

## Pre - Dong Son and Dong Son Cultural System and Issue of Early State in North Vietnam

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**Abstract:** For the past 50 years, Vietnamese cultural archaeologists have set up Pre - Dong Son Cultures on Northern Vietnam in the systems of Phung Nguyen - Dong Dau - Go Mun in the Red River basin, Con Chan Tien (Cồn Chân Tiên) - Bai Man (Bái Man) - Quy Chu (Quỳ Chử) in the Ma (Mã) River basin, and Den Doi (Đền Đồi) - Ru Cat (Rú Cật) - Ru Tran (Rú Trăn) on the Lam River basin. These systems are considered to be the direct and main origin of the Dong Son Culture. The Dong Son Culture prosperously developed in many aspects of technology, economy, sociology and ideology, forming a material and spiritual base for the formation of an early State - the Van Lang State and then Au Lac State as in the legends and annals.

**Key words:** Archaeology; Pre - Dong Son Culture; Dong Son Culture; the origin of Vietnamese; metallurgy.

We are celebrating the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dong Son cultural discovery and research. It can be said that this culture is closely related to the question on the origin of Viet people and foundation of the early state in our country. For the past few years, there have been two tendencies in searching for the origin and civilization of Viet people. The first one considers all things of Viet people as the best and everything as original in Vietnam; it even assumes that civilizations started here and then spread to the North. The second one is opposite to the first one; it assumes that ancestors of Viet people migrated from the North and civilizations also spread from Guangdong and Fujian thousands years ago. What is the truth? It is, of course, necessary to do further research to find out an answer to this question, based on scientific grounds, especially archaeological evidences.

### 1. From Pre - Dong Son to Dong Son

One of the greatest archaeological achievements in our country for the past five decades is that we have set up a cultural genealogy lasting from Pre - Dong Son to Dong Son period. This is recognized by overseas scholars and there are likely not any local archaeologists denying the genealogy. Owing to a wide range of new archaeological evidences found from excavations, investigations, and explorations, we have obtained consensus on awareness of this issue. Those evidences can be enumerated as below:

1.1. There have been a number of vestiges that have thick strata with cultural layers overlapping each other; there is no interruption by a non-inhabited layer

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between cultural layers. This demonstrates the continuity of time and culture. Typical vestiges that can be mentioned here are: Dong Dau (Đồng Đậu) vestige (in Yen Lac Town, Vinh Phuc Province), where cultural traces are overlapping chronologically from Phung Nguyen (Phùng Nguyên) to Dong Dau, Go Mun (Gò Mun), and Dong Son Culture; Dinh Trang (Đình Trảng) vestige located in the middle of the Red River Delta, of which the strata are meters thick with the same overlapping cultural layers. Archaeologists made the absolute dating by measuring the proportion of carbon - 14 isotope in their carbon content. They also made the relative dating by comparing artifacts and cultural characteristics. As a result, three cultures have been determined, including: Pre - Dong Son (Phung Nguyen), Dong Dau, and Go Mun. The sites of those cultures are located in the midland and plains of the Red River valley. Remarkably, sites of the Pre - Dong Son Cultures are the very sites of Dong Son Culture, in which the Pre - Dong Son Cultures were adopted and so far expanded.

In the Ma River valley, Pre - Dong Son cultural vestiges have been discovered and subdivided into genealogies, including: Con Chan Tien - Bai Man - Quy Chu. These cultural genealogies were subsequently developed into Dong Son Culture in this region.

Although there are not many vestiges found in the Lam River valley, they are enough for us to identify Pre - Dong Son Cultures, including: Den Doi - Ru Cat - Ru Tran that were then developed into the striking Dong Son Culture, of which a

typical vestige is Vac (Vạc) Village (in Nghia Dan (Nghĩa Đàn) District, Nghe An).

It can be said that Pre - Dong Son cultural strata in all three important valleys in North Vietnam are the most significant evidences to show the cultural continuity of ancient Viet people from 4,000 years ago to the formation of the united and diversified Dong Son Culture.

1.2. In addition to the continuity of strata and the location of Dong Son cultural distribution, another important evidence is the inheritance of archaeological artifacts. We can provide a lot of examples for convincing demonstration. Regarding to stone artifacts, there are many stone axes made of the same materials and types for a long period from Phung Nguyen to Dong Son Culture. Similarly, the inheritance is shown in personal ornaments. Regarding to ceramic artifacts, the designs of Phung Nguyen ceramics seemingly constituted a traditional style, which was inherited particularly for bronze decoration at the time of Dong Son Culture. Bronze artifacts also show the inheritance from Dong Dau and Go Mun to Dong Son Culture: rectangular axes, chisels, fish - hooks, spears, javelins, and personal ornaments. Especially, bronze - the alloy used in the Pre - Dong Son products - was still used for products of Dong Son Culture. The casting technique that used two - piece molds, which originated from the period of Dong Dau Culture, was also maintained to the period of Dong Son Culture, when it was much more developed to meet requirements in casting big products such as drums and big jars.



*A two - piece mound made of sandstone in Quang Binh Province (Dong Son Culture), of which the technique was inherited from the stone - axe mold making technique of Dong Dau culture (Pre - Dong Son).*

The archaeological evidences have demonstrated convincingly that material and archaeological cultures were created, inherited, and developed continuously by their owners - Viet ancient people - in the territory of north Vietnam for the entire two thousand years BC. Certainly, cultural exchange with surrounding areas also took place. Basically, however, the owners of the cultures were the very local people, but they were not those who migrated from overseas. Thanks to geographical advantages, Pre - Dong Son Cultures were kept in harmony and then developed into Dong Son Culture with a lot of unanimous factors that were typical for the whole

region. Consequently, Dong Son Culture originated in the very Pre - Dong Son Cultures; It did not come from other strange cultures as mentioned by some overseas scholars previously or some local scholars recently, who implied that Dong Son Culture and people existed in Vietnam as a result of immigration.

## **2. Dong Son Culture**

One of the archaeological achievements in Vietnam is to have affirmed successfully that Dong Son Culture inherited characteristics from local Pre - Dong Son Cultures, as described above, with obvious dates and a specific territory of distribution,

based on an enormous amount of vestiges and artifacts. In general, Dong Son Culture has following characteristics:

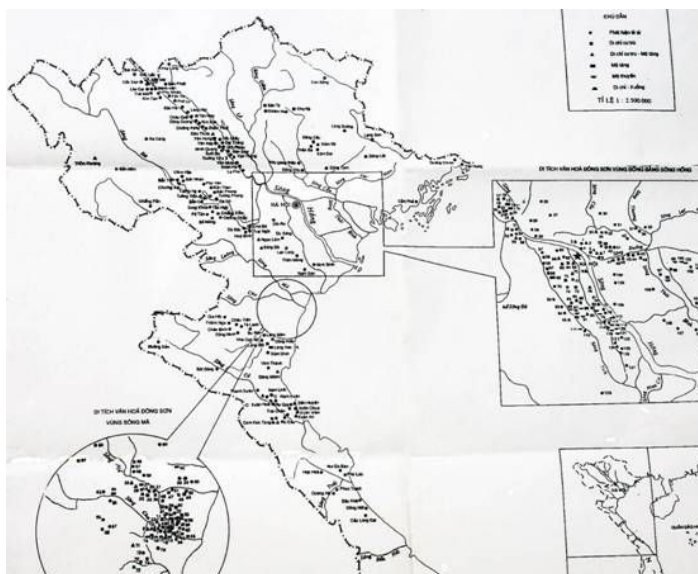
2.1. Basically, the territory of Dong Son cultural distribution is the same as the area of North Vietnam at present, formerly called the Northern Region and the North Central Region. (Map 1)

In the above - mentioned area, people of Dong Son Culture mainly lived in the plains, where land was large and appropriate for rice cultivation. The population density in mountainous areas was lower, which still remains until now. People at the period of Dong Son Culture were concentrated by big rivers to get water for agricultural production, as shown in the proverb that “water is the first important and fertilizer is the second important”. The source of water was also used for living activities of every person, every household, and every community as well. One of the habitation characteristics at the period of Dong Son Culture was that all contemporary economic and social centers were located in the areas of the intersection or confluence of streams and rivers. The valleys of the Red River, Ca (Cả) River, and Lam River met the demands for agricultural production and economic development of Dong Son community. Vestiges of ancient villages and graves were found densely along those rivers. It can be enumerated here some well-known

riverside vestiges, such as: Ca (Cả) Village (located by the confluence of the Red River, Da (Đà) River, and Lo (Lô) River); Co Loa (Cổ Loa) (by the confluence of Hoang Giang (Hoàng Giang) River and the Red River); Dong Son (by Ma (Mã) River); and Vac (Vạc) Village (by Hieu (Hiếu) River). It can be said that the rivers gave rise to Dong Son Culture and helped it develop into one of the most outstanding civilizations in Southeast Asia at that time.

Owing to the optimal geographical conditions that the three big rivers with branches made the whole plain area fully fertile, Dong Son Culture was created and developed favorably.

The territory of Dong Son cultural distribution was an area as a whole without alternate partitions, meeting the requirement of the border for an early state. The very territory was acknowledged afterwards. When the Han dynasty took over Vietnam, this territory was divided into Jiaozhi District (the Red River valley), Jiuzhen District (the Ma River valley), and Rinan (the valley of Lam or Ca River). In other words, we can make argument in reverse: Based on the locations of the three above - mentioned districts, we can see the image of the territory for an early state, where Dong Son Culture played the role as the material foundation.



*Map 1. Distribution of Dong Son cultural vestiges*

*(Source: Institute of Archaeology, 1994)*

2.2. In the area of Dong Son Culture, a great amount of Dong Son artifacts have been found, typical for a material civilization that flourished most in the region at that time.

An advantage of Dong Son Culture is that bronze artifacts are more abundant than iron ones. There are large - sized bronze drums, which were cast by very high metalworking technique; even by now, we cannot produce such perfect drums by traditional casting methods. The most typical are bronze drums of Ngọc Lu (Ngọc Lũ), Hoàng Hạ (Hoàng Hạ), and Co Loa types. Drums of all the three types were discovered in situ, but they were not found accidentally. These are convincing evidences to show that ancient Viet people directly used the drums when they were alive and buried the drums when they died;

the drums were sometimes buried as hidden property.

The bronze drums found in Vietnam are really original, they are different from bronze drums of the Tian Culture (Yunnan, China) of the same date. The differences can be seen in shapes and decorative designs. They are, therefore, named by scientists as Dong Son bronze drums.

Dong Son bronze drums were actually cast in the area of Vietnam, based on following evidences:

- Pieces of the drum - casting mold made of terra - cotta mixed with rice husks were found in Luy Lau (Luy Lâu), Bac Ninh Province.

- Some decorative designs on the bronze drums describe tools and weapons, which are found in the area of Dong Son Culture, but not in any surrounding areas. They are

battle - axes (bronze axes with one square end), which are taken by the dancer in the festival shown by the designs on the bronze drums; those axes have been found all over the territory of Dong Son Culture. In some vestiges, such as Ca Village and Go De (Gò De), there are the same axes, of which the designs describe a very beautiful deer - hunting scene of a dog; such an axe has not been found in any places in South China or Southeast Asia.

- Dong Son bronze drum is the product of the excellent bronze - casting technique among ancient Viet people. This is demonstrated by hundreds of terra - cotta and stone casting molds discovered in ancient villages and graves of Viet people at the same date. Besides, one has found bronze - heating and bronze - pouring pots, which are persuasive evidences for the local metalworking.

In addition to the bronze drums, which are the most typical, there are other artifacts, including: 1. Tools of production (ploughshares, shears, hoe-blades, axes, chisels, and fish - hooks, etc.); 2. Distant - striking weapons (crossbows and arrows); 3. Close fighting weapons (spears, javelins, battle - axes, daggers, and short swords, etc.); 4. Some bronze container artifacts of big size, which were decorated with beautiful designs (jars and vases); 5. Personal ornaments (bracelets worn around the wrist or the ankle, ear rings, and key chains, etc.); 6. Round statues with decorative designs that describe the scene, in which Dong Son people were carrying each other on the back or blowing the pan - pine (khèn), the statue of a man spreading out the elbow on the dagger handle, the

statue of a man carrying a dog under the arm, etc., the status of animals such as elephants, toads, dogs, cows, and chicken, etc.

Apart from bronze artifacts, some iron artifacts have been found in the vestiges, although the number of iron artifacts is not great. There are also artifacts made of ceramic, stone, horn, and glass.

The ancient villages, ancient graves, and a great number of artifacts found in situ are convincing evidences for the existence of Dong Son Culture in Vietnam, of which the date ranges from the 7 Century BC to the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD.

Dong Son Culture was neither brought from outside nor created due to immigration, but it originated in the Pre - Dong Son Cultures distributed in the valleys of the Red River, Ma River, and Lam River in Vietnam. This affirmation is made, owing to the achievement of archaeological research works carried out for over a half of a century.

Based on artifacts and vestiges of Dong Son Culture, archaeologists can make an overall picture of material and spiritual life of ancient Viet people - the owners of Dong Son Culture.

### 2.3. Material and spiritual life of Dong Son people

The most important economic sector of Viet people at the time of Dong Son Culture was agriculture. Their production tools are, therefore, related to farming activities in wet rice fields, including: to chop down trees for farmland reclamation (axes); to turn over the soil (hoes,

ploughshares); to do harvesting (sickles, shears, pincers). A set of farming tools was found in the archaeological cultural layer. The final product after harvesting was rice; and, the rice was also found in some vestiges such as: Dong Dau (a site of Pre - Dong Son Culture, where burned rice was found); Ca Village (the trace of a casting mold made of clay and rice husks); and, Vac Village (rice husks and rice were found in a bronze jar). Another reliable evidence to show that Dong Son people knew how to grow and eat glutinous rice is the discovery of an earthenware pan in double boilers in Vac Village during an excavation in 1973. The ancient bibliographies recorded at the early period under domination of the Northern invaders reveal that in 111 BC, messengers of Jaozhi and Jiuzhen submitted 1,000 jars of wine to Lu Bode, a military leader of the Western Han Dynasty. This shows that people got abundant rice not only enough for food but also for alcohol making, due to agricultural development at that time.

Animal husbandry was also developed at the period of Dong Son Culture, which is recognized by the fact that bones of cows and buffaloes have been found in many ancient villages of Dong Son Culture (in Vac Village, 6 out of 13 teeth of Bovidae cattle are appraised to be the teeth of domestic buffalo). In addition to food supply, cattle were probably used to do ploughing. On the back of bronze drums, furthermore, there are many designs of cows in the scene, in which fighters were killing cows as a sacrifice or in the scene, in which cows were being carried in the boat. Ancient bibliographies also mention that

Ma Yuan saw a thousand of cattle, when he was taking troops to Jiuzhen district. Archaeological documents have also demonstrated that people could domesticate dogs, elephants, pigs, chicken, and goats at the time of Dong Son Culture.

An economic sector that created a breakthrough for Dong Son Culture is metallurgy, which we have already mentioned above. The metalworking technique was relatively advanced, compared with that of people in surrounding areas.

In reality, at the time of Pre - Dong Son Culture, people could do copper refining, as they successfully mixed copper and tin to make bronze. Artifacts made of this two - component alloy were produced in the period of Phung Nguyen culture - the beginning of the Iron Age in the Red River Delta. In the period of Dong Dau and Go Mun culture, people knew how to add arsenic and antimony to the alloy in order to produce sharper arrows [2]. It can be said that people at the period of Pre - Dong Son Culture already knew how to mix copper and tin to make bronze, but they did not yet know how to add lead into the alloy for casting work. Thus, lead is just found in the alloy composition of the artifacts in the period of Dong Son Culture [1, p.43]. It is really a breakthrough in metallurgy in terms of materials: after lead was used in metallurgy, the source of casting materials became abundant and the amount of materials increased by many times. Apart from the increase in quantity, the lead alloy helped Dong Son people cast a lot of artistically valuable products, which probably symbolized power and wealth

(drums, jars, bells, and vessels, etc.) as well. In the previous periods, people could hardly cast such products, because of having no lead in the alloy. In the period of Dong Son Culture, people knew how to use at least 11 alloys, 2 times higher than that in the period of Dong Dau and Go Mun cultures [2, p.47]. A lot of copper mines are located in north Vietnam. According to the geological statistic data, there are 75 copper mines, excluding those in the Northern highlands, where a lot of copper are also found. Many copper and tin mines have been also found in the upper area of the Red River in Yunnan. This can be seen as an advantage for development of the mining sector and the copper refinement, which helped to get outstanding achievements in the bronze metallurgy during the period of Dong Son Culture. The very achievements in metallurgy caused positive impacts on other sectors of production, leading to social prosperity and creating powerful and wealthy leaders.

In addition to the economic key sectors, archaeologists have found evidence for development of other sectors in the period of Dong Son Culture, such as stone product - making, ceramics, and textile.

Development of economic sectors led to a superfluity of goods as well as economic and cultural exchange. The most convincing evidence for trading activities is the discovery of equipment for weight measurement. Both copper and stone weights have been found. Besides, some Dong Son products have been found in many local areas in South China and Southeast Asia. The evidence for the fact that Dong Son people, for example,

traveled by boat along the sea coast to Zhejiang, is an illustrative sample of the bronze drum - an original product of Dong Son Culture - found in the grave vestige in Shangma shan (Zhejiang) [3]. During the excavation in this grave vestige, Chinese archaeologists found the illustrative sample of bronze drum and acknowledged that it could not be a product of the contemporary cultures in China. Certainly, cultural exchange resulted in the two-way influence. On the other way, some copper and wooden products of the cultures in South China have been also found in the Dong Son archaeological sites.

Besides good material life brought by economic development, the spiritual life of Dong Son people was also diversified. The very spiritual living conditions made a significant contribution towards formation of an early state. The artistic and spiritual demands as well as advanced social living conditions promoted production of objects that showed the power (the bronze drums) and creation of musical and dancing instruments to be used in the ritual festivals, etc.. Due to the spiritual conditions, production was more improved and social strata were formed to serve the early state apparatus. There were probably shamans at that time, according to some archaeological documents. Dong Son people's scientific thinking is also manifested in the fact that they grasped some astronomic knowledge. Madeleine Colani found out that the direction of the designs of human, birds, and deer on the drumhead of Dong Son bronze drum is the same as the direction of the Earth's rotation; they are both counterclockwise. He assumed that Dong



Son people already learnt of the Earth's rotation around the sun [7, pp. 37 - 41]. The high economic living conditions not only made the spiritual living conditions more diversified, but also played the role as a ground for formation of the early state. The pinnacle of this culture is that the superstructure was set up. In fact, very few communities of ancient people in the region could do the same. As a result, the Van Lang - Au Lac State that will be described in the following part was established.

### **3. The Van Lang - Au Lac State**

When doing research on the state foundation in China, Japan, and many other countries in Asia for recent decades, scientists raised the conception of chiefdom. This kind of state does not resemble the standard feudal state, but it is just a legend state to be used for research on the beginning period of each nation. Despite being a legend state, it corresponds to a certain extent in the scale of material civilization, based on archaeological evidences.

In Vietnam, the Kingdom of Van Lang ruled by the Hung Kings is mentioned in legends and bibliographies. In an important historical and the most ancient book titled "Abridged Chronicles of Viet" (Việt sử lược), it is also recorded: "At the time of the King Zhuang of Zhou Dynasty, in Gia Ninh, there was a stranger, who used magic to win the tribes; he proclaimed himself as the Hung King and set up the Capital City in Van Lang, naming the Kingdom as Van Lang. Customs were warm - hearted; people were simple - hearted and tied with each other. The throne was descended for

18 generations, who all were named the Hung King" [6, p.18].

The period of the Van Lang State was followed by the period of the Au Lac State. There have been a lot of bibliographical documents talking about this period. Historians have seen some image of the Au Lac State in the Records of the Grand Historian (Taishǐgōng shū) in the 2nd Century BC as well as in the Book of Han (Han shu) of Ban Gu etc.. [4] When doing research on the Van Lang - Au Lac State, Vietnamese and international archaeologists used different approaches on the basis of the real material documents. It is important that the dates they have determined are completely coincident with each other. In the Abridged Chronicles of Viet, the Hung King appeared in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century BC. At the same time, archaeologists determined that Dong Son Culture was formed in the same period. According to bibliographies, the period of the Hung Kings ended in 258 BC or so, when the power was handed over to An Duong Vuong. During that period, Dong Son Culture flourished rather impressively. One of the evidences is the grave site in Ca village, which dates back to  $285 \pm 40$  BC (i.e. the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC) according to the radiocarbon dating with Carbon - 14. The existence of the grave site perhaps lasted for several hundreds years, from the second half of the 4th Century to the second half of the 2nd Century BC [5, p.30]. The dating of Ca Village is extremely significant. Analyzed by natural sciences, the date of Ca Village is determined to be completely within the period of the Hung Kings; more specifically, it might exist

about 30 years before the end of the Hung Kings' period.

Thus, Ca Village of Dong Son Culture dates back to the late Hung Kings' period. In other words, Dong Son Culture was the very material foundation for the Hung Kings' period and they have the same date. In addition, Ca village and nearby Go De - typical sites of Dong Son Culture - are found in the confluence of the Red River, Da River, and Lo River, where the Van Lang Capital of the Hung Kings was inherently located.

Based on archaeological findings, researchers can come to the conclusion that development of Dong Son Culture inevitably led to the basis for foundation of chiefdom. The chiefdom coincides with the Van Lang - Au Lac State in terms of the date. It is, therefore, completely reasonable to make analysis and find out relationships between the chiefdom and the Van Lang - Au Lac State. Owing to an enormous amount of archaeological material documents, it is possible to outline something about the premise for foundation of this type of state, as below:

3.1. The first premise: Social division, wars, and conflicts in the community of Dong Son people would lead to the appearance of military leaders:

Social division was already profound in the community of Dong Son people. According to the documents on grave goods, a majority are the graves of poor people, where no grave goods are found (84.1%); whereas, the graves of rich people, in which 16 or more artifacts are found, just make up 1%. In another grave site in Viet

Khe (Việt Khê), about 100 precious artifacts are found in 1 grave; whereas, in 4 other graves, no artifact is found at all.

Social division certainly would lead to conflicts and wars. This caused an increase in the number of weapons. In the sites of Dong Son Culture, the proportion of bronze weapons is often more than 50%. The corresponding figures in Viet Khe, Thieu Duong (Thiệu Dương), Vinh Quang, and Dong Son, for example, are 49.4%, 59.8%, 50.6%, and 63.29% respectively [4]. Internal conflicts and wars among tribes of Dong Son Culture as well as conflicts between Dong Son people and other ethnic groups, of course, would result in the appearance of military leaders, who had good art of war and could rule communities. Is that an image of the Hung Kings? Another archaeological aspect shows that power was symbolized by possession of bronze drums, based on research works of Dong Son bronze drums, bibliographies, and anthropological literature (in the bibliographies, it is recorded that those, who had some bronze drums could proclaim themselves emperors). In the meanwhile, a lot of bronze drums were found in the area of Dong Son Culture. Probably, those are the graves of local leaders of the Van Lang - Au Lac Kingdom.

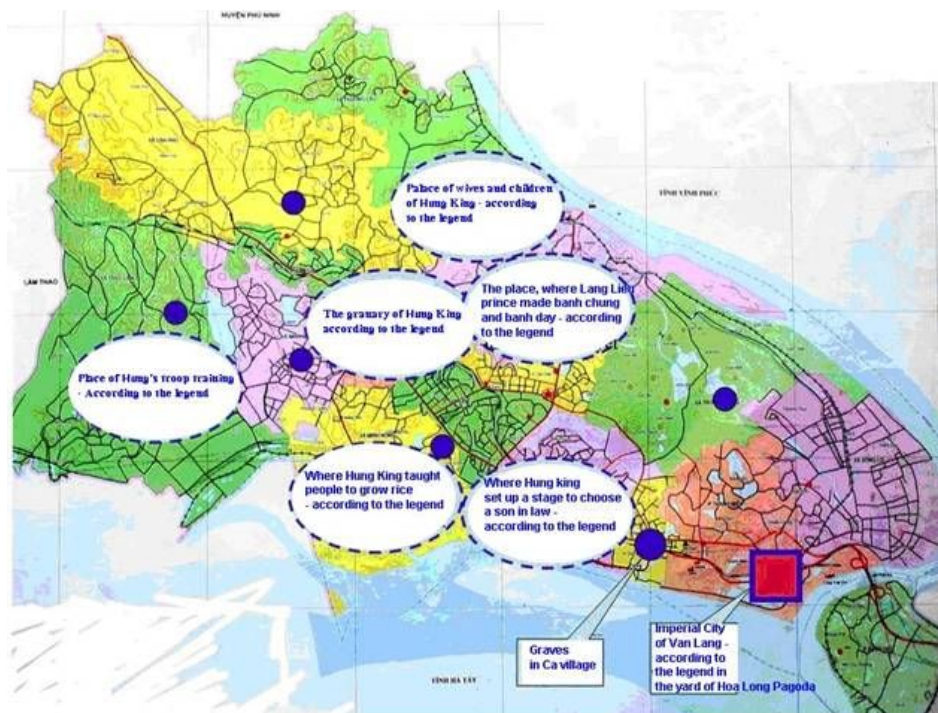
3.2. Another premise is the very terrain of Viet Tri area, where three rivers, including the Red River, Da River, and Lo River, join together; it is also the place of Van Lang Capital, according to the legend. This is an important area, as it was the gateway for transport of copper - casting materials. It was located in the middle of

“the Red River corridor”, by which copper and tin materials were carried from the upper reaches and products of the coastal and plain areas were carried from the lower reaches (an example is that the cowrie of the North Coastal region was carried to the area of the Tian Culture in Yunnan). Thus, if someone or some tribe took over the area of Viet Tri (Việt Trì), the person or the tribe could get the role of regulating casting materials and controlling the metallurgy - a key economic sector at that time - and consequently could take the leadership.

### 3.3. Some features about the early state

3.3.1. Van Lang Capital: Many bibliographical documents and legends talk about Van Lang Capital in Viet Tri City.

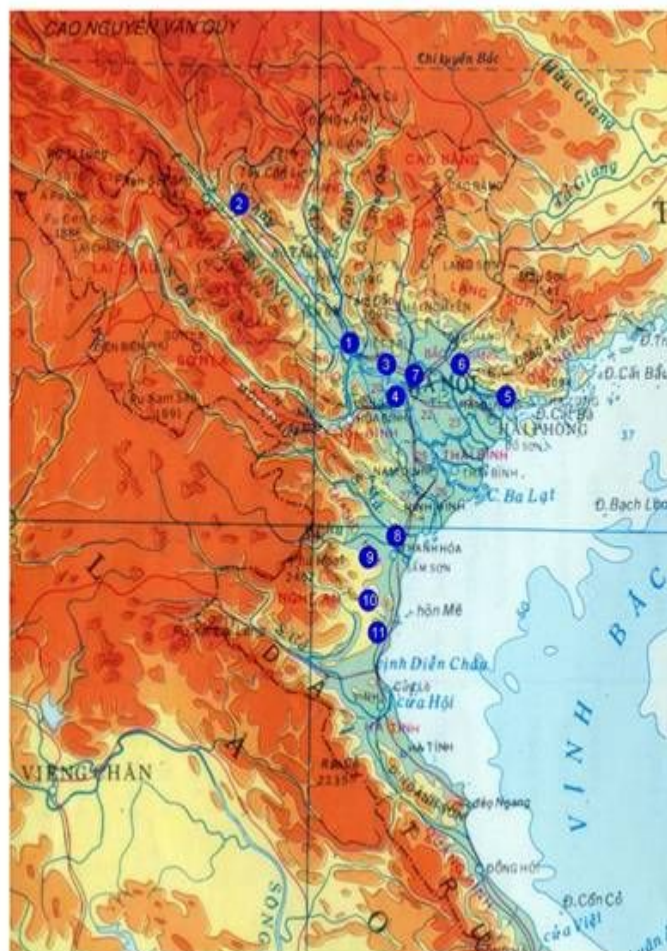
Remarkably, it is also the place, where vestiges of Dong Son Culture are densely found, typically Ca village and Go De. Also, some Dong Son bronze drums have been found underground in this area. It, therefore, might use to be a powerful political and economic center like a capital city, of which the earthen ramparts were completely destroyed with no traces left till now (Map 2). For the period of Au Lac Kingdom, the traces of Co Loa Capital have remained more obvious. Based on archaeological works, researchers have found the lowest part of Co Loa Citadel, of which the date determined by natural sciences corresponds to the bibliographical date of King An Duong Vuong.



*Map 2. Supposed location of Van Lang Imperial City in Viet Tri City according to combination of archaeological documents legends and bibliographies: the circles are locations of Dong Son Culture.*

3.3.2. Regarding to districts at the Van Lang period: According to bibliographies, ancient Van Lang consisted of 15 districts. Based on archaeological works concerning with economic centers and outstanding sites of Dong Son Culture, we can realize there were 11 economic and political centers of

Dong Son Culture in the area of the Red River, Ma River, and Lam River. Those documents are very significant for research on “districts” of the ancient Van Lang. In fact, it is necessary to pay more attention to this hypothesis (Map 3)



*Map 3. Distribution of clans of Van Lang kingdom, according to archaeological documents: 1. Ca Village Clan; 2. Lao Cai (Lào Cai) Clan; 3. Me Linh (Mê Linh) Clan; 4: Chau Can (Châu Can) Clan; 5: Viet Khe Clan; 6: Lang Ngam (Lăng Ngâm) Clan; 7: Co Loa Clan; 8: Dong Son Clan; 9: Nui Nua (Núi Nưa) Clan; 10: Vac Village Clan; 11: Dong Mom (Đồng Mỏm) Clan.*

#### 4. Conclusion

Archaeological achievements for the past 90 years, particularly for the recent decades, enable us to affirm that Dong Son Culture was our local culture that originated from Pre - Dong Son Cultures before. This culture was the material basis for foundation of the Van Lang - Au Lac early state.

There was cultural exchange between Dong Son Culture and other cultures in South China and Southeast Asia. However, this was not the major factor for formation and development of Dong Son Culture. Although the exchange took place and even some ethnic groups migrated here, they could not be those who created this culture. The owner of Dong Son Culture are the very ancient Viet people, who inhabited and exploited the confluence of the Red - Ma - Lam Rivers a long time ago. At the period of Dong Son Culture, they set up an early state named Van Lang - Au Lac as mentioned in the legends and ancient bibliographical documents.

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