

THE FORTY-THIRD NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES

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From September 9, 2008 to November 1, 2008, the forty-third national conference of new archaeological discoveries was held in Hà Nội. The archaeologists, scientists and archaeological lovers all over Việt Nam attended the conference. 406 papers divided to the four sections were discussed during the two days.

1. The section of Stone Age: 64 papers with the following main contents:

The Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and the Department of Culture and Sports of Sơn La province together conducted excavations at 7 sites in the hydro-electronic lake area of Sơn La, found and removed thousands of the remains from the Sơn Vi, Hoà Bình cultures to the late Neolithic and early Metal Age in the districts of Mường La, Mường Chiên and Quỳnh Nhai.

The Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Quảng Ninh province conducted an excavation at Tiên Ông Cave and confirmed that Tiên Ông Cave

and Đục Cave means the same, doing away with the mistake in the previous data. According to the excavators, the remains and artifacts with the dates of 10.000 BP – 8000BP are not enough for isolating the Soi Nhụ culture from the Hoà Bình- Bắc Sơn tradition.

The Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and conducted an excavation at Phia Mùn Cave, with the stratum developing from the Hoà Bình culture to the late Neolithic in cooperation with the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Tuyên Quang province; conducted an investigation and found Thảm Vài Cave at Chiêm Hoá (May 2008), with the early layer dating to 7000 BP (the Hoà Bình culture) and the later layer dating to 4000 BP in cooperation with the provincial Museum of Tuyên Quang and excavated Hang Cò, Hang Sáo caves (at the end of 2007) with Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Ninh Bình. As a result, a complex of the sites in the process of occupying the northern plains of the Đa

Bút inhabitants, including Hang Cò, Hang Sáo, Hang Mo, Hang Ớc (Ninh Bình), Hang Công I, ii, iii, Hang Đáy (Hà Nam).

The Centre of Archaeological Studies, the Institute of Sustainable development of the Northern plains, the provincial Museum of Lâm Đồng together conducted an excavation at Hoàn Kiếm stone making workshop at Lâm Hà district (April 2007), with the found main materials of Opal stones and the characteristics of workshop site as at the Hamlet I, ii, iii, iv and Gan Thi, dating to 4000 BP- 5000 BP.

The Hà Nội University of Social Sciences and Humanity and the provincial Museum of Phú Thọ found Sơn Vi cultural stone artifacts at the two sites of Thượng Nông commune, including 20 tools, over 100 flakes and some broken pebbles as material during the excavation at Gò Bông site.

In the project of archaeological investigation and set up scientific profile of Con Moong Cave for UNESCO to recognize as World Heritage, The Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Thanh Hoá conducted an excavation at the sites at Thạch Thành district, Cúc Phương National Garden and Tràng An bio-ecological area (Ninh Bình). Of them, many sites have been reviewed and many other have been newly found. In particular, when making some corrections to the stratigraphic pillar that is 3.5m thick (discovered in

1976), the archaeologists found 177 stone artifacts, 5 human skeletons of 4 burials, including 2 individuals that are possible for study: a female the was about 40–50 years old and 1.61m high and 1 male, 1,75m high, 25-30 years old and probably Melanesian. The study results confirm the successive development of the three prehistoric cultures (Sơn Vi, Hoà Bình, Bắc Sơn).

Apart from that, there are reports on the new finds in the provinces of Đắk Nông, Hoà Bình, Quảng Bình, Đắk Lắk Gia Lai, etc and the 14C dates of the excavated and studied sites such as Xóm Trại Cave (Hoà Bình), Bãi Bền (Hải Phòng), Mán Bạc (Ninh Bình), Báo Tử Đầu and a strange burial ritual at Ding Shi Shan, Guangxi (China).

2. The section of Metal Age: 85 papers, with the following main contents:

The Department of History, the Hà Nội University of Social Sciences and Humanity and the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Phú Thọ conducted the third excavation at Gò Bông site. Based on the strata and artifacts, Gò Bông site possibly developed through 2 similar stages of Gò Bông và Phùng Nguyên, dating to 4000 BP- 3500 BP; with the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Hà Nội conducted the second excavation at Đồng Đậu and the fifth excavation at Thành Dền. Đồng đậu site included a sterile between the lower layer (late Phùng Nguyên) the upper layer (Gò Mun), after that it became a cemetery of

Đông Sơn culture. Based on the strata and artifacts, Thành Dền site might have developed through 3 stages (late Phùng Nguyên – early Đông Đậu, typical Đông Đậu and late Đông Đậu – early Gò Mun), dating to 3500BP - 3000BP.

To study the area for casting bronze arrows, Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and the Centre for Preservation of Cổ Loa Relics – Ancient Hà Nội Citadel conducted the third excavation at Đền Thượng site; with the department of Anthropology, Illinois Chicago University (USA) conducted an excavation at the Bastion–Moat–Middle Rampart (Cổ Loa). From the voluminous data of moulds, grinding stones fragments of broken moulds, discard artifacts, stone materials and the likes, the authors think that Đền Thượng was one of the great centres of many ancient–medieval states (in King An Dương and Ngô Quyền periods) and at the same time it was also the metallurgical centre of Cổ Loa citadel, where there were many kilns for casting bronze arrows, with a long–lasting settlement from King An Dương time (the third–fourth century BC) through Ngô Quyền time (the tenth century AD) to the later historical periods. With the excavation results, the excavators introduce a new perception: when building Cổ Loa citadel, King An Dương inherited the previous rampart (defensive moat); it was built at many times, with the same structure Moat–Rampart–Moat–Defensive Mound

(watch tower) and Cổ Loa citadel had Rampart–Bastion– Citadel Gate.

Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of other provinces conducted investigations at the sites of Cù Hin, Cam Lâm (Khánh Hoà); the jar burial area at Côn An Hải, Côn Đảo (Bà Rịa - Vũng Tàu); Gò Đình (Long An), and had a test–excavation at Gò Duối site. The excavators have distinguished the stages of Vĩnh Hưng (Long An): Gò Đình–Gò Ô Chùa–Gò Duối–Lò Gạch. They are the bio-environmental area of Đồng Tháp Mười, the buffer zone and the link between the western and eastern parts of southern Việt Nam in the Metal Age of Việt Nam; with the Museum of History and Revolution of Thừa Thiên–Huế classified the artifacts of Côn Ràng site, one of the centre of Sa Huỳnh culture, dating to 2500 BP- 2300 BP.

The cooperative projects of the Hà Nội University of Social Sciences and Humanity of Hồ Chí Minh city, the Centre for Archaeological Studies, the Institute of Sustainable Development of southern Việt Nam, the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Long An; An Giang; Bình Phước, etc provide valuable data for the research on the cultural relationships among the areas of southern Việt Nam.

Many bronze drums were found in 2008, concentrating in Phú Thọ, Thanh Hoá, Điện Biên provinces. The provincial Museum of Đắk Lắk conducted an investigation and test-excavation at

Xuân Vĩnh site (in March 2008), and collected many stone tools, ceramics, where human bones were found in the drums in 2007. The data collect here show that Xuân Vĩnh was a settlement and burial site, with similar artifacts to the sites of Dha Prông, Chư Ktu, Buôn Mrao.

3. The section of the historical period:

230 papers, with the following main contents:

The Museum of Anthropology, the Hà Nội University of Social Sciences and Humanity and the Management Board of 1000-year Thăng Long and the provincial Museum of Hà Nội conducted excavations at Long Tửu berth and Đầu Vè site. Similar to Hoa Lâm Viên site, these sites were ancient villages of Việt inhabitants in the Lý, Trần periods (the eleventh- fourteenth centuries). They are significant data for the great anniversary of 1000-year Thăng Long.

To provide data for the research, preservation and valorization of cultural historical relics, Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the provinces conducted excavations at Tức Mặc area (Nam Định), including many sites with the finds of a large number of relics and artifacts associated with the architecture, the votive and daily items, dating from the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries; investigation at Ngoại Vân site and Hồ Thiên pagoda (Quảng Ninh) – one of the important temple/pagoda complexes of Trúc Lâm Zen on the

range of Yên Tử mountains; excavation at the area of the southern gate of Hồ period (Thanh Hoá), with the finds of part of the stone base of the citadel and the stone foundation outside the gate, the stone road running from the main gate to the south and other artifacts mainly from the fourteenth – fifteenth centuries; excavation at Xương Giang citadel (Bắc Giang), with the finds of many architectural traces such as pillar bases, brick foundations and broken tiles and other remains related to the system of warehouse and military and civil areas, dating to the fifteenth century; excavation at Gò Cây Găng site (Khánh Hòa) and found similar characteristics to the ceramics of Lư Cầm in Nha Trang, dating the seventeenth–eighteenth century.

The Museum of Vietnamese History in cooperation with the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Hà Nội and the office of the Management Board of 1000–year Thăng Long conducted an excavation at Miếu Đồng Cổ site and found the remains related to the periods of Đông Sơn, Han, Trần, Lê, which are suitable to the records in the historical annals; with the Centre for Preservation of ancient Huế Relics conducted an excavation at Xã Tắc altar site, contributing to the research and reconstruction of the relics; with the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Hà Tĩnh excavated Hàm Nghi site from 1885; with the Management Board of the crucial sites

in Quang Ninh explored the system of ancient Vân Đồn trade ports.

In addition, there are many other reports on the new finds, including 11 reports on pagodas and the remains related to them, 8 reports on communal houses, 23 reports on temples and shrines with their related remains, 39 reports on stele and old poems, 17 reports on the royal proclamation, ordinance, family records, legends and so on, 10 reports on coins, gold, stone and bronze artifacts, ceramics from the museums and private collections.

4. The section of champa-Óc Eo: 27 papers, with the following main contents:

The provincial Museum of Bình Định and the Centre for Archaeological Studies, the Institute of Sustainable Development of southern Việt Nam conducted an excavation at Dương Long and Bình Lâm temples. The architectural decoration of Dương Long temple contain the characteristics of Bình Định and Khmer, Đại Việt (the twelfth–fourteenth century) styles. The data of the excavation at Bình Lâm temple are being classified and the head of the excavation temporarily presents some following comments: after Bình Lâm temple was constructed, it at least was reconstructed twice, which is quite different from Bánh Ít, Cánh Tiên, Dương Long temples. Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology and The provincial Museum of Phú Yên conducted the fifth excavation at Thành

Hồ (Hồ Citadel) and the found traces show that they belonged to a collapsed architecture with fairly early date (the fifth–eighth centuries), which was later used by Cham people. The found artifacts reflect the cultural life of Cham people at Thành Hồ site, which reached a high standard equivalent to the Champa remains at Trà Kiệu kingdom (Quảng Nam). The Centre for Preservation of Relics and Sightseeing of Quảng Nam conducted the group of Khương Mỹ temple sites, discovering Khương Mỹ was built three times, and the date of some of the architectures was the early twelfth century.

Apart from them, there are other reports by The provincial Museum of Long An on the test-excavation at Gò Xoài site, by the Centre for Archaeological Studies on the test-excavation Địa Tháp site (Tiền Giang), investigation in Bình Dương; investigation at An Thỏ Citadel (Phú Yên); investigation in Tây Ninh, Triều Châu club-house, An Thọ communal house, Champa/Việt site (Quảng Ngãi), with the new finds from the research on the golden pieces of the Champa crown, the strange architecture at Cát Tiên and a bronze statue at Đức Hoà, etc.

Concerning the urban archaeology, under the Law on Cultural Heritage, we conducted great excavations in ancient cities of Huế, Hội An, Hồ Citadel and other sites such as Plei Krong, Sơn La, Lai Châu, Điện Biên, especially the excavation at Thăng Long Imperial Citadel at 18 Hoàng Diệu since 2002.

There are Japanese leading experts from the Imperial Cities of Nara, Kyoto, Korokan (Japan). So far, the Japanese – Vietnamese archaeologists are aware of the scale and characteristics of each architecture through every period, realizing the architectural plan of Lý–period architecture and the find a special eight-sided pavilion with a pillar in the centre.

Recently, the Vietnamese scientists and conservators in Hà Nội have finished a world–heritage profile of Thăng Long Imperial site centre and submitted it to UNESCO to recognize as a World Heritage.

Apart from those outstanding achievements, the conference informs the curators and archaeologists all over the country a problem of counterfeit of ancient artifacts. Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology went to some centre for counterfeits at Hoa Lư (Ninh Bình), at Hai Bà Trưng district of Mê Linh (Hà

Nội), Thanh Hoá, Quảng Ninh and realize that the technique of making counterfeit is high standard, very sophisticated and skilful, which is very difficult to recognize. Therefore, the conference warns the museums to be careful to avoid confusing the counterfeits with the real ones.

The scientific activities in 2008 contribute to the improvement in the research and the cause of preservation and valorization of the national cultural heritage. The director of Việt Nam Institute of Archaeology informed that Việt Nam will be the host of the nineteenth conference of the Indian–Pacific Prehistoric Association (IPPA) in 2009, with about 400 international scientists projected to attend the conference. IPPA conference in Việt Nam will be a great landmark of the unceasing development and progress of Vietnamese archaeology.