changed to “Can Nguyen palatial hall” like that in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*. It was recorded that *Cao điện* was built in the *chính dương* (正阳), which means “due south” but not “due north” like that in the translated version. In *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, *Cao điện* is named Cao Minh palatial hall.

<sup>11</sup> In *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, it is written that two palaces, Thuy Hoa and Long Thuy, were built behind Nhat Quang and Nguyen Minh palatial halls. According to *Đại Việt sử lược*, however, there was only palace named Thuy Hoa, because Long Thuy palace, built behind Can Nguyen palatial hall, was the place where the king rested.

<sup>12</sup> *Ngũ Lâu* mansion located in front of Nung hill was built under the Ly dynasty with the epigraph “*Đoan Môn*”. Since *Doan Mon* had 5 doors, it was also named Ngu Lau mansion (Vietnamese: Ngũ lâu, “ngũ” = 5, “lâu” = mansion).

<sup>13</sup> According to description in *Đại Việt sử lược*, Dai La citadel had a perimeter of 1,980 trượng (i.e. 5.94 km). There was an inner citadel named *Từ thành*, which had a gate in the east named Ung Mon. Annam La Thanh citadel under the ruling period of Zhang Zhou had three gates, including the east, the west, and the south gates. Dai La citadel under the ruling period of Zhang Boyi (the Chinese Tang dynasty) also had three gates, including the eastern, the western and the

southern ones. The size of Dai La citadel was quite large; its perimeter was nearly 6km, bigger than Hanoi citadel under the Nguyen dynasty; the inside perimeter was roughly 4km. The inner citadel named *Tử thành* was not described at all; its shape and size remain unknown. By now, archaeologists have found vestiges of Dai La citadel all over the excavation sites in Sections A, B, C, D, and even E (the premise of the Ba Dinh Hall) and in the north of the Rose Garden due south of Bac Son Street. A part of Dai La citadel was discovered in company with some architectural works under the Ly dynasty in this place.

<sup>14</sup> In *Tam tổ thực lục*, the chapter on the first patriarch (of Truc Lam Zen) - King Tran Nhan Tong - reads: "The king often took siestas in Tu Phuc pagoda inside *Đại nội*" (p.2); the chapter on the second patriarch (*Pháp Loa*) also mentions: "Tu Phuc pagoda is located inside *Đại nội*".

<sup>15</sup> According to "*History of measurement units in China*" written in the Yuan dynasty, "several scores of *trượng*" herein is about 60m, (Shanghai Publishing House, 1984, p.66).

<sup>16</sup> As the circumference is estimated about 6 – 7 miles, roughly equivalent to 9.6-11.2km, it cannot have been the Forbidden City alone. It must have been the entire Imperial Citadel.

<sup>17</sup> Data in the documentations submitted to UNESCO for recognition of Thang Long Imperial Citadel as a world cultural heritage site.

<sup>18</sup> Under the Nguyen dynasty, there was Chu Tuoc gate still in existence in the south of Hanoi citadel. As described in *Đại Nam thực lục* (大南實錄, The True Records of Great [Country in the] South), in 1804, 1820, 1841, and 1842, Chu Tuoc gate was located in the south, outside Doan Mon gate, facing Nhi River. The Nguyen dynasty destroyed Tam Mon/Chu Tuoc to build Kỳ Đài, so the Chu Tuoc gate of the *hành cung* (royal step-over palace) was likely to be rebuilt after 1805.

<sup>19</sup> As described in "*Description of the Kingdom of Tonqueen*" written by Samuel Baron, the circumference of the entire area covering palaces ranges from 6 to 7 miles"; i.e. from 3,330m to 3,885m. Assuming the area is square, each side would be 900m long. but, the mile used in his description is the British mile, which is equivalent to 1.6km; i.e. 6 miles is the same as 9.6km and 8 miles is the same as 12.8km. It should be the size of the imperial citadel, but cannot be the size of the Forbidden City.

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